

*This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of
Lillian Rojzman Berkman
1922 - 2001*

George Weymouth

Landscapes and Portraits of Brandywine

July 19 - September 30, 2001

Organized by the Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University

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Egg tempera on panel

49 1/4 x 49 in.

Collection of the Brandywine River Museum

Gift of George A. Weymouth and his son

in memory of the artist's father and mother

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George Weymouth

Landscapes and Portraits of Brandywine

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Acknowledgments

The exhibition *George A. Weymouth: Landscapes and Portraits of Brandywine* would not have been possible without the generous cooperation of the artist George (Frolic) Weymouth. As curator of the exhibition, I worked closely with Mr. Weymouth in developing the exhibition and the Brandywine River Museum has also been instrumental in this process. The real catalyst behind this exhibition, however, is the late Lillian Rojzman Berkman. Mrs. Berkman, who has been a long supporter of the Haggerty Museum of Art, first introduced me to George Weymouth in 1999.

Hence I would like to dedicate the exhibition to the memory of Lillian Rojzman Berkman whose own involvement in the arts was an inspiration to many. Mrs. Berkman, who had planned to attend the opening of the exhibition, unfortunately died at her home in New York on May 1, 2001.

Special thanks are due to all of the lenders who have helped to make this exhibition possible by permitting their works to appear at the Haggerty. This list includes the artist who has generously lent from his collection, MBNA America, the Blackshear-Campanelli Trust, Ms. Adrienne D. Hewitt, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew G.P. Hobbs, Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Bert Kerstetter, Mr. and Mrs. Matthew B. Swanson, Mr. and Mrs. Michael A. Wall, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene E. Weymouth, and various anonymous collectors. In addition to these lenders, the Brandywine River Museum has lent several important works to the exhibition.

George A. Weymouth: Landscapes and Portraits of Brandywine and its catalogue was made possible in part from funding provided by the Robert Apple Memorial Endowment for Haggerty Museum exhibitions.

The Haggerty Museum of Art staff was involved in all aspects of the production of this exhibition. Annemarie Sawkins coordinated publication of the catalogue; Jerome Fortier designed the catalogue; Lee Coppennoll assisted by Joyce Ashley provided administrative support; James Kieselburg arranged loans, shipping and insurance; Andrew Nordin assisted by Tim Dykes designed the exhibition; Lynne Shumow arranged programming and community outreach; Jon Mueller acted as communications assistant and Clayton Montez served as the chief security officer.

Curtis L. Carter
Director



Joan Whitney Payson, 1968
Egg tempera on panel
Collection of Sandra H. Payson

Against the Grain

From the perspective of the artist, George (Frolic) Weymouth born 1936, there is no need to search for words to describe his paintings. “Let them speak for themselves,” he says, with an attitude signaling genuine respect for the power of visual expression in art and a certain unpretentious modesty concerning his own achievements as an artist. His paintings are mainly landscapes and portraits of persons ranging from people in his local community to international figures, with an occasional still life.

Weymouth's art training began with a library of art history books at home and the encouragement of his artist-mother, Deo du Pont Weymouth who had studied at the Art Student's League of New York. His work is informed by his training at Yale University School of Art beginning in 1954. At Yale, he encountered the crossroads of art training and theory generated by the seemingly opposite approaches of the painter Joseph Albers' abstraction and the realism of portrait artist Deane Keller. Weymouth understood the importance of abstraction as a structural foundation for painting, but his prior experience of living and painting in the Brandywine Valley with its own tradition of painting drew him toward realism. Abstraction, he believes, is essential to the practice of art but is insufficient without the content afforded from directly observing nature and the culture of persons. The Brandywine Valley of Pennsylvania and Delaware near Wilmington has been the home of numerous prominent American artists including Howard Pyle, N.C. Wyeth and members of the Wyeth family, as well as Peter Hurd. Weymouth has lived throughout his life in this intimate environment surrounded by beautiful nature, as he continues the Brandywine tradition of realist painting.

From a technical perspective, Weymouth has never forgotten the lesson learned from his talented mother Deo du Pont Weymouth--how difficult painting really is. He respects the fact that a successful realist painting depends on composition, which is grounded in abstraction, but must then capture the particular qualities and spirit of what is being depicted. Before a final composition for a painting is achieved, the process involves endless observation sessions and trial sketches using drawing and watercolor, with the final stages in oil or tempera. This is true, whether one is painting nature or people. Timothy Jayne's discussion of the technical aspects of Weymouth's art recounts the artist's use of traditional media including watercolor, oil, and tempera and their respective applications to paper, canvas, and panel.¹ Jayne provides a detailed account of the artist's experiments with tempera. Tempera is an ancient medium with varying composite elements used by Weymouth in many of his paintings. It consists of egg yolk thinned with water and mixed with pigment, which is then applied to a wood surface prepared with chalk and glue. Paintings made with tempera are known for their luminosity as is reflected in the portrait *Gathering Storm*, 1964 (p. 20), or in the landscape *August*, 1974 (p. 11). His palette for the tempera paintings typically consists mainly of the primary colors: reds, yellows, blues mediated with white, umbers, and black. The skill and techniques for applying tempera, acquired with the advice of painters Andrew Wyeth and Peter Hurd, as well as his own experiments with the medium, have resulted in Weymouth's mastery of a difficult medium that is seldom used today.

I. Nature Paintings

In an age when art is dominated by modernist abstraction or complex social and political agendas of the postmodern era, it would be easy to dismiss the type of painting found in Weymouth's works. And yet their unflinching appeal to the public suggests that there is reason to revisit the type of art offered in such paintings. To appreciate the Weymouth landscapes, it is necessary to suspend much of the theory-laden Western aesthetics of today and listen for a moment to the artist's claim that his paintings are based on direct and sustained experiences of nature. The key to understanding Weymouth's paintings is indeed grounded in the artist's life-long closeness to nature. Unlike many artists of our time who are attracted to life in urban environments, he chooses to live in the countryside surrounded by beautiful nature. Sources in nature for the tree trunks and the flowers found in *Banks*, 1998 (p. 15) are easily recognizable on a walk with the artist through the woods near his home. It is clear from our conversation on this walk that the artist visits these sites daily to absorb the details of visual forms of the changing landscape as it evolves through the seasons. Spring is the time for the appearance of tiny delicate wildflowers whose entire life span is over in a few hours, and emerging shades of green that will evolve through the summer and recede again in fall to shades of brown and gray. Decaying limbs of trees, blossoms and foliage in the gardens, even the sounds of blowing winds or a chorus of hoards of insects cavorting in the fields might find their reflections in the artist's work. Remnants of the annual spring flood waters from the Brandywine creek mark the tree trunks with reminders of nature's ways of setting limits on human encroachments. Getting to know the wildflowers and other elements found in the countryside is an essential part of the painting process for this artist. The result is art that reflects the particular differences and tone of the region and its climate.

To appreciate the approach represented in Weymouth's paintings, it is necessary to recall the aesthetic creed of another era, or perhaps even of another culture. It requires adopting a preference for happiness over angst and for solitude and a feeling for gentleness, versus the need for the bombastic excitement of urban violence that dominates so much of contemporary culture. This is not to say that violence is absent in nature. It is depicted in the aesthetics of the sublime and also appears in the cycle of unrelenting threats to human well-being from storms and flooded streams as well as from occasional natural catastrophes of greater proportion.

The perspective on natural beauty that I have in mind is reflected in the text of a seventeenth-century opera, *Armide* with music by Jean-Baptiste Lully (1686) which takes as its theme the Crusades in the Middle East.² The stage directions call for a scene with open country and a small island in the middle of a river with "trees, greenery, water, breeze, birdsong, flowers, together creating a feeling of gently sensual idleness."³ Rinaldo, one of the characters in the opera, finds himself alone and utters these words:

The more I see this place the more it pleases me,
This river slowly flows
And with regret quits so delectable a retreat,
The sweetest flowers and most gentle Zephyrs
Perfume the air that one breathes.
No, I cannot leave these fair shores...⁴

While the sentiment is exaggerated for the dramatic purposes of the operatic setting, the words are similar to the remarks of the artist as he expresses the pleasure he derives from experiencing and capturing the natural environment in his paintings.

If there is no longer an aesthetic basis for the appreciation of natural beauty in modernist Western aesthetics, it is not the case everywhere. For instance, there still exists a Japanese style of aesthetic experience based on “a wisdom that allows the human being to come back to nature” in a spirit of humility and with a sense of beauty. The emphasis here is on the beauty of nature itself, its flowers, trees, and streams, instead of on the disinterested subjective filtering processes of the human mind. This point of view depends on daily contact with the beauty of nature, and a disciplined practice of seeing. The Japanese Haiku master Basho once said, “As to the truth of the pine tree, you must learn it from the tree...” What is being suggested here, as the philosopher Ken-ishi Sasaki proposes, is “the importance of cognition through identification with the object.”⁵ The words uttered by the artist during our conversations suggest an approach similar to the Japanese perspective on the beauty of nature. His words, seen in conjunction with this perspective on Japanese aesthetics, provide a basis for understanding what he intends to achieve through his art.

Why painting? In the artist's words, “You don't choose to paint. You do it because you must. It is what makes me the happiest, enables me to realize my self. As a realist you are constantly on your knees to your subject. You always feel inadequate before nature. The main problem is to choose how to present what excited you in nature.”⁶ Training and practice in drawing and composition help teach the eye to see but it is also necessary to sense how the flower or the tree feels and perceive the changes it undergoes as a result of variations in the light. Verisimilitude for a realist is measured by emotional closeness to the object in nature as well as by visual perception. Hence, the artist must respond to the emotional as well as to the physical aspects of depicted objects.

For the viewer of such paintings as Weymouth's *August* (p. 11), which depicts a rolling hillside covered with flowers and grasses, there is a veritable field of colors and shapes intended to bring him as close as possible to the experience of nature encountered by the artist. Even more intriguing is the enigmatic rendering of sunflowers against an ominous night-time sky found in *Nightlife*, 1998 (p. 14). This painting is based on sketches made in the night over a period of days and is a metaphor of the darker side of nature. But the images of sunflowers against the night sky have been filtered through the artist's selective processes of undergoing nature, co-mingled with his own responses consisting of seeing and feeling, and rendered according to the conventions chosen to execute the painting. If the viewer does not receive from the painting the same experience of nature as the artist, he may nonetheless be provided with some appreciation of its beauty and stimulated to carry on his own search for the beauty of nature.

II. Portraiture

As portraits are an equally important part of Weymouth's paintings, where do they fit into his approach to painting? Broadly speaking, he approaches people in the same way as nature. “Getting to know the person and deciding what you are going to say involves, again, seeing and feeling who they are.”⁷ Despite his strong attachment to nature and his choice to live close to nature, Weymouth is far from a hermit. On the contrary, he is socially engaged with a broad spectrum of people from family members and neighbors to international celebrities. His egalitarian spirit is evident in his role as environmental advocate and through his leadership in cultural affairs.

The transition from nature to people, and indirectly to the culture that surrounds the depiction of a person can be seen in Weymouth's *The Way Back*, 1963 (p. 16). This painting functions as a type of self-portrait, even though it features only the artist's hands holding the reins of his horse-drawn carriage which is headed toward his eighteenth-century stone home. Nature is still present here in the grass-covered fore-

ground, the sky, and trees. It is most notably signified by the dominant place given in the composition to two leafless trees flanking either side of the house. This picture reminds the viewer that, for the purposes of making a portrait, a person is defined by the cultural symbols projected through his lived experiences. In this instance, the picture shows the artist's strong identification with his horses and a collection of antique carriages. In the distance is his cherished home, a modified version of an eighteenth-century structure native to the site. The artist is aware that he lives in a house with a history and the painting is a means of encoding the historical character of the house for future generations, while also revealing its role in his own identity.

When the subject of a portrait is another person whose life embraces many different roles, the challenge is even more engaging. Weymouth's portrait of *Joan Whitney Payson*, (p. 6) shows an elegant, intelligent, but troubled, figure whose sorrow is plain to see, despite the trappings of wealth and social position. The portrait, made in 1968, was not accepted initially by her family but it was later acquired by her daughter. Perhaps the portrait was rejected because it revealed aspects of the subject that the family was not prepared to acknowledge, as is sometimes the case with portraits. In his portrait of the opera star *Luciano Pavarotti*, 1992 (p. 19), Weymouth chose to represent a more private, reflective aspect of the singer, showing a serious side of the person rather than his flamboyant public image. Here the focus is on the person's facial features; the portrait does not succeed in penetrating to the inner life behind the mask-like face. The upper body is draped simply with scarf and coat against a dark brown background. However, in *Eleven O'Clock News*, 1966 (p. 28) the profile of an unnamed African American is embellished with an array of culturally significant details, as was the case with the artist's self-portrait in *The Way Back* (p. 16). The details identify the figure as a workman. The face and figure are rendered to show the artist's respect for the quiet dignity of the sitter. Both hands grip the handle of an axe and there is a woodpile nearby suggesting the nature of his immediate task. Behind the tall, erect character, dressed in a blue jacket and brown trousers, is a bare tree trunk against the wall of a house positioned in the composition to reinforce the dominant verticality of the character

In both his landscapes and portraits, Weymouth is committed to certain ideals of aesthetic realism that distinguish some of America's most successful painters. His art consists of pictorial representations of nature and people based on their observed real properties. Absent from his paintings are the idealized mythological and historical subjects of previous generations of artists. Rather, his art is grounded in the belief invoked earlier by the French Realist Gustave Courbet, that painting is a concrete art that must be applied to real and existing things. His work thus represents a love of life, tempered with romantic idealism, and a desire to make accessible to others through his art an appreciation for those aspects of nature and of individual personalities who have contributed to the richness of his own life.

Curtis L. Carter

1. Timothy Jayne, "The Materials and Craft of George A. Weymouth," in *George A. Weymouth: A Retrospective* (Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, Brandywine River Museum, 1991), pp. 49-59.
2. I am grateful to Ken-ishi Sasaki, *Aesthetics on Non-Western Principles*. Version 0.5 (Maastricht: Jan Van Eyck Academie, Academieplein, 1998), p. 21, for this example and for thoughts that follow on a Japanese approach to beauty of nature and art.
3. Ken-ishi Sasaki, p. 21.
4. Act II, scene III, translation by Derek Yeld, the booklet of the compact disc: Jean-Baptiste Lully, *Armide*, 1993, p. 57.
5. Ken-ishi Sasaki, p. 18.
6. Interview with the artist, April 5, 2001 at his home near Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.
7. Ibid.



August, 1974

Egg tempera on panel

49 1/4 x 49 in.

Collection of the Brandywine River Museum

Gift of George A. Weymouth and his son

in memory of the artist's father and mother (1989)



Farm House, 1972
Watercolor on paper
21 x 38 1/2 in.
Collection of MBNA America



Ice Shoes, 1997
Egg tempera on panel
42 x 48 in.
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Bert Kerstetter



Nightlife, 1998
Egg tempera on panel
48 x 48 in.
Collection of the artist



Banks, 1998
Watercolor on paper
48 x 48 in.
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Bert Kerstetter



The Way Back, 1963
Egg tempera on panel
35 x 25 in.
Collection of the artist



Eugene E. du Pont, 1958
Oil on panel
48 x 36 in.
Collection of the artist



6:59 a.m., 1958

Oil on panel

24 x 32 3/4 in.

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Eugene E. Weymouth



Luciano Pavarotti, 1982
Egg tempera on panel
27 1/4 x 38 1/4 in.
Collection of the artist



Gathering Storm, 1964

Egg tempera on panel

22 x 23 3/4 in.

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew G.P. Hobbs, Sr.



Margaret, 1986
Egg tempera on panel
31 3/4 x 36 1/2 in.
Private collection



Almost Time, 1965

Egg tempera on panel

31 1/2 x 48 1/4 in.

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew G.P. Hobbs, Sr.



Main Line (unfinished), 1982
Egg tempera on panel
48 x 47 3/4 in.
Collection of the artist



Charfoot, 1957
Egg tempera on panel
12 x 14 in.
Private collection



Field Sparrow, 1959
Oil on panel
12 x 18 in.
Private collection

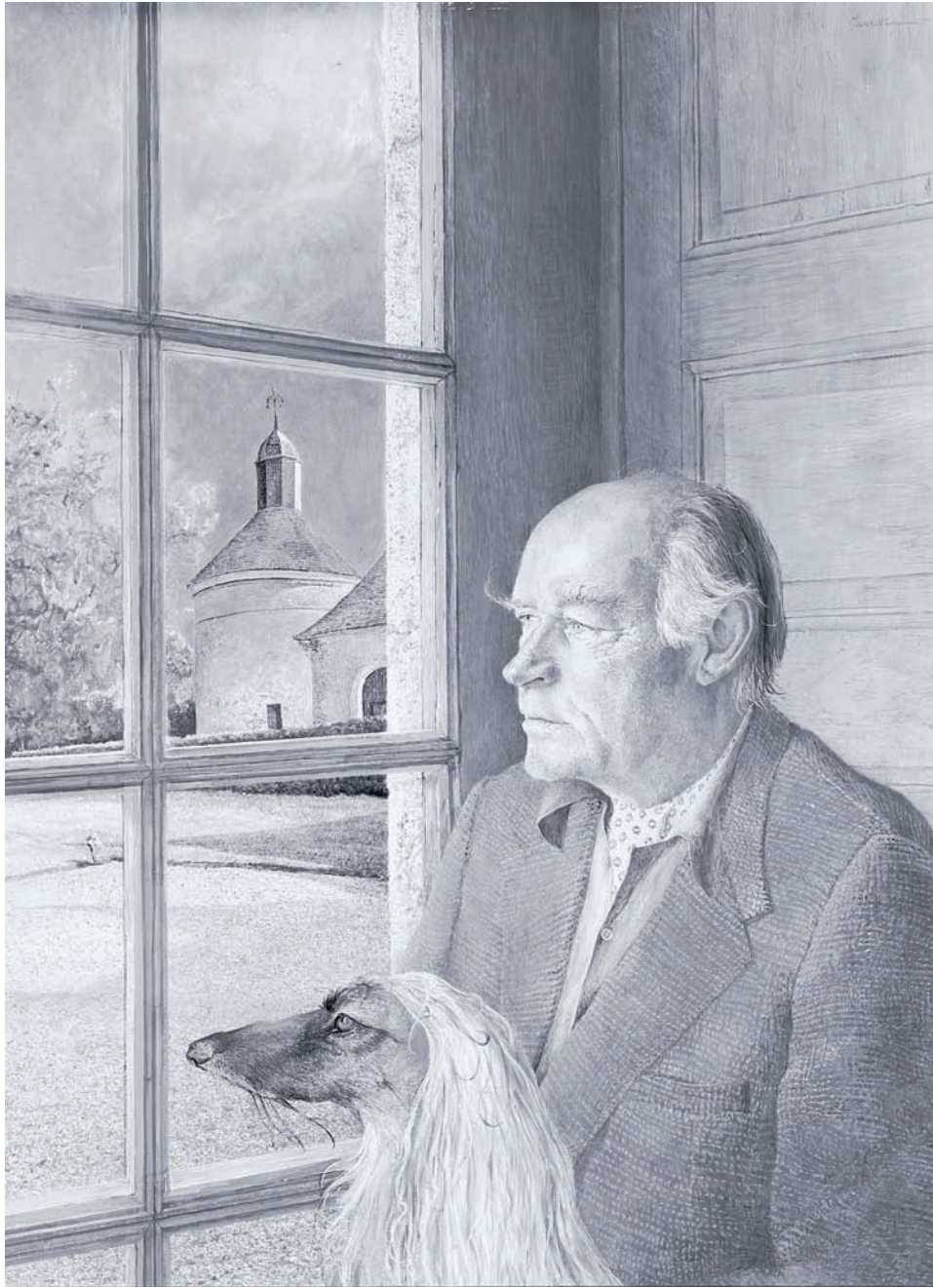


Honorable William A. Hewitt, 1978

Egg tempera on panel

31 x 48 in.

Collection of Ms. Adrienne D. Hewitt



Marshall Haseltine, 1985

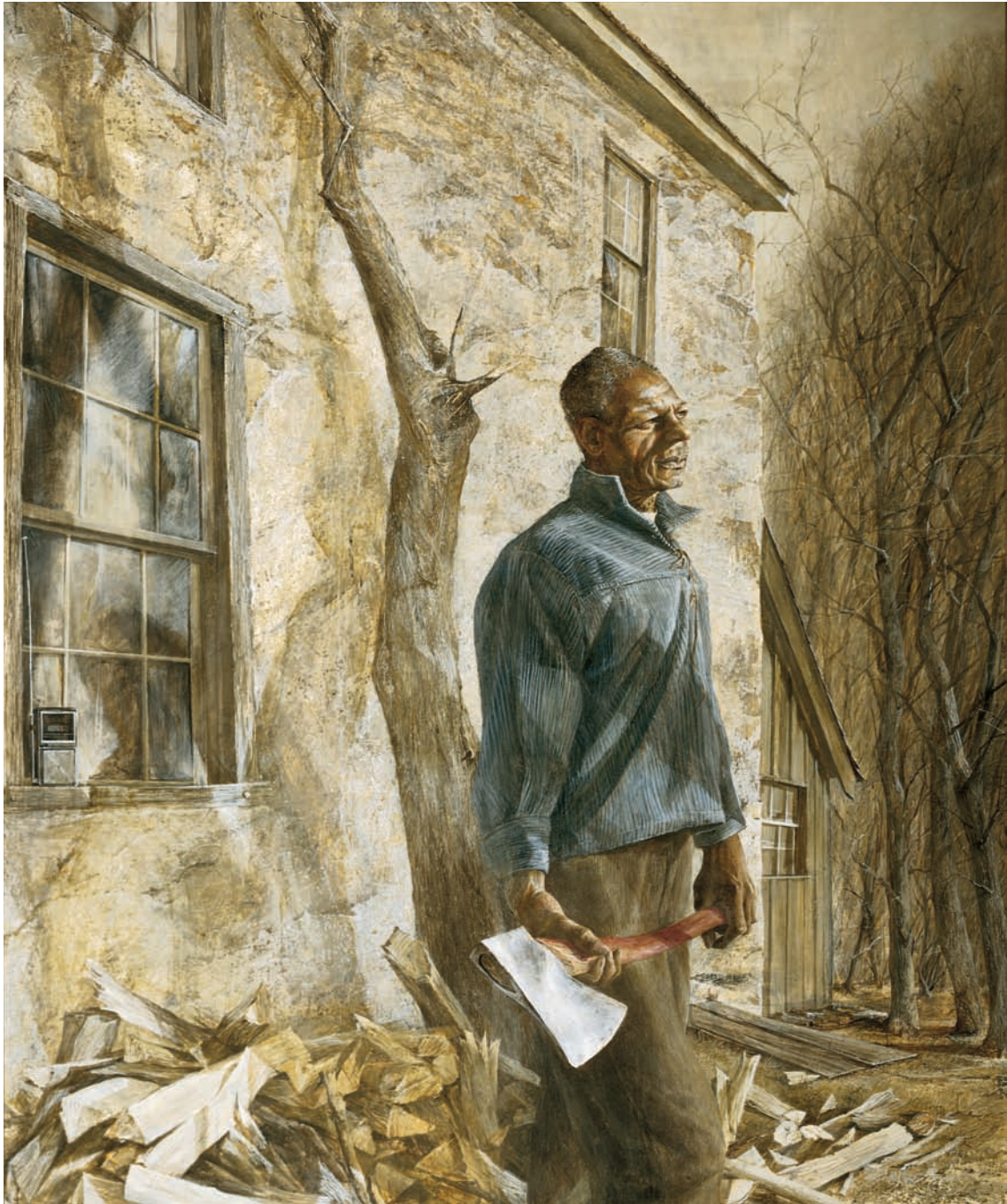
Egg tempera on panel

33 1/4 x 25 3/4 in.

Collection of the Brandywine River Museum

Gift of Marshall Haseltine in memory of

Ella Widener Wetherill (1991)



Eleven O'Clock News, 1966

Egg tempera on panel

47 x 39 in.

Collection of the Brandywine River Museum

Gift of Richard M. Scaife (1986)



Mr. Hilton Taylor, 1962
Watercolor on paper
20 1/2 x 17 3/4 in.
Collection of the artist



Geoffrey Holder, 1990
Pencil on paper
23 3/4 x 18 in.
Collection of the artist



The Countess of Westmorland, 1985

Pencil on paper

12 x 9 in.

Collection of the artist

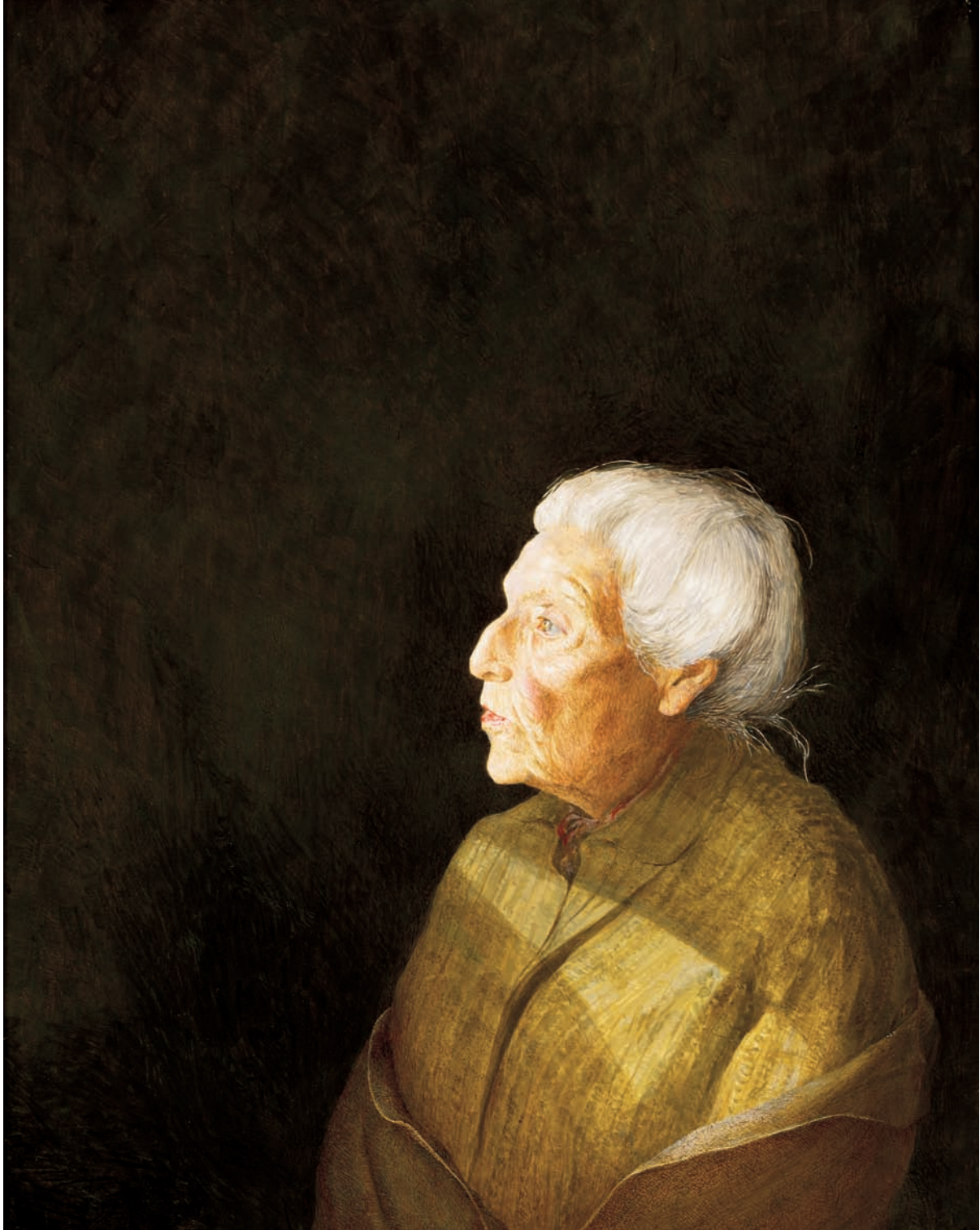


Buckley, 1964

Watercolor on paper

21 x 25 in.

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Eugene E. Weymouth



Baroness, 1997
Egg tempera on panel
29 x 23 in
Collection of the artist



Michael Wall, 1997

Egg tempera on panel

24 x 26 in.

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Michael A. Wall



Jack Campbell's Coat, 1961
Watercolor on paper
29 3/4 x 20 in.
Collection of the artist



Corn Basket, 1965

Egg tempera on panel

14 1/2 x 36 in.

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew B. Swanson

George A. Weymouth

- 1936 Born in Wilmington, Delaware
- 1949-54 Studies with Kleber Hall at St. Mark's School in Southborough, MA.
- 1958 Receives Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University
- 1958 Paints portrait of Eugene E. du Pont
- 1963 Invited by NASA to paint at Cape Kennedy during the Moon Shots
- 1963-65 Represented by Emmanuel J. Rousuck at Wildenstein and Co., New York
- 1967 Helps found the Brandywine Conservancy, an environmental and cultural organization
- 1968 Paints portrait of Joan Whitney Payson
- 1971 Helps found the Brandywine River Museum
- 1971-77 Appointed by President Nixon to the Commission of Fine Arts
- 1974 Serves on the Visual Arts Panel of the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts
- 1980 Paints portrait of Lord Westmorland, Master of the Horse
- 1981 Receives the University of Delaware merit award for community service
- 1982 Paints portrait of Luciano Pavarotti
- 1988 Paints portrait of His Royal Highness Prince Michael of Kent
- 1989 Receives National Society of Fund Raising Executives' Outstanding Fund Raising Volunteer award
- 1990 Receives the National Arts Club annual award
- 1991 The exhibition *George A. Weymouth: A Retrospective* is held at the Brandywine River Museum and travels to the Jacksonville Art Museum
- 1995 Paints portrait of His Royal Highness Duke of Edinburgh (Prince Philip)
- 1999 Receives Cliveden Heritage Preservation award
- 2000 Receives Garden Club of America special citation award for exemplary service in the field of conservation and environmental protection
- 2001 *George A. Weymouth: Landscapes and Portraits of Brandywine* at the Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI.

Exhibition Checklist

Race Rider, 1956

Egg tempera on panel
24 x 18 in.
Collection of the artist

Charfoot, 1957

Egg tempera on panel
12 x 14 in.
Private collection

6:59 a.m., 1958

Oil on panel
24 x 32 3/4 in.
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Eugene E. Weymouth

Eugene E. du Pont, 1958

Oil on panel
48 x 36 in.
Collection of the artist

Field Sparrow, 1959

Oil on panel
12 x 18 in.
Private collection

Jack Campbell's Coat, 1961

Watercolor on paper
29 3/4 x 20 in.
Collection of the artist

Mr. Hilton Taylor, 1962

Watercolor on paper
20 1/2 x 17 3/4 in.
Collection of the artist

The Way Back, 1963

Egg tempera on panel
35 x 25 in.
Collection of the artist

Buckley, 1964

Watercolor on paper
21 x 25 in.
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Eugene E. Weymouth

The Shelter, 1964

Egg tempera on panel
24 x 50 in.
Collection of Blackshear-Campanelli Trust

Gathering Storm, 1964

Egg tempera on panel
22 x 23 3/4 in.
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew G.P. Hobbs, Sr.

Almost Time, 1965

Egg tempera on panel
31 1/2 x 48 1/4 in.
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew G.P. Hobbs, Sr.

Corn Basket, 1965

Egg tempera on panel
14 1/2 x 36 in.
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew B. Swanson

Mrs. E. Miles Valentine, 1966

Egg tempera on panel
36 1/2 x 30 1/8 in.
Collection of the Brandywine River Museum
Gift of Joy Fanning (2001)

Eleven O'Clock News, 1966

Egg tempera on panel
47 x 39 in.
Collection of the Brandywine River Museum
Gift of Richard M. Scaife (1986)

Farm House, 1972

Watercolor on paper
21 x 38 1/2 in.
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27 1/4 x 38 1/4 in.

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Pencil on paper

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Egg tempera on panel

29 x 23 in.

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Ice Shoes, 1997

Egg tempera on panel

42 x 48 in.

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Bert Kerstetter

Nightlife, 1998

Egg tempera on panel

48 x 48 in.

Collection of the artist

Banks, 1998

Watercolor on paper

48 x 48 in.

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Bert Kerstetter