



James Wyeth: A Short Biography

James Browning Wyeth was born on July 16, 1946 in Chadd's Ford, Pennsylvania. James attended public school until grade 6, and then privately tutored through high school. At age 12, James (or Jamie) began academic art training in his grandfather N.C.'s big studio by his aunt Carolyn. She continued the formal lessons she and her brother Andrew learned from their father by having James draw cubes, spheres, and cones in charcoal. He worked with his aunt for two years.

James' father Andrew never formally taught him; however, he would offer encouragement and constructive critiques and direction. James began painting in oils, the media of choice of his grandfather and his aunt. Following one of his favorite artists, Thomas Eakins, James wanted to experience studying anatomy in a more accurate way than working from a skeleton. He spent two months at a hospital morgue working with a doctor doing autopsies and studies of the human body from the inside out. He felt this experience was invaluable, especially for portraiture.

From 1966 to 1971, James served in the U.S. Air Corp Reserve stationed in the Texas Panhandle. In Texas, James painted a large mural for the battalion ball. He had security clearance and was able to draw and record several space launches and astronaut training sessions while in Texas. These works are now in the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Washington, D.C.

James works with a variety of subject matter in oil painting as well as in prints. Fascinated by animals, he has painted portraits of bulls, cows, dogs, hens, sheep, sea gulls, and pigs. These paintings are large and full of rich textures and color.

In 1968, James married Phyllis Mills. The couple purchased a farm not far from Chadd's Ford in Delaware.

James was commissioned to paint a portrait of the late President Kennedy. He spent months watching videotapes of the late President before deciding on the right expression and pose. The portrait is exhibited at the Kennedy Library, Boston, MA. In 1974, Chief Justice Burger allowed Wyeth to sketch the impeachment trials of the Nixon administration. James has painted many portraits of famous people such as Kennedy, Rudolf Nureyev, and Andy Warhol, as well as people from the areas around his homes on the coast of Maine and in Delaware.

References:

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