Andrew Wyeth Show At Library

A loan exhibition of 38 tempera and watercolor paintings and one drawing by Andrew Wyeth, Hayden Gallery through December 4. Monday through Friday 10 to 5. Saturday and Sunday 9 to 5 (Nov. 11, 12 to 5).

These paintings inevitably provoke the still-hot polemic of objective versus nonobjective painting. Against the current plethora of unidentifiable visual images, Wyeth's works speak eloquently for the traditional values in objective painting: easy communication and complete command of the painter's craft. Although one may suspect an abstract work to be a series of accidents, there can be no such doubts about Wyeth's carefully planned objective creations. So carefully are the implications of his subject matter explored, and so painstakingly are his graphic decisions portrayed, that he is able to produce only a few canvases each year. Yet, Wyeth uses the positive qualities of objective painting so precisely that the exactness of the artistic conception remains unblurred by possible emotional misinterpretations.

Simplicity

The subject matter of these Wyeth works is commonplace: unusually usual people who seem to speak for many others; simple objects that dramatically contain the essence of the object; or a rolling, lovely landscape that is unique, yet so evocative that it says much of landscapes everywhere that have been changed by man and that have changed him.

Very little "goes on" in a Wyeth painting. We are immediately fixed on what he intends us to see, for he has concentrated his own attentions on the fewest, simplest, and strongest elements. Even the colors are simple. Usually they are grayed variants of a monochromatic scheme. If motion is suggested, it is suspended motion — caught still for our examination.

Though these paintings are statuelike, straightforward, and solemnly colored, their exquisitely rich details, highlights and textures cause them to exude a grave vitality. Drama, in these paintings, is heightened by their unusual perspective views (the viewer may soar with the birds or crawl with the ants); by illusions of air, space, and light; and by suggestions of infinity (thus of our own infinite freedom within our realistically impinging world). Wyeth stops us, grabs us by the collar, and promptly enchants us. It is a quiet, solemn, enchantment. It is the enchantment of the deep look, through beauty's eyes.

MIT's Privilege

These works are well known, of course; and rewardingly known. Wyeth, at 48, probably is America's best known contemporary painter, and certainly her most beloved.

— Howard Herschberger, '60

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