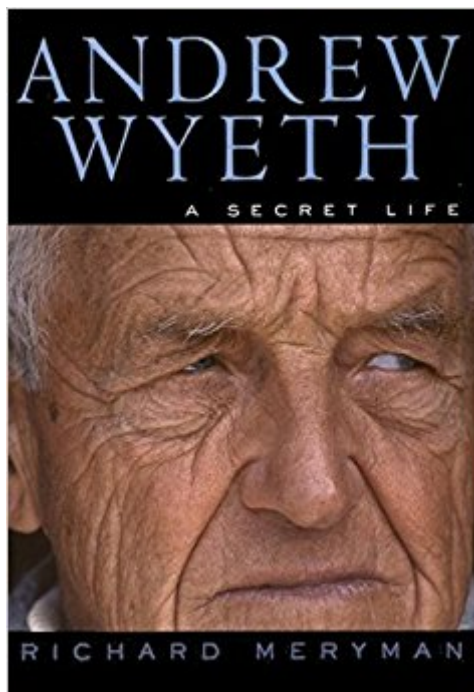


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# Andrew Wyeth: A Secret Life



## Synopsis

"A revelation. No one will ever view Andrew Wyeth's apparently tranquil works the same way again after reading this vivid and astonishing portrait of the turbulent, driven man who paints them. Richard Meryman has written a wonderful book." - Geoffrey C. Ward At its most fundamental level, this stunning and unique biography describes a distinguished painter's enterprise of transmitting emotion onto a flat surface. It explores all the factors that have combined to create Andrew Wyeth -- his childhood in a hothouse of creativity; his hypersensitivity; his formidable wife; his identification with people marginalized and misunderstood -- all which have made him an American icon. In the process, his realist works in watercolor and tempera, including the famous "Christina's World," have gained him a special and secure niche in the history of American art. The book is a portrait of obsession -- how single-mindedness has affected Wyeth's relationships and transformed his world into a realm of secrecy and fervid imagination. Those who read this book will never look at Wyeth's work as they did before. It reveals the artist's dark depths, as well as the ruthless, angry, child/man fantasist who paints the basic brutalities of existence -- death and madness --that vibrate eerily beneath his pictures' calm surfaces. Richard Meryman's narrative is almost novelistic, with its larger-than-life characters and subplots: the tragedy of C.C. Wyeth; Betsy Wyeth's campaign for independence and individuality; the byzantine 15-year-long drama of the Helga paintings; the eccentric and creative Wyeth clan; and the idiosyncratic land and people of Maine and Pennsylvania. Based on 30 years of research, frequent visits and countless conversations with the artist, his family, friends, admirers and critics, *Andrew Wyeth: A Secret Life* is the only book about the man and the artist that gets behind his carefully guarded screen, tells the full story of his life and reveals his complex personality and the motivations for his paintings.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Andrew Wyeth's achievement is unmatched by other modern American realist painters: he produced canvasses that became American icons, deepening our sense of the possibilities of representational painting in an abstract age. This biography, produced by family friend Richard Meryman, who first wrote about Wyeth for Life magazine in 1964, takes in not only Andrew Wyeth's life but three generations of Wyeths: the peerless illustrator N. C. Wyeth, Andrew's father; Andrew Wyeth; and Jamie, Andrew's son and a successful realist painter in his own right. The "Secret Life" of the title refers in part, of course, to the "Helga" paintings, sketches, drawings, and portraits (many of them in the nude) of Wyeth's neighbor, later his companion and assistant, Helga Testorf. The revelation of the "Helga" series gave the married Wyeth's life, at almost 70, a final dose of drama. This new biography, besides delving deeply into Wyeth's personal life, includes long discussions of almost every Wyeth canvas. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"They're sticking pins in me!" Wyeth complained in 1986 after the press roasted his furtive and seminude "Helga" paintings. "I'm a has-been." Then 70, he had been an artistic icon since his 20s, and *Christina's World*, Wyeth's signature canvas, ranked with Whistler's portrait of his mother and Wood's *American Gothic* as national images. Meryman (*Mank: The Wit, World, and Life of Herman Mankiewicz*) bases his biography on interviews over many years with Wyeth, his family and his inner circle. Bare of printed sources and dependent on dialogue, the book strikingly evokes three generations of a talented, idiosyncratic family, its middle generation the progeny of a larger-than-life artist (N.C. Wyeth) insecure to the end about his worth. Andrew Wyeth (b. 1917) himself appears as a bundle of contradictions?modest and vain, outgoing and secretive, moved by anger as well as by love, a painter of pitiless pictures as well as postcard scenes. To his biographer, Wyeth's studies of rustic loneliness and decay accomplish what Edward Hopper achieved for 20th-century urban life. There are 75 b&w and 16 color photos here. Wyeth wanted a "tough book," writes Meryman, not one in which his works were "reverentially placed on the page surrounded by white borders

This is a well written and interesting book. I read a lot of non-fiction and this has to be one of best books I have read in a long time. The book is full of interesting facts. I found it especially interesting

because I am also an artist who coincidentally lives within a mile of the Wyeth world in Chadds Ford, PA. I was surprised Betsy Wyeth signed off on this book because I felt it did not make her look good. In fact, the book, in my opinion, portrayed her as over controlling, self-centered, and just not a nice person. I know a lot about the Wyeth family and this does not surprise me. They seem to be a bit full of themselves. It was sad to read how their relationship wasn't very healthy under the surface. All in all, if you have any interest about Wyeth or the Chadds Ford area then this is a must read. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

I have studied Wyeth through Art School and for all the years since, and this book reveals things I never knew about him! Rare insight into the life of a reclusive and complex man. Points out the time line on some of his most iconic master works, and delves deep into the motivation and inspiration behind them. A must read for anyone wanting to look beneath the surface of this very hard to know man.

One of the best biographies of an artist I have read in a long time. Helga was a very important part of his life and also of other members of the Wyeth family. Sometimes a person will walk in and take over the life of an artist or writer. Helga was that someone. Her loyalty to the whole Wyeth family and taking care of Andy in his final years when he was so sick, and also his artist sister Carolyn who I grew to love through the pages. What shocked me more than anything was the greed of art dealers and museums.. Andy had little knowledge of the deals that were being made for his Helga paintings.. These transactions "screwed" him out of millions of dollars. I call it legalized robbery.. I know this practice is common in the art world but it surprises me he was so unaware of it. Money was not important to him, but to be robbed by people he thought were his friends was a bitter blow. The death of his father and Karl Keurner were bitter blows I don't think he ever fully recovered from. I view Helga as a guardian angel, in fact he called her one several times. Without Helga he would have never have had the will to go on. I have read and re read this excellent biography of a complex man several times and it will always be in my collection.

I enjoyed the book about Andrew Wyeth as I was curious about his life and his many years of tempera and watercolor painting. It brought to life the man behind the lonely looking landscapes and snow covered hills that I admire and try to learn from. It is a long book, however, a lot of background is covered that is most helpful in understanding this artist and what drove him to paint. With having N.C. Wyeth as his father, he had a wonderful teacher right there every day. It was very interesting

what role his wife, Betsy, played in keeping all of his work organized. I would recommend this book to anyone who is an admirer of the Wyeth family art.

A very interesting story.

This has got to be one of the best autobiography written about the artist. The book confirms information written by other writers who wrote about the Wyeth family. For anyone who really get to the know the artist and his art... I highly recommend this book. Author Meryman did a superb good.

I loved reading this book and recommend it to anyone who has just a glint of interest in Andrew Wyeth and his paintings. As the author said, you will never look at his paintings in the same way after you read the book. And you will feel a little bit better about your own struggles and craziness.

This is simply a fabulous book about one of the great artistic talents (and his incredibly talented extended family) of our time. I have read it many times, and wanted my own copy. Meryman knew Wyeth and his family well. His insight and his writing talent is wonderful. The book reads more like a very, very good work of fiction than a bio. Fabulous.

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