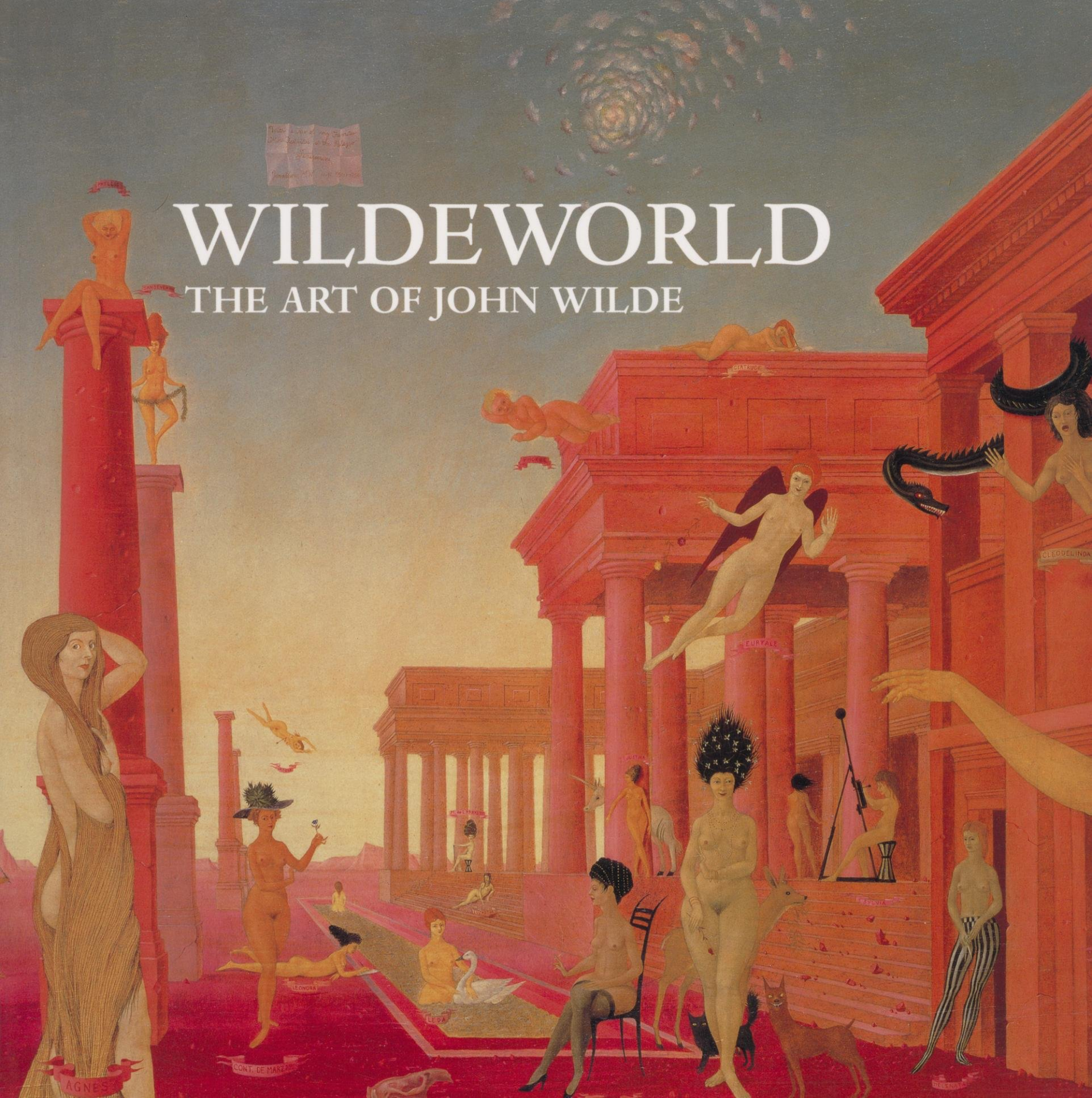
Wildeworld : the art of John Wilde.

Wilde, John, 1919-2006
Madison, Wisconsin: Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999



WILDEWORLD

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ORGANIZED BY

RUSSELL PANCZENKO

WITH AN ESSAY BY

THEODORE F. WOLFF

HUDSON HILLS PRESS NEW YORK

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ELVEHJEM MUSEUM OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON

First Edition

Published in the United States by Hudson Hills Press, Inc.,
122 East 25th Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10010-2936.

Distributed in the United States, its territories and possessions, and Canada by National Book Network.

Distributed in the United Kingdom, Eire, and Europe by Art Books International Ltd.

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Paul Anbinder

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COMPOSITION: Angela Taormina

Manufactured in Japan by Dai Nippon Printing Company.

This book is published on the occasion of the exhibition

Wildeworld: The Art of John Wilde

at the Elvehjem Museum of Art,
University of Wisconsin–Madison,
November 13, 1999–January 9, 2000.

Cover illustration: *More Festivities at the Palazzo Sanseverini* (detail), 1951–52 (see colorplate 54).

Frontispiece: John Wilde in his studio, 1946.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGUING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Wolff, Theodore F.
Wildeworld : the art of John Wilde / Theodore F. Wolff, Russell Panczenko. — 1st ed.
p. cm.
"Published on the occasion of the exhibition 'Wildeworld: the art of John Wilde' at the Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison, November 13, 1999–January 9, 2000"—T.p. verso.
ISBN: 1-55595-160-0 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Wilde, John, 1919– Exhibitions. I. Wilde, John, 1919– . II. Panczenko, Russell. III. Elvehjem Museum of Art. IV. Title. V. Title: Wilde world.
N6537.W4597A4 1999 99-16551
760'.092—dc21 CIP

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Introduction

Russell Panczenko

In November 1984, shortly after I became director of the Elvehjem Museum of Art, I had the good fortune to preside at the opening here of an exhibition of John Wilde's drawings. I clearly remember how impressed I was by his masterful use of silverpoint and how fascinated I quickly became by his imaginative, and sometimes fantastic, subject matter. Since then, I have seen much of his work, in both public and private collections, and have come to appreciate Wilde more and more, not only as an exceptional draftsman but also as a painter. The present exhibition and catalogue, celebrating the artist's eightieth birthday, bring together and document the largest and most comprehensive body of his paintings and drawings ever assembled.

It is appropriate to begin a discussion of John Wilde's art by considering his drawings. Initially, his national reputation was based largely on his exceptional achievements in this area. Drawing was how Wilde began as an artist, and it was the only subject he would teach during his career in the art department at the University of Wisconsin. Nearly all his drawings are finished works of art in their own right; only a few are preparatory sketches. Although he has experimented with a variety of drawing techniques, he generally prefers silverpoint, a fine-line method favored by both northern and southern artists of the early Renaissance. Usually, Wilde draws on a white ground, although he occasionally uses blue- or rose-colored paper.

Living in Cooksville, a rural village near Evansville, Wisconsin, Wilde is an outdoorsman who frequently draws what he finds on his rambles: dead birds, rabbits, or chipmunks in various stages of decay; birds' nests and cocoons; dried cicadas and grasshoppers; the moldering jawbone of a swine or some animal's skull; or leaves fallen from a tree—all potential subjects that he can bring into his small, unpretentious studio. There, he closely examines each quiet, unmoving object before rendering it in meticulous detail.

At other times, Wilde draws the human figure, usually representations of people he knows intimately: his wife, close friends, or, very often, himself. Although he is accomplished at drawing from live models, he regards this practice primarily as an exercise. For a drawing to qualify as "art" to Wilde, it must, of course, be well executed. But it also must have a subject that is imbued with personal significance. Although the viewer may not necessarily discern the meaning of the image—in fact, Wilde is uncomfortable when viewers do search for meaning in

his work—it must be there for the artist himself. Understandably, then, studio exercises, no matter how exquisitely rendered, are mere preparations for the creation of his art.

In his numerous self-portraits, Wilde presents himself to the viewer with an honesty and an intimate directness that are both shocking and captivating. The various selves seem to ask and answer, over and over, a haunting question: "Who am I?" Sometimes, this artistic search for self-definition is supplemented with phrases, sentences, or long paragraphs that Wilde writes on the open areas of the paper. He frequently begins by describing or amplifying the drawn image. Sooner or later, however, his thoughts become an independent, widely meandering stream of consciousness that often, in turn, inspires a subsequent drawing. His images tend to build upon one another, and his writing seems to serve as a bridge that leads him toward the next drawing. Now, both artist and critics see these handwritten texts as intrinsic to the drawings on which they appear, whether or not that was Wilde's original intention.

His existential self-exploration with pencil, silverpoint, and other drawing instruments began with great intensity in the early 1940s and continues today. The images progress from a lithe, handsome figure dressed in a harlequinlike costume to a naked or seminaked figure whose body clearly shows the effects of time. The handwritten texts appear most frequently during the first two decades and less so as time goes on, but they have never disappeared. The titles of many of the self-portrait drawings suggest milestones in Wilde's inner life: *Myself with Long Hair, Myself Indicating Two Points of Neurasthenic Pain* (colorplate 3), *Myself as a Soldier with a Shattered Head, Myself Drugged, Myself as a Bandit* (colorplate 14), *Myself Reading Stendhal in a Bed Made for an Indian Prince, Myself Entertained in Such a Manner as I Feel Myself Deserving, Design for Myself as a Landscape, Myself Contemplating Nature, Here, AE 36, I Am Partially within the Object, Looking out to Find Reality, Myself with Involvements,* and *Myself AE 58, Eating an Apple.* Others are simply labeled *Myself* or *Selbst,* followed by *AE (aestas,* Latin for age) and a number, as for example *Myself AE 42* and *Selbst AE 62* (colorplate 25). He also speculates about himself in the future, as in *Myself, April 1946* (colorplate 9), which was drawn in 1944.

Wilde's paintings are more complex and rich in content than the drawings and more formal in their presentation. They vary in size from exquisite miniatures whose height and width measure no more than a few inches to relatively large easel works. Whatever the scale, the detail in each one is minutely and painstakingly rendered; the large panels require the same kind of scrutiny by the viewer as the small ones. Like his drawings, Wilde's paintings recall those of both northern and southern Renaissance masters, especially the ones who used line to contain color, linear or aerial perspective to organize the compositional elements, and transparent layers of glazes for rich and subtle modeling. The fanciful and often fantastic subjects of his paintings, as those of the drawings, emanate entirely from Wilde's imagination and allude to people, objects, and events about which the artist feels deeply. He has, however, painted few self-portraits. Although he includes himself in several paintings, he is usually one character in a complex mise en scène, and his identity is not necessarily obvious to the viewer. The titles he has given these works offer little assistance with identification or interpretation.

In Wilde's drawings the transparent, wraithlike figures, no matter how realistically rendered, always read as immaterial, intellectual constructs. In his paintings, on the other hand, the perspective, the modeling, and the use of color combine to solidify the figures and situate them in a seemingly natural spatial environment. Wilde exploits this capacity for realism in painting to the fullest in his still lifes, wholly enjoying its illusionary effect on the eye. Ultimately, however, he is neither a realist nor a teller of

tales. He is, rather, a poet. Throughout his long career, he has continuously sought to make the subjects of his paintings as immaterial and elusive as those of his drawings, to express the ineffable without renouncing the joys and pleasures of the physical.

Wilde employs various techniques to contradict the illusion of real space caused by his use of linear or aerial perspective. In some paintings, especially the earlier ones, eyes, ribbons, and other mysterious decorative elements float on, and thus reinforce, the picture plane (colorplates 39 and 52). In others, figures or partial figures intrude from above or the side of the picture frame with no logical relation to the stage upon which they perform (colorplate 61). And in still others, he employs the flat, opaque, gold backgrounds that Byzantine artists used to assert the spirituality of their pictorial narratives (colorplates 47 and 48). In his quest for otherworldliness, he embraces fantasy, depicting objects and events that are both empirically and socially impossible. He defies the laws of science by creating biologically aberrant creatures (colorplate 88); by playfully reversing expected size relationships between a human being and a vegetable, a bone or a dead bird (colorplates 86 and 90); and by negating the laws of gravity, having couples float in midair as they make love (colorplate 55). The open sexuality Wilde depicts, the orgiastic festivals, and the diseased or violently torn bodies also seem incongruous in relation to the bucolic Wisconsin countryside where the artist lives. The latter is perhaps best represented by his still-life paintings, but even here, he challenges realism: Vegetables are infused with a mysterious inner light (colorplate 75) or, occasionally, assume beautiful but shockingly unnatural colors—as in the painting descriptively entitled *Blue Lemons,* one in a series of such works.

Wilde's paintings are enigmatic and intellectually provocative, each one offering a tantalizing glimpse into a fascinating imaginary world, a very private world, which one writer suitably labeled "Wildeworld," appropriating and broadening the meaning of a title the artist gave to two of his own paintings (colorplates 61 and 103). When asked, he offers few clues to the meaning or symbolism in his work. In fact, he says there is none. Acquaintance with the sources of his inspiration is not particularly helpful to those seeking admission into Wildeworld. Although he acknowledges that surrealism was a point of entry into the world of fantasy, Wilde has never subscribed to the common language of dreams or primordial archetypes so readily adopted by devotees of Freud or Jung. He is and always has been an avid reader with esoteric literary tastes. But even knowing his reading preferences does not demystify the objects or narrative complexities of his paintings. There are no direct correspondences to be found, for instance, between his intriguing serial depictions of festivities at the Contessa Sanseverini's (colorplates 53, 54, 78, 100, and 104) and Stendhal's 1839 historical novel, *The Charterhouse of Parma,* from which they originate. I imagine, too, that Renaissance paintings are a source of subject matter, but in truth, Wilde's interest in art of that period is focused solely on its formal qualities; he reveals little regard for the original iconographic significance of the figures or for compositional systems he may have admired.

In an era when a raw, abstract, painterly style is the dominant language of self-expression, and to those who advocate the aesthetic credo of "letting it all hang out," John Wilde's calm, formal dignity is impenetrable. The splendid, meticulously finished surfaces of his paintings call to mind the gold or silver mantles that hide from view the sacred images of icons. And those who know his processes sometimes find it hard to accept this stunning fact: Beneath each painted surface there is, forever lost, an exquisite underdrawing.

John Wilde: A Personal Perspective

THEODORE F. WOLFF

In a century that worships size and sensationalism, John Wilde has demonstrated time and again that modesty and tact, coupled with a subtle imagination, can result in art every bit as vital and significant as that produced by more flamboyant and aggressive talents.

Although generally small and unassuming, Wilde's paintings and drawings pack a surprisingly powerful punch. They may resemble little else in today's art world, but their superb draftsmanship, impish wit, jewellike color, and exquisite craftsmanship proclaim that only someone of exceptional talent and originality could have conceived and executed them.

But that's not all. Behind the shimmering facades of his silverpoint and pencil drawings and the brightly hued surfaces of his paintings lies a creative imagination of remarkable depth and subtlety. Few have probed as thoroughly into the mysteries and realities of art as he, and even fewer have had as clear a perception of their own creative goals. Wilde's understanding of and commitment to the art of drawing, especially, at least equals that of any other artist working today and has propelled him into the front rank of America's living draftsmen.

Despite his talent and originality, however—or possibly because of them—Wilde remains something of an art-world anomaly. With a style that owes a significant debt to early Flemish and Italian Renaissance sources, a precisely rendered representational approach that rejects any and all modernist strategies, and a fancifully sardonic world view that delights in depicting the universe and everything in it as slightly askew, it is not surprising that Wilde is generally perceived as outside the mainstream of today's art. But that is of little concern to him or to his numerous collectors or, for that matter, to the critics, curators, and museum directors who have written respectfully about his work and bought it for their museums. They agree that whether he belongs in the mainstream or not, he did exactly the right thing at the beginning of his career when he struck off on his own to produce work very much at odds with what was then in fashion.

For Wilde, independence paid off. While successive generations of talented young artists heeded the siren call of the many short-lived "isms" that dominated the American art scene in the postwar period, Wilde persevered and soon gained recognition—first in his native Midwest and then in New York City—for his highly personal, exquisitely crafted paintings and drawings.

By the late 1940s, when he was still in his twenties, his future as an artist seemed assured. Not only was

he beginning to show his work in major national and regional exhibitions, but he also was increasingly being mentioned as one of America's best and most original younger draftsmen. It was at this point in his career that I first met Wilde. He was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and would soon begin teaching drawing there. I was an art-school undergraduate. I had seen two or three examples of his work in local shows but had only been moderately impressed. But then, I happened upon a small pencil study of a sick child that stunned me.

I realized for the first time how powerful a drawing could be if the paper on which it was drawn was used not merely as a working surface but as the image's primary source of inner illumination and light. It was a revelation. Never before had I seen the whiteness of paper so shrewdly and sensitively utilized to bring out not only the volume and character of a human head but also something of its emotional state. I wanted to get to know Wilde better but hesitated. He was, after all, seven years my senior as well as a campus celebrity. Furthermore, despite his friendliness the few times we met, I always felt I had so little to contribute to a more serious relationship that it was pointless to pursue it.

It wasn't until a year or two later—it must have been in either 1948 or 1949—that the opportunity arose for closer and more frequent contact. I had signed up for James Watrous's acclaimed course in the history of drawing techniques. When I entered the classroom for the first time, I was startled but pleased to discover that one of the large room's far corners was filled with painting and drawing paraphernalia and that, seated in its middle and hard at work on a tiny painting, was Wilde himself. Professor Watrous had extended the hospitality of his classroom to one of his favorite former students, and Wilde had made himself completely at home. His corner immediately became a miniature, self-contained "Wildeworld." Students would be bustling about and talking within a few feet, but anyone glancing in knew that everything was serene and under control in Wilde's humble corner kingdom.

The sight of Wilde there, totally absorbed in his painting and oblivious to the noise and activity around him, has remained with me all these years, becoming my personal metaphor for his life and art as well. The reasons are obvious. No one can be friendlier or more open than Wilde, and yet no one values his privacy more than he. For all intents and purposes, his home deep in the countryside a little over twenty miles from Madison is both his fortress and his Shangri-La, which he designed and transformed from a cornfield into a modest, tree-ringed country estate with a substantial vegetable garden and spacious lawns. This retreat has served as both his home and studio since 1952. Here is where he creates his rich and complex Wildeworld, the carefully observed and meticulously executed still lifes, portraits, landscape fantasies, and allegories as well as the many other delightful and outrageous studies and paintings that constitute his oeuvre. And he does so with the same concentration, independence of spirit, and determination not to allow the outside world to interfere with his creativity that I saw demonstrated so effectively some fifty years ago in Professor Watrous's classroom.

I cannot shake that early image of him, just as I cannot shake my conviction that the Wilde I first met in the late 1940s and the Wilde I see occasionally now are—if allowances are made for the effects of aging—very much the same person. Nothing much has changed. Unlike so many of us, he knew at a very early age just who and what he was and what he wanted to do with his life. Certainly, the fact that he was, at fifteen, the youngest artist to exhibit a watercolor in a Wisconsin Painters and Sculptors show supports that assumption. But I base it more on the quiet authority he already conveyed in his twenties and on the unflappable, self-assured way he handled himself upon every occasion, whether it was in front

of an audience or in private conversation. One never doubted, while in his presence, that he had complete faith in himself, his vision, and his talent. Not that he ever proclaimed it. Quite the contrary. One sensed it precisely because he apparently took it so for granted that it never occurred to him to make an issue of it.

I bring this up because I believe it has a significant bearing on his art. Examining his life's work to date, one is struck by the fact that there is no noticeable stylistic evolution, no gradual or dramatic progression from youthful floundering to mature realization such as one encounters in the work of most artists of consequence. Indeed, the only real difference between Wilde's paintings and drawings of the 1940s and 1950s and those of the 1980s and 1990s lies in the area of refinement and technical sophistication. Thus, *Myself Indicating Two Points of Neurasthenic Pain* (1943, colorplate 3) is more tentatively drawn than *Selbst AE 62* (1982, colorplate 25), but it is obviously by the same hand. And *Walter Hamady and Myself Conjuring 1985* (1991, colorplate 34), while looser in execution and more fanciful than *A Crab Claw, Ileosenilatic* (1943, colorplate 7), is technically similar to the earlier work in every other respect.

Neither his subject nor his general approach has changed over the years. A sketchbook from the early 1940s, for instance, contains hastily drawn images that reappear decades later, unaltered except for enhanced technique and the addition of color, as full-fledged paintings. And quite a number of his more recent efforts are reworked versions of paintings dating back to the 1940s and 1950s.[1] Wilde himself makes it perfectly clear:

> Consistency is just part of my character. . . . To me there is no such thing in art as a forward progression. It's all equal, no matter when or where it was done. What I did thirty years ago is just as valuable as what I'm doing now. So why not do it again? That this is better because it's new—that's science. That's not art. Art is better because it's old—and not new. And because it's something that's happened so many times before. It's that element of the human condition that is constant, absolutely the same.[2]

Only someone confident of his talent and assured of the validity of his insight into the nature of art could make such a statement, especially one so diametrically opposed to recent art-world thinking, with its passionate commitment to the new, the experimental, and to what is glowingly referred to as the "cutting edge." But then Wilde always had his own ideas about art, as I discovered to my delight and edification many years ago during our occasional conversations in his classroom-corner studio. Most of his ideas were given an ironic twist, but every once in a while he would strike a serious note. "Art is not a circus act," is one I remember with particular clarity since it struck at the heart of the confusion I felt at the time as an art student confronted by the circuslike atmosphere of America's postwar art scene.

Wilde obviously had no illusions, even as a young man, about the transitory nature of art-world fashion or about the dangers of dogma in art. And neither, apparently, did he distrust his intuitions or his judgment. But most important, he was extremely fortunate both in where and under whom he studied art. For anyone as interested in drawing as he, the University of Wisconsin in Madison at the time he enrolled there, 1938, was close to ideal. Its art history department, largely because of the presence on its staff of Oskar Hagen, gave particular emphasis to precisely the kind of work with which Wilde felt the greatest affinity: early Flemish and German painting and drawing and the art of the early Italian Renaissance.

In this congenial atmosphere Wilde flourished, not only because he was regularly exposed in class and in the library to the inspiring accomplishments of such great—and favorite—painters and draftsmen as Fra Angelico, Pieter Brueghel, Albrecht Dürer, Mathis Grünewald, and Antonio Pisanello, but also because he was being guided toward mastery of his craft by the

example and teachings of several excellent draftsmen on the university faculty. Among these, Wilde singles out James Watrous for special praise as the teacher who first alerted him to the true nature and potential of drawing as an art form.

Mention must be made, too, of the effect Madison's cultural climate had upon the young Wilde, both during his undergraduate days and later, when, having fulfilled his World War II military obligations, he returned to the university, first as a graduate student and then as a faculty member. Small and isolated though it might have been, Madison took pride in its commitment to the arts and in the fact that distinguished artists and performers lived and worked there. These included John Steuart Curry, one of Midwest regionalism's three major figures (along with Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood) and, from 1936 until his death in 1946 the university's artist-in-residence, and the musicians of the then nationally acclaimed Pro Arte Quartet.

Madison also was the home of roughly two dozen young and exceptionally gifted practitioners of the arts, some of whom would shortly receive a measure of national recognition. Among them were several painters of fanciful and freethinking disposition who drew inspiration from a mixed bag of twentieth-century surrealist and fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Northern European masters. These talented iconoclasts constituted the core of what, at another time, would have been described as Madison's bohemian counterculture. As it was, Sylvia Fein, Marshall Glasier, Dudley Huppler, and a handful of like-minded art students were generally perceived as fascinating and entertaining characters whose paintings and drawings frequently provided the only spark of life in the area's art exhibitions.

To my undergraduate eyes, these individuals were the glamour figures of Wisconsin art, the true representatives of the creative spirit, and the ones after whom I intended to pattern my own life. It did not surprise me, therefore, to discover that Wilde was a highly regarded member of their group and that, conservatively "correct" as he might appear—with his jacket, bow tie, and neatly trimmed mustache—he was, in his heart of hearts, every bit as free-spirited as any of his "bohemian" friends.

It is this intermingling of traditionalism and iconoclasm in his character that makes Wilde so interesting a human being and so fascinating and difficult an artist to define. On the surface he is a conservative, an artist who depends both on the art of the past and on the appearances of nature for the manner in which he presents his imagery. Digging deeper, however, one soon realizes that he is an original and innovative creator, a painter/draftsman who carved out a singular niche for himself with his paintings and who pushed drawing in a direction it had never explored so thoroughly before. It will come as a surprise to some, especially those aware of the debt Wilde owes to the drawings of such old masters as Dürer, Pisanello, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, to see him described as an original and innovative draftsman. And yet that is exactly what he is.

It is easy, especially today when drawing is defined by some as "anything executed on paper," to confuse appearance with substance. To insist, for instance, that an artist who makes precisely linear, subtly shaded, high-keyed drawings with a 7H pencil on light paper is obviously an imitator of Hans Holbein or Ingres. Or that anyone who draws aggressively staccato lines with a reed pen owes his identity as a draftsman to Vincent van Gogh. Given the current propensity for shallow stylistic analysis, we should not be surprised that Wilde, whose drawings often bear a surface resemblance to those of previous eras, tends to be categorized as a traditional, even an academic, draftsman. As a result, the innovative nature of his draftsmanship remains largely overlooked.

For Wilde, this is of little consequence. After all, the pursuit of the different, the novel, and the new was never of interest to him. In fact, as we have already seen,

he emphatically denies that the last-named even exists in art. "The total mystical fabric of the 'new' in art is a lie," Wilde says.

> The truth of art was discovered when the first artist made the first work of art—it hasn't changed since, it never can and it never will. It can only be sought and re-discovered by individuals of succeeding generations, generation after generation. But it is all the same, and what appears to be change or new is only an apparition resulting from the ascendancy of the moment. . . . To rediscover the old art-truth is as inevitable as it is impossible, that is to say, it is found in spite of and because of self, or it is not found at all. It cannot be made to happen. It happens because of intense selfless work, through time, skepticism, love, awe, and single-mindedness, if at all.[3]

"It cannot be made to happen." That is the bottom line in any discussion of originality or innovation in art. And that is something Wilde understood from his earliest days as a draftsman. He also understood that drawing is not only a recording device, the simplest and quickest way to replicate the appearance of an object on paper. And neither is it merely a means to an end, the preliminary stage of what ultimately will become a more fully realized work of art. Almost from the beginning, certainly from the time Watrous first alerted him as an undergraduate to the true nature and potential of drawing, Wilde saw it as a separate and self-sufficient art form.

As indicated above, Wilde realized at an early age that paper was not merely the surface *upon* which lines were drawn but that it was also the space *within* which they exist. The whiteness of paper itself can be as active a participant in the drawing process as lines, dots, and tones. It can, in effect, function as space and light and help produce, in conjunction with line, the illusion of volume and depth.

This, of course, is no news to serious draftsmen. Holbein, Ingres, the German Nazarenes of the early nineteenth century, and Salvador Dalì, among others in this century, took brilliant advantage of it. Few, if any, however, have used it as shrewdly and effectively as Wilde, or made it as central to their creative strategy.

His commitment to this approach was already evident in such early drawings as *Design for a Defense Mechanism* (1943, colorplate 6) and *Myself Illustrating How a Square with Points A. and H. Is Always in My Vision* (1947, colorplate 12). Both could serve as textbook examples of how best to make the whiteness of paper an integral part of a drawing. Studying them, one becomes aware that Wilde's pencil functioned both as a probing and caressing device, gently "penetrating" the surface in one area to help carve out volume and form for a finger or an ear, and stroking it repetitively in another to suggest the presence of wrinkles in skin or cloth.

The latter drawing, especially, is a marvel of both precision and economy of means. What needs to be defined is defined. Everything else is merely suggested or left out. Even the line fashioning the square around the eye is essential. Without it, or without the darker pupil within it, the image's effect would be dramatically weakened.

Particularly noteworthy is Wilde's handling of the mouth and fingers as well as the barely articulated but highly important area separating them. Paper and pencil are in perfect harmony here. Each is given equal weight in a creative process of "push and pull" that brings the paper "forward" in one place to establish volume and form and anchors it in another to create the illusion of depth. Nothing is overlooked or treated lightly. Every line and tone is given exactly its appropriate emphasis in the overall scheme and significance of the drawing.

It is in works such as these, in which he first demonstrated the depth of his commitment to extracting maximum formal and expressive effectiveness from paper, that something of the innovative nature of Wilde's drawings first becomes apparent. True, other factors, such as the clarity and precision of his draftsmanship, the near-clinical objectivity of his probings into nature, and the delightful, often idiosyncratic nature of his creative vision

play at least equal roles in the nature and quality of his art. Still, if one asks what most clearly distinguishes Wilde's drawings from those of other artists, the answer must lie in the extraordinary degree to which line and paper interact intimately upon one another in his drawings.

Wilde's approach directly reflects his passion and commitment. "Drawing grasps my heart," is how he expresses it.[4] And indeed, his lifelong involvement, both with the act of drawing and with the teaching of its principles and methods, proves how central it is to his life and career. Even his painting, as we shall soon discover, is directly related to his drawing.

When asked about his passion for drawing, Wilde responds,

> I have always loved to draw. Ever since junior high school in Milwaukee, I was particularly fond of drawing imaginary cities, which I then erased and recreated. Now I concentrate more on the little things—a tiny skull, a piece of fungus or bark that my wife, Shirley, or I find in the woods or by the pond. I also enjoy depicting the vegetables and fruit we grow, the birds and animals we see or I imagine. And then, there are the figure studies, nudes, and exotic, fanciful things that have always engaged me.[5]

Not mentioned during that conversation, but apparent to anyone who knows Wilde's work, is his profound interest in the craft of drawing itself. One of the first conversations I had with him in his corner studio during the late 1940s had to do with the relative merits of silverpoint and the 9H pencil. Both leave very fine, silvery lines that are close in value to the paper itself. Silverpoint, however, which is executed with a stylus or a mounted silver wire on a gessoed surface, leaves a permanent mark that cannot be erased. Any changes, therefore, are made with sandpaper. Nevertheless, Wilde, during that particular discussion, argued the case for silverpoint, as much, I suspected, for its intractability—and its art-historical precedents—as for its subtle tonalities.

Silverpoint has served Wilde exceedingly well throughout his career. He has favored it often, especially for small, exquisitely detailed studies such as *Hats* #3 (1989, colorplate 33). But it also was his medium of choice for his largest drawing to date, *The Great Autobiographical Silverpoint Drawing* (1983–84, colorplate 26), which measures all of thirty-eight by ninety inches.

Wilde is most comfortable working within a narrow range of silvery tones, accented judiciously here and there by touches of dark gray or black for contrast or as a means of calling attention to a particular thematic or expressive detail. Here again, he is a master of his craft, managing to orchestrate his linear and tonal effects so that, from a distance, his drawings appear both satisfying in their overall design and sufficiently provocative to entice the viewer to come closer for a more detailed examination. Once the viewer is closer, the seductive magic of Wilde's carefully calculated artistry begins taking effect. Areas that appeared to be blank reveal the existence within them of delicately delineated shapes and forms. And darkish areas that, from a distance, were merely intriguingly suggestive now show themselves to be the roughly textured interior of a fungus or the shaded underside of a tiny, richly feathered bird.

This ability to intrigue, entice, and then reveal is crucial to Wilde's art. It is used with equal effectiveness in his imaginative works and in his studies from life. His range of subjects, in both areas, is enormous. Nowhere among them, however, will one find an abstraction. In Wilde's mind, a "subject there must be," no matter what its nature or importance. "There is always something that is definite and positive—essentially an object, whether it is real or imagined, having weight and occupying space."[6] And yet, he insists, "the mark, the surface, the mark on that surface, and how each mark and each surface is used must carry the day. It is not what is drawn but how."[7] In short, drawing is a transformative, not a reproductive, process.

And a subject, regardless of how beautiful or important it may be, is only a point of departure for the artist.

No one demonstrates this principle better or more convincingly than Wilde himself. Given an ordinary egg to draw, he undoubtedly would produce a beautiful drawing. Many of his finest and most satisfying images, in fact, are of subjects just as humble as that. Fortunately, however, for those who prefer more provocative or evocative themes, his oeuvre includes literally hundreds of fanciful, even downright prankish creations that are as delightfully entertaining as they are exquisitely fashioned. Each of these, whether executed in pencil, silverpoint, or, much less frequently, ink and wash, exhibits one or another facet of his multifaceted approach to drawing.

Wilde's commitment to drawing is even evident in his paintings. As he states:

> My painting method is directly related to drawing. Sometimes I will do a very complete silverpoint drawing on a panel and then I will isolate that with a lean varnish and then begin to use tone to build up from that drawing. Sometimes I'll do a very complete drawing and then I'll outline that drawing with black ink. And then I'll put on an imprimatura, and the drawing disappears and the only thing that's left is the outline. Then I'll start working from that. But it always comes from a drawing, that is, I will never work on an empty canvas with paint. In a way that's a relatively primitive method, as compared to being able to go directly to the paint and working with impasto. It's usually a series of thin glazes, related to the drawing in value, in color, and then building from the tone, building up with whites, and glazing again, and down in color, and building up again with whites, and then glazing, and back and forth until it reaches a finality which I sense intuitively.[8]

He describes the act of painting itself as "trance-like" and suggests that it is not so much an intellectual process as an intuitive one. His method, which he believes he invented, evolved from egg tempera, an early European painting technique that was superseded by oil painting in the fifteenth century and is so named because it utilizes an emulsion of eggs and water. Wilde claims that, much as he was fascinated by it, the medium proved a little dry for his taste.

> I didn't especially like the surface of it. . . . When it's new, it's like casein paint, or it's a little like acrylic, and I just don't like it. So I started introducing oil, which is not completely antithetical, because that's exactly what some of the Flemish and early Italians did. They did their underpainting in egg and their overpainting in oil, with oil glazes. I started doing that, and then slowly I started going all the way, doing the underpainting in oil and my overpainting in oil, and just left the tempera out altogether.[9]

Here again we encounter Wilde's profound concern for craft. The care with which he approaches the entire painting operation, from detailed underdrawing to highly polished finish, guarantees not only the effect he desires but also that the painting itself will remain in good physical condition for decades, even centuries, to come.

Of course when I first saw his paintings, he hadn't yet fully developed this technique. Perhaps that was why I was only moderately impressed. But then, I remember distinctly, I ambled over to his corner studio one day after class to discover a nearly completed painting that took my breath away. I am not positive, but I believe it was *A Winter Hunter* (1949, colorplate 46). At any rate, it was a darkish, moody landscape, small in size but powerful in effect.

From that time on, I studied his paintings more carefully and slowly began appreciating them as much as I already appreciated his drawings. I soon realized what a fascinating world Wilde was creating, a world in which everyday life had been shifted just enough to place it somewhere between the realm of Alice in Wonderland and reality as we know it—a place where the most impossible things could happen, but always with great style and wit and with the quiet assurance that made even the most outrageous occurrences appear perfectly normal.

It is a world in which, over the next five decades and beyond, outlandishly dressed humans would move about as freely in the air as on the ground *(Further Festivities at the Contessa Sanseverini's,* 1950–51; colorplate 53); public nudity would become fashionable *(With Friends,* 1987–88; colorplate 97); animals and birds would engage with humans for bizarre and mysterious purposes *(The Great Dog of Night,* 1984; colorplate 89); and awesome allegories would be played out within hauntingly surreal landscapes *(Muss Es Sein? Es Muss Sein! [Must It Be? It Must Be!],* 1979–81; colorplate 87). But it is a world equally committed to the commonplace, to ordinary vegetables meticulously rendered *(Still Life with Kohlrabi,* 1956; colorplate 63); straightforward studies of dead fowl *(The Great Bird Painting,* 1967–68; colorplate 79); and richly detailed flower paintings *(Still Life with Hepaticas,* 1968; colorplate 80).

Yet no matter what the subject, or the degree of wit or solemnity it conveyed, every painting received the same exacting and respectful treatment. In the world Wilde fashioned, nothing was unimportant.

Several other things became clear as I studied his paintings in greater depth. Although I saw a fair amount of sentiment in his work, I detected not a trace of sentimentality. Even the tiny furred and feathered creatures of the fields and forests he loved to paint and draw, and that could so easily have become cute and cuddly, were treated with cool detachment. Furthermore, I saw, he had a remarkable ability to assimilate any and all sources and influences. He obviously looked long and hard at the art of the past, took from it what he wanted, and made it completely his own. The result was a seamless whole, every atom of which was an expression of his sensibilities and character. It was easy to tell who and what in art history had most affected him but virtually impossible to point to even one specific piece of stylistic or thematic evidence in the work itself that revealed who or what had influenced him.

In addition, his approach to color was distinctive and often unpredictable. One could expect the majority of his still lifes and studies from nature to adhere to the greens, browns, and blues of their subjects. But his fantasies and allegories were a different matter altogether. There, the conventional rules of color were relaxed, and hues from all points of the spectrum intermingled to produce new and often exotic combinations.

But most of all, I began realizing that, to appreciate Wilde's art fully, one had to acknowledge the delightfully subversive nature of much of his work—its sly digs at convention, ritual, taboos, and all the other things in our society that tend to obscure reality and derail the search for truth. In this, he is both clear as a bell and rather impish. One can imagine him chuckling to himself as he lifts a veil or skewers a convention—or as he fashions a tiny corner of a world where everything is just a bit off-center. Yet whatever his target, his approach invariably is polite, civilized, and in good taste. He prefers to charm and convince—even, if necessary, to seduce—rather than to assault. The result is art that projects, even at its most outrageous, a charmingly benign aura of innocence. In Wilde's world, purity prevails. The Garden of Eden still exists. The serpent has not yet arrived. And if there is a "snake" lurking somewhere, it almost certainly will be in the form of Wilde himself, keeping a wary, and knowing, eye on the proceedings *(With Friends).*

One cannot overemphasize the Garden of Eden aspect of Wilde's painted world—its pristine atmosphere; clear, distant horizons; unsullied forests and fields; and extraordinary air of peace and quiet. In this world, all things large and small coexist easily. It is where attractively naked ladies and gentlemen stroll, cavort, and make love much as Adam and Eve must have done before the arrival of the serpent—and where ordinary fruits and vegetables are given equal billing by first being carefully arranged on a tabletop before becoming delectable works of art. Even his occasional forays into naughtiness have a kind of

harmless innocence about them, as though such behavior was deemed perfectly acceptable except in the eyes of the viewer. *With Friends* is a delightful exception, but only because of one participant in a field of nudes: Wilde himself, stark naked with a nude young woman on his back, is fully aware that his activities are not exactly what one might expect of a respectable citizen.

It is not uncommon for Wilde to include himself in his compositions, and then to be the only one in the painting aware of our presence. At times, as in *With Friends,* he makes direct eye contact with us, as if to say, "Ah, yes. There you are!" At other times he's merely an observer, or an artist recording the scene for posterity. In *Myself Working from the Nude in Silver* (1948, colorplate 45), Wilde, wearing a red beret and harlequin tights and momentarily distracted from his painting-in-progress, peers out at us with a mildly surprised, somewhat irritated look. And justifiably so, for our presence is an intrusion, a violation of the artist's right to privacy in his studio.

That is not the case, however, in the majority of the paintings in which he appears, and it most emphatically is not so in the series of self-portraits in silverpoint and pencil in which he records the gradual effects of aging. In many of these he seems to be addressing us directly, as though asking that we bear witness to his slowly diminishing mortality. *Selbst AE 62* (colorplate 25) is a good case in point. In it, Wilde rather melodramatically reacts to his own aging face with something akin to terror. Only the clarity of this observation and the clinical detachment of his draftsmanship (note especially the precise rendering of the nose and teeth) prevent this self-portrait from becoming a mask representing terror itself.

Death frequently plays a significant role in Wilde's art. Several of his most moving and effective images, in fact, deal with this theme. For instance, in *Muss Es Sein? Es Muss Sein!* (colorplate 87), a man and woman, seated apart in a desolate landscape filled with skulls and other skeletal remains, contemplate the inevitability of death. In no other painting is he so grim and unrelenting, so insistent that the truth of man's fate be faced. Not that he himself can ever deny or forget it. "I continually sense the tentativeness of all things—the brooding ever-presence of disaster and death—each day and every moment," he says of his feelings on the subject.[10] On the other end of the scale lie Wilde's passion for life and his deep commitment to gardening. Despite his abiding awareness of death—or, more likely, because of it—he also can state, "Under the circumstances I am appreciative of every day."[11]

As Wilde creates his work, his ideas about life and death interact contrapuntally. Or as he puts it, a bit more bluntly, "all art from sex and the awareness of death."[12] To clarify this point, he cites his impressive *Portrait of D* (1988, colorplate 98), which depicts a nude woman cradling a partially mummified creature. "I used a small desiccated animal," he explains.

> That is the death symbol, and the frontal nude is the life symbol and the sex symbol at the same time. It's that simple. There's immediate juxtaposition. It's basically the old idea of the beautiful figure with the skull—that's very traditional. The concept of death and the maiden goes all the way through art history, and I think it's a reiteration of that very same idea: even with this person, death is everpresent.[13]

Death may always be present, but Wilde, with a few major exceptions, focuses less on the life-death confrontation these days. As a theme it seems to have lost some of its grip on his imagination, to have become less interesting, even less painfully significant, than it was a decade or two ago. "All art from sex and the awareness of death" may still hold, as far as he is concerned, but his recent work treats this awareness with a lighter touch than was evident in his earlier paintings and drawings. It is not that he does not still sense the "tentativeness of all things," nor that life and death no longer interact contrapuntally in his work. It is just that he is more relaxed and casual about it all, less willing to give death top billing in his art.

Wilde, for the moment at least, has tipped the balance toward life—and a wickedly hedonistic view of life at that. His colors are brighter, his draftsmanship is looser, and the people and animals in his compositions are even more delightfully uninhibited than they were before (*A Grand Finale at the Contessa Sanseverini's,* 1996–97; colorplate 104).

Of course, there are serious moments. *Wildeworld Revisited* (1995, colorplate 103) and *Portrait of D* are powerful and solemn paintings. The former, however, is an updated version of a work from the early 1950s; and the latter, although just over a decade old, represents the attitude of a somewhat younger Wilde.

Wrestling with Death (1997–98, colorplate 37) shows Wilde at his current best. In this large silverpoint drawing, three times as wide as it is high, he once again focuses his attention on the interaction between life and death. This time, however, the conflict is evenly joined. "Death may be inevitable, but life will go on" is the message I get from this remarkable composition of ten separate pairings of female nudes and strange, exotic creatures grappling with one another on a horizontally extended, pure white field. *Wrestling with Death* sets new standards, both for silverpoint and for Wilde. Despite its size and complexity, it is not a tour de force, a showpiece designed to demonstrate the artist's abilities. Instead, it is a skillfully designed and sensitively executed series of variations on a theme, a lyrical, lighthearted takeoff on two classic art-historical themes: death and the maiden, and beauty and the beast. With this work, he deepens and extends, with apparent effortlessness, the quality and range of his draftsmanship. The drawing also is remarkable for its inventive juxtapositions of the grotesque and the attractive. And finally, because the ten couplings could just as easily represent the act of love as a duel to the death, it raises the question of what kind of relationship actually exists between sex and death.

For me, *Wrestling with Death* represents the essential John Wilde, the heart and soul of what first attracted me to his drawings five decades ago. But the work represents it on a level that neither I nor, I suspect, Wilde himself could have anticipated. What began as a revelation to a young art student, and as early evidence of exceptional talent to an only slightly older artist, has led to full creative realization in this and similar recent works of art. The path from initial to full realization has been slow and measured. His creative evolution, as we have seen, has been constant, and without any of the dramatic shifts in style or direction that have characterized the evolution of most twentieth-century artists. The only real difference between the young Wilde and his mature counterpart is that the latter is more direct and masterly in his performance.

There has been change, but only to a degree and of a special kind. In this regard, Wilde sees a significant parallel between the arts of painting and gardening: "Both areas resist sham, oddness, and are receptive of long evolution, love and devotion."[14] Referring to his own art, he observes:

> I do not say there is not change; there is change indeed from picture to picture even. But it is even less rapid than the change, hour by hour, in the cabbage plant growing in the garden; slight, absolutely organic, integral; perceptible only to the most discerning eye. But as the change in the cabbage plant is quite apparent in 10 days—the change in my work is quite apparent in 10 years. But, perhaps most important, after the 10 days the cabbage plant, though changed, is still a cabbage—as my painting after 10 years, though changed, is still *my* painting.[15]

Wilde's dismissive attitude toward progress and the new in art and his insistence that change be evolutionary rather than revolutionary have set him apart from most of his contemporaries and made him a difficult subject for art critics and writers on art. He may not like it,

but he understands the reasons for this and accepts his critical isolation. He acknowledges that he is "outside of art. I know what is 'going on' but only intuitively, for I have little contact with it. I know, in fact, that 94%, more or less, of the au Current [*sic*] is nonsense. . . . Equally, I am certain that what will happen today, if anything happens, will happen in isolation. . . . Art comes from lonely men, cooking in their own juices, but physically able and driven to state their madness."[16]

"Driven to state their madness." What an excellent way—even with its touch of hyperbole—to identify both what motivates the genuine artist and what distinguishes him from his less authentic counterpart. Wilde is right, of course, that it is a kind of madness to devote one's life to the pursuit of an idea, a vision, that one knows very well can be only partially realized and that, in all likelihood, will most often only lead to indifference or misunderstanding once its end product is presented to the world.

But Wilde means more than that, as anyone who knows his work can testify. He is referring to the condition of heightened awareness, to human consciousness itself, that informs us, usually when we are most vulnerable, of our all-too-human frailties and of the immense distances that separate our desires and intuitions from what we actually can do and truly understand. This maddening awareness, this "soul pain," demands expression and finds it, in certain individuals, through the creation of art. For this expressive force to be most effective, however, Wilde believes that the artist who embodies it must lead a conventional life. Nothing must deter or impede the creative process; otherwise, its authenticity will diminish or disappear.

This explains a great deal about Wilde: his physical isolation in the Wisconsin countryside; his unwillingness to travel, especially to the great art centers of Europe; his aloofness from the fierce competitiveness of the gallery world; and his indifference to the numerous "isms" that have risen and fallen in art since his student days. It also explains why he can write, "I try to draw the fine line—attending the school board meeting while teetering on the brink of madness—taking out the trash on Friday morning and doing the yard on Saturday, all the while on the edge of shrieking with horror and vomiting my spleen."[17]

Can this be the same John Wilde who has been described as "cold and unfeeling," "academic," "irrelevant"? Yet none of these terms applies. Perhaps "irrelevant" has some validity, but only if "relevancy" refers to what appears in today's newspapers or in the fashionable galleries—or on the walls of the most up-to-date museums. But if relevancy is perceived as anything dealing seriously with the human condition, either with solemnity or with humor, then that description of John Wilde and his work is inaccurate.

I noted earlier that, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, while Wilde remained true to his style and vision, other young artists heeded the "siren call" of the various "isms" then beginning to dominate American art. In a way, I was one of them. While my own work remained fairly consistent, my interest in what other artists of very different persuasions were doing grew dramatically. I remained a fan of Wilde's art, especially of his drawings, but by the early 1950s, my major interests had shifted to the modernists. During the next two decades, however, I gradually rediscovered his work, finding it not only fascinating but also frequently moving and significant. By the early 1980s, after having viewed his paintings and drawings whenever I could, it occurred to me that, of the hundreds of thousands of American works of art I had seen in my lifetime, Wilde's were among the relatively few I felt reasonably certain would endure.

My reasons were—and are—both rational and subjective. Heading the list was the fact that the more I saw of his work, the more I admired it. At a time when

my regard for most of my other early favorites had diminished, my respect for Wilde and his art increased. In a way that was initially difficult to explain, the work spoke for itself. And that, I realized, was the key.

Despite all the grand postwar pronouncements that a new day was dawning, a day when art would be cleansed of all extraneous subject matter and finally be permitted to exist in a purified state, no miraculous changes had occurred. If anything, by the mid-1980s, art in America was more confused, contradictory, and "impure" than ever before. Between 1945 and 1985 the United States had certainly produced a number of significant artists, but rather than representing a cohesive, clearly defined attitude or approach, they ranged dramatically across the thematic and stylistic spectrum, from the most "advanced" positions (Jackson Pollock, James Turrell) to the most "traditional" (Andrew Wyeth). Amid these confusions and contradictions, Wilde remained constant; he carried on, unconcerned, all the while expanding his vision, clarifying his objectives, and improving his skills.

It was the compact and extraordinarily self-contained nature of his work, its rich imagery, brilliant draftsmanship, seamless fusion of style and subject matter, and impeccable craftsmanship that first drew me back to Wilde's paintings and convinced me of their staying power. Why, I asked myself, would not art lovers and art professionals seventy-five or a hundred years from now respond in much the same way to Wilde's art—and for largely the same reasons? Confronted by the incredibly varied but often fragmented or only partially realized art of the mid-to-late twentieth century, might they not also react with pleasure and relief to work so imaginatively conceived and so obviously accomplished? It seemed logical to think so, especially in light of the work's undoubted quality and originality.

Of course, future viewers will have to take his idiosyncrasies as an artist into account. No one can deny that, for some, Wilde is an acquired taste. Not everyone is prepared for small, exquisitely rendered paintings of birds scooting about on women's legs, huge vegetables towering over rural landscapes, or nudes and partially attired ladies and gentlemen strolling casually in elegant gardens with exotic creatures in attendance. Or even, for that matter, straightforward, meticulously executed still lifes of ordinary fruit, flowers, and vegetables that are as botanically accurate as they are aesthetically pleasing.

Further down the scale, some may have difficulty with Wilde's reverential treatment of nature at its tiniest and most fragile, with his precise and lovingly detailed depictions of such commonplace items as leaves, bits of fungus, wasp nests, and broken eggshells. Although we respect size, we prefer to ignore what is small—and Wilde's work demands close attention to the ordinary and the minute. There are those who do not approve of the precision, the exactness of his technique, and those who believe he would be a better artist if he would loosen up a bit. Not surprisingly, Wilde does not agree: "How I despise huge canvases with pounds and layers of paint, thick as sin and nauseatingly viscous. . . . Conviction is recognized only by obvious impact, smashing thrusts and measured only in yards and tens of feet. Small, quiet studied expression is simply run over and trampled underfoot."[18] Perhaps, but not as much as before, as Wilde himself has recently begun to prove. Acceptance of "small, quiet studied expressions," even highly idiosyncratic ones, has grown considerably during the past decade or so. Many of these modest expressions are by women. Deborah Barrett and Joan Nelson, for instance, have garnered both critical acceptance and serious collectors for their small, imaginatively conceived and delicately rendered creations. Witness, too, the growing attention paid to the sensitively executed, highly personal works of Glenn Goldberg, Glen Hansen, and Robert Schwartz.

In Wilde's case, being outside the mainstream actually has been advantageous because it has freed him to concentrate exclusively on his work without being

concerned about meeting others' expectations. Keeping his own counsel has paid off in other ways as well. Fifty-five or so museums and more than a thousand private collectors own one or more of his paintings and drawings. Gallery exhibitions have become more frequent and successful, and major museums, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, are giving his work greater exposure. Best of all, a number of younger artists and art students are fascinated by his draftsmanship and by his thoughtful attention to every aspect of the painter's craft.

All of this points to a slow but definite shift in art-world attitude. It is moving from an insistence that art, in order to be significant, must follow one or another prescribed creative agenda based on theory, precedent, or a passion for the new to a perception of art as open, broadly based, and potentially representative of the entire spectrum of human experience and imagination. Seen in this light, conformity to a particular style or movement—or to a prevailing notion of cultural relevance—is much less likely to determine whether or not a given artist or work of art should be taken seriously.

It is because of this shift that John Wilde and his work have gained somewhat greater critical acceptance during the past decade. And it is because this shift appears to be deep, widespread, and gaining in momentum that I believe his remarkable, beautifully realized paintings and drawings will be given the opportunity to delight and enchant viewers many decades from now.

Notes

1 Some of these sketchbook images are reproduced in John Wilde, 44 *Wilde* 44*: Being a Selection of* 44 *Images from a Sketchbook Kept by John Wilde Mostly in* 1944 (Mount Horeb, Wis.: Perishable Press, 1984), unpaginated.

2 Quoted in *John Wilde: Eros and Thanatos,* exh. cat. (Madison, Wis.: Madison Art Center, 1993), 11.

3 John Wilde, *What His Mother's Son Hath Wrought: Twenty-four Representative Paintings with Excerpts from Notebooks Kept off and on between the Years Nineteen Forty through Nineteen Eighty-eight* (Mount Horeb, Wis.: Perishable Press, 1988), unpaginated.

4 Quoted in *Leaders in Wisconsin Art,* 1936–1981*: John Steuart Curry, Aaron Bohrod, John Wilde,* exh. cat. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1982), 44.

5 All remarks by the artist not otherwise attributed are from various conversations with the author over the years.

6 John Wilde, "Some Thoughts on My Drawings," *Drawing* 6, no. 6 (March–April 1985): 121.

7 Ibid.

8 Wilde, *Eros and Thanatos,* 8–9.

9 Ibid., 9.

10 Wilde, *What His Mother's Son Hath Wrought.*

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Wilde, *Eros and Thanatos,* 14.

14 Wilde, *What His Mother's Son Hath Wrought.*

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

Interview with John Wilde

CONDUCTED AND EDITED
BY RUSSELL PANCZENKO
SEPTEMBER 1998

Russell Panczenko You have had a long and distinguished career as an artist. Your works are in major museums all over the country. Also, you have been an influential teacher of drawing for an equally long time. How did you get into the field? What motivated you?

John Wilde I can't think of any motivation whatsoever, except that I've always loved to draw. As far back as I can remember, I was drawing. I loved to do battle scenes and all those horrible things, and I drew airplanes. I was often reprimanded by my parents for sitting in the house drawing instead of doing something more active. It was simply a very deep instinctive love of drawing. There wasn't any outward reason for it, nor any particular encouragement. As a matter of fact, it was a little bit the other way around: "Why aren't you doing something else besides drawing?" The drawings were pencil or crayon on pieces of scrap paper. I didn't consider them to be of any importance. I just drew them, and I have no idea what happened to them. Probably they were thrown out.

RP I suppose the battle scenes and the "horrible things" to which you refer were imaginary. But did you draw inspiration from real objects or real people in those very early days?

JW It was all imagination. When I entered high school, in Milwaukee, certain teachers, such as Fred Logan, later a professor at the University of Wisconsin, encouraged my drawing, and I ended up taking art classes—probably the only thing I enjoyed in school. I don't know if the teachers were particularly influential, as much as they were encouraging. And it was then that I started to develop an interest in subject. My earliest interest in this regard had been very ordinary, very plebeian: birds, animals, and a little bit of landscape. Even later, entering high school, I didn't focus on any specific subject. You see, I wasn't at all aware of art as "art." This state of mind began to change during my second or third year of high school, when I spent a lot of time with my mother's cousin, the well-known Milwaukee artist Gustave Moeller. I called him Uncle Gus. He taught at the old Milwaukee State Teachers' College, which is now the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Through him, I first became aware of drawing and painting as "art." I also started to go to museums and to think about music and literature.

Some of my high school teachers took us to the studios of Milwaukee artists. I remember one studio very clearly: It had a sign on the door that read, "Atelier! This is the studio of [Santos] Zingale and [Alfred] Sessler." When

we visited them, I saw them, real artists, at work. They were working for the WPA [Works Progress Administration] and earning perhaps ninety dollars a month. I became aware of art as a possible profession, as something serious. I suppose it had something to do with maturation. As a result, I began to work more seriously and began to exhibit. A little watercolor I still have hanging on my studio wall was in the *5th Wisconsin Salon of Art* of 1936. It is the only piece from that time I have left.

Something else quite important happened during my high school years. My brother Leslie, who was studying dentistry, was a good friend of the artist Paul Clemens. Clemens, who had a tremendous facility for portrait painting, had been working professionally in Milwaukee during the Depression. I began to frequent his studio and became almost what you could call an apprentice. I would go there most Saturday mornings, sweep the floor, help him gesso panels, and mix paints. Although I didn't really do much painting at the time, he'd sometimes let me paint my own things there. Also, I attended a life-drawing class that Clemens taught one evening a week in one of the public schools. We drew from live models, which of course we didn't have in high school art classes. We had to put a dime into a little bottle; that's how much it cost to attend Clemens's class—ten cents—for instruction and a model for three hours. It was a pretty good deal. I fell more and more in love with drawing and became very conscious that I possessed considerable facility for it. It came easily. . . well, not easily, but readily. This realization had a big influence on me, and when I finished high school, it was clear where my interests lay. And even though my parents were not totally approving, they allowed me to go to the university to study art.

RP At that time, the University of Wisconsin was not a center for the study of art. Since you were leaving home anyway—and given your evident talent—why did you decide to attend the university in Madison rather than any of the art schools in New York, Philadelphia, or Chicago?

JW Probably because of parental pressure. While my parents wanted me to go to a university, they discouraged me from going to schools other than the University of Wisconsin. I had a couple of scholarships, one to the Kansas City Art Institute and another to a school in Chicago. (I can't remember its name.) I didn't really want to go to Kansas City. I wanted to go to Chicago, where I had begun to make friends with several artists. One of these, Karl Priebe, who lived in the same Milwaukee neighborhood as I did in the late 1930s and early 1940s, was a fairly well-known painter. He had studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, as had Paul Clemens and his wife, Ruth. They were the main reason for my interest in the Art Institute, but I didn't get a scholarship to go there. Besides, my parents really wanted me to go to the University of Wisconsin. This combined with the fact that I had attended Washington High School, a pretty strict academic school whose graduates traditionally went on to Madison. All of these factors combined explain why I ended up at the UW. Originally, I didn't like the idea very much, but it proved to be okay. The greatest part of it was the freedom, which I enjoyed immediately and immensely.

RP When you came to the university in 1938, did you enroll immediately as an art major?

JW Yes, because I didn't know where else to go. I didn't know anything about the art school at the UW, and, in fact, there wasn't much there at the time. But I did find the general intellectual atmosphere of the university most stimulating, especially the courses in history. I'd never had instruction like that before. Professors actually talked to students in a meaningful way, as if they were adults. The professors knew their subject matter and knew how to teach it. I had been a mediocre student in high school—barely made it. When I got to the university, I blossomed.

I loved the humanities in general, taking a lot of philosophy, art history, and literature courses. I did very well. I even did well in general courses in the biological and social sciences.

One course that interested me was a basic drawing course, including figure drawing, which was being taught by James Watrous. He was working as an instructor in the art department while pursuing his doctorate in art history. Jim responded very favorably to my work and gave me a great deal of encouragement. He sensed a quality in my drawing and somehow indicated to me that my abilities in this area were special. We hit it off. His encouragement was especially important because I respected him as a teacher.

RP Jim Watrous developed a course on the drawing techniques of the Old Masters that has become proverbial among alumni, especially those of the art and art history departments. Is this the course to which you are referring?

JW No, his course on the drawing techniques was later, when he was teaching art history. I took that proseminar several times. Each time was an equally wonderful experience because I was working with him and because of the content. I was very interested in the technical aspects of drawing. In addition, we had the opportunity to look at good reproductions of hundreds and hundreds of master drawings. We even tried out some of the old techniques. We prepared papers, made inks, and drew with silverpoint, gold point, lead point, and a few other such things. Later, he offered courses in the techniques of the Old Masters in painting that I also attended.

While at the university, my interest in the arts broadened very rapidly. I had the good fortune of meeting people in Madison whom I found sympathetic to my art. One such individual was Marshall Glasier. At that time, he was a well-known Madison artist, a free spirit, a brilliant guy with a lot of wonderful associates. He had studied drawing with George Grosz, who referred to him as one of his most talented pupils. Glasier later replaced Grosz on the faculty of the Art Students League. Many of the people with whom I was taking courses also knew Marshall, and an informal salon developed in his parents' home, where he was living and where he had a studio in the attic. In the late 1930s, he was showing widely in New York and Chicago—just a brilliant body of work. He probably had more influence on my artistic development at this point than anyone in the art department except for Jim Watrous.

An academician in the art department named Roland Stebbins, who had studied at the Royal Academy in Munich, taught human anatomy and could lecture for an hour or two about the structure of the human body and draw it at the same time. His drawings weren't great, but his facility was very impressive and he knew anatomy cold. You had to keep a notebook, a very strict anatomical notebook, which I really didn't like to do. Maybe it was because I found this study somewhat academic that I only got a "C" and never really learned the names of anything. But I did learn anatomy.

This was also the time when John Steuart Curry was active in Madison. However, I only had casual contact with him, and he had very little, if any, influence on what I was doing.

My friendship with Karl Priebe intensified in those years, and, through him, I met various Chicago artists. As I said earlier, he had studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and therefore knew people there both in the visual arts and in the world of jazz, which was one of his great interests. Among the painters I got to know through him were Gertrude Abercrombie, John Pratt, Julia Thecla, Charles Sebree, Felix Ruvolo, and Julio de Diego, as well as some other casual acquaintances. We began a regular liaison: A contingent of Madison artists would go to

Chicago, where we would meet a Milwaukee contingent. Then we'd all party at various places and stay at various places. In a sense, this art life became more important than the university, and it inspired me to paint and draw even more seriously and to exhibit.

RP Looking at your list of exhibitions, I noticed that already as an undergraduate, your works were being shown in some rather prestigious institutions. For example, when you were only a sophomore at the UW, one of your works was in an international exhibition of watercolors at the Art Institute of Chicago, and the following year, one of your paintings was included in an American exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. This is significant recognition for someone so young.

JW In those days, it was much simpler. We had the gall to send our paintings to national exhibitions, such as the one at the Pennsylvania Academy, and occasionally they were accepted by the jury. The art magazines listed upcoming exhibitions or we heard about them, maybe through Glasier, other artists, or through people in Chicago. You'd get an entry blank and then send the painting, the real painting, which would be looked at and judged by real artists. In that sense, you had direct exposure. Jurors at that time were always artists, not curatorial people. Obviously, our work didn't always get in, but we'd send it anyway. It didn't cost very much, and it made us feel awfully good and awfully important. We were competing in the art world.

Besides encouragement, participation in these exhibitions increased our acquaintance with American and European contemporary art. We also learned about the art world through Glasier, who was intellectually alive and had access to a lot of publications. His father was the Wisconsin legislature's law librarian, which is neither here nor there, except that he had access to books. Whether Gilson Glasier actually bought books for his son through the state or simply got a discount—I suspect that was it—Marshall had a wonderful library that included a number of contemporary art magazines.

RP Were the courses you were taking enlightening about developments in contemporary art?

JW At that time, the art department was only producing art teachers. Everyone was required to take education courses. Some of us young Turks, who had a lively interest in art, began to revolt against that sort of program. Joe Bradley—a fellow student who later switched to art history—and I lobbied hard for the creation of a professional degree in art that did not require education courses. We were instrumental in getting it approved by the faculty. Of course, there were also members of the faculty who were interested in such a program; otherwise, it never would have happened. The new degree came to be called Applied Art. In this manner, we avoided taking any education courses and still graduated with a degree in art. In any case, the school eventually became a modern art department, with art education a minor aspect of it.

I was really working hard up to and immediately after graduation in June 1942, producing paintings in a sort of creative furor. But all that ended with the war. I was drafted in September. My Army service, which lasted until 1946, was uneventful: I never left the country. I was engaged in various areas, including, for a while, camouflage. Eventually, I was transferred to a unit called the Office of Strategic Services, or OSS, which was sort of a forerunner of the CIA. There, I worked with a unit that was stationed on the third or fourth floor of Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. We did a variety of things, from propaganda drawings to maps and detailed terrain models for Army intelligence. It was okay. It relieved the tedium. Also, the fact that other artists were there, many of them commercial artists, was good.

RP Even though you were not sent overseas, did the war have any influence on your art?

JW Yes, but mostly subjectively. I couldn't understand the madness of war. There's no reason for anybody to fight anyone else. How war can be sanctioned by government and approved by the public is just beyond my grasp. I kept a journal/sketchbook throughout my time in the service. I was conscious that the war was keeping me from my art. I expressed my disgust with the insanity of war and my frustrations in drawings. I sent these back to friends in Madison and asked them to hold them until my return. It's an important body of work for me [colorplates 3–9]. In these drawings, my reaction to the war manifests itself as physical corruption or putrefaction. I also wrote a lot at the time. Often I wrote on the drawings, sometimes in my notebooks, and letters, lots and lots of letters. I wish I still had some of them. A few have ended up in the Archives of American Art, but most of them were probably destroyed.

RP Why did you return to the UW after your military service?

JW While in the service, I had a dream of establishing a studio in a small Wisconsin town along the Mississippi River called Lynxville. I never did. Instead, I came back to Madison, where I had friends and associates. There were professors in Madison whom I had gotten to know very well, such as Fred Burkhardt, a professor of philosophy who had been in the OSS with me. And then, of course, there were artists, such as Glasier, Dudley Huppler, and Karl Priebe, with whom I had become friendly before the war, as well as the people in Chicago. In other words, my life was there; it was simply going home.

I thought I could pick up where I had left off, and to a certain extent I did. But to a larger extent, I didn't. I really didn't think of myself anymore as a student, even though I went back to school. Also, I did not enroll in the art department. Instead I became an art history major and Jack Kienitz's teaching assistant. I studied art history for a full year until I began to realize that I could not make it because of the academic demands. Not so much the art history courses, which I loved, but the other things associated with graduate work—the thesis, the language requirements, and that sort of thing. Although it was never approved, I did complete a master's thesis on Max Ernst. Also, I found that studying art history was eroding my time in the studio. I now thought of myself as a professional artist and very much wanted to be one. So I switched back to art and completed my master's degree there. This was somewhat automatic because I had already fulfilled all the requirements and had more than enough work for the obligatory master's exhibition.

RP Your association with the UW did not end there, of course. You taught in the art department until your retirement in 1982. Did you enjoy the experience?

JW When I finished my master's degree, I received eleven invitations to interview for teaching positions, including one from the art department at the UW. Art teachers were in great demand. But I decided that my world was in Madison. Besides, teaching seemed the natural thing to do. I did have a family, and artists simply could not earn a living by their art in those days. I even found teaching rewarding, particularly drawing, which was my first love, my major love, and I never taught anything else. Teaching takes time away from studio work. But at that age, you have tremendous energy and can work long hours tirelessly.

I also think I had a good deal to say about drawing. I was into teaching. I set very high standards and stuck to them. If people didn't know what I was talking about, it was their problem, not mine. The greatest rewards, of course, were with good, advanced students with whom I could work intimately and personally, in a one-on-one situation. My classes would often attract non-art students who were very interested in drawing, its theory and its basic

structure. Even though they weren't going to be artists, their intellectual excitement and enthusiasm about drawing were very gratifying.

RP Did your experiences as a teacher influence your work as an artist?

JW I don't think so, because I always have been able to separate myself as an artist from myself as a teacher. I did this consciously, and I think I succeeded. I even dressed differently when I was in my studio. There, I looked like an artist. But when in the classroom I dressed like a professor, that is, the way they used to dress, not as they do now.

I don't think teaching influenced my drawing in any way. More likely, my work as an artist, as a draftsman, shaped my teaching. Teaching convinced me that the principles of art are distinct from art itself. I soon learned that I could only teach the structure of drawing but not the art of drawing. It's like poetry: You can teach something about the elemental structure of what makes a poem, but you cannot teach poetry. In drawing, the marks are the things that, put together in a certain way, become critical and may eventually end up as a work of art. I suppose that way down deep I believe that art is unteachable. It can't be taught in the way you can teach language or mathematics. There isn't anything concrete defining art, which makes it all even more confusing but, at the same time, engrossing.

I was the head of the art department's drawing program when there were about twenty assistants teaching basic drawing. I developed a syllabus based on the mechanical principles of drawing that I had distilled from my academic training, my study of art history, and my own work. It caused a furor among certain members of the faculty who didn't believe in any kind of structure in teaching drawing. Also, many of the graduate students objected to the syllabus because they claimed that it dictated what was to be taught. But I always put a qualifier on the printed syllabus: "Use only insofar as it is meaningful to you." The proof of its value is that many of these same students, as they themselves later went on to teach, wrote or called me to ask if I still had the syllabus and if I could send them copies.

RP During your early years as an artist, there was much debate in artistic circles about the relative merits of abstraction and realism. Was there much discussion within your own circle of colleagues about these issues?

JW I'm sure we talked about it a great deal. But in the late 1930s and early 1940s abstraction was only beginning to affect American painting. We were intimate with the work of the regionalists. Of the artists dealing with abstraction, we were only familiar with the work of the more influential ones, such as Adolph Gottlieb and Ben Shahn. And, of course, for us realism was exemplified by the work of such artists as Aaron Bohrod. But I don't think many people in the area thought about abstraction as being in opposition to realism. We didn't engage in debate about abstraction because it just wasn't our thing. The people in our group were all more or less on the same route: a sort of a quasi-fantasy, certainly not realism, perhaps a bit of surrealism. That's what most interested us. In fact, abstraction and surrealism were thought to be the same or equal, as they were by the organizers of the exhibition *Surrealist and Abstract Art in America,* held at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1947.

RP To the extent that one defines surrealism as the fantastic or unconscious made real, your work certainly relates to the theme of the Chicago exhibition. But in addition to being fanciful, even at times bizarre, so many of your subjects are so personal. How does your imagination relate to your personal experiences?

JW Sometimes they are related, not in any direct sense, but insofar as some event or some individual will inspire a certain kind of imagery. Somebody might evoke for me an image of a bird. Another person might evoke a teapot.

I might see some quality in a person that seems to stand for this, that, or some other thing, even though there isn't any real relationship between what is evoked and the person who evoked it. It's purely a personal response on my part; it comes out of my subconscious. Much of this concept is pretty well spelled out in some of the surrealist manifestos.

RP Many of the works depict people with whom you are very close. But you never make their identities or relationship to you explicit. Even the titles are tantalizing but ultimately unrevealing. Is that deliberate?

JW Yes, in a sense it is. You are right that most of my subjects are very personal. But I am, first and foremost, a subject painter. I don't care how crazy the story is—there has to be a story. In the end, however, the story is of lesser importance. What should really matter is how the painting is put together, the way the colors are used, the way the marks are put down, and that sort of thing. It seems that most contemporary critics find it impossible to surmount subject and go directly to paint. They do this only when there is no subject. Even though everything I do has to have subject, that is, some kind of activity set on a stage. For me subject, ultimately, is not the critical factor in my work; it is a secondary concern. I also don't worry about universal meanings in my subject matter. That would be, to use a derogatory term, illustration.

RP You frequently appear as the subject in your work. Why is self-portraiture so important to you?

JW Well, there are probably a lot of reasons. First, subject matter. In other words, I, the artist, am there. On occasion, I have used a mirror to get a likeness of myself, but very often my self-portraits are not meant as physical likenesses. My main concern is simply myself: I am the actor on the stage being depicted. Most of my painting is scene painting. I paint a proscenium arch and depict activities happening on that stage. And, very often, I am one of the actors in whatever the event happens to be. To me, there is very little difference between being in the painting and the act of painting—it is the same thing. It's almost impossible for me to separate myself from the things I am doing and, therefore, very often, I include myself. Even if I do not actually appear in the painting or drawing, I am included nonetheless, simply because of the things that end up on the canvas or panel. The core idea is that all of this is happening because of me, and it's impossible to separate me from the things that are happening. The things that are happening, of course, are what end up on the surface of the panel.

RP People who know you, when looking at your self-portraits, whether facial close-ups or a figure in a complex composition, frequently comment that although there is a resemblance, the character portrayed seems so different from the person they know. Most people tend to think of you as a gentle, private person, yet what they see is a kind of boldness showing through. There is always a deliberate, knowing sparkle or gleam in the eye that one never suspected.

JW I've heard that before. God knows what it is, but part of it might be that I remain as affable and gentle as I am because of the analysis that I am putting myself through in my work. It's true that I resolve a great many of my personal issues through my painting rather than in any external way. There certainly is psychological self-analysis in my work. One of the surrealists—I can't think which one—said that surrealism was the art of mind rather than the art of eye. It's the art of finding out why you work in the way you do and then working out your difficulties through your art. Basically, I am not as happy-go-lucky as I appear.

RP You often paint still lifes, and still-life elements appear prominently in much of your other work. Some

of these seem to be fairly straightforward, from a realistic standpoint. However, others have a fanciful, even surreal appearance, for example a bowl of fruit suffused with a magical light or a tiny human figure juxtaposed with a vegetable or bird many times its size. Where do these still-life images figure in the range of your subjects?

JW I am never happy if a still life is just a still life. It has to be more than that. It has to have a certain quality that is a little bit spooky, a little bit strange, or something else to me. Of course, once again, that quality I seek is inexplicable. But I sense if it's there or not. And, if it isn't there, then the painting is simple documentation or illustration.

As for the different-scaled figures to which you refer, that is simply an extension of the idea that none of what is depicted is really true. What happens in a work of art is a disruption of the logic of it all. Sometimes strange relationships between figures occur as I start working on something. I respond to these with: "That's okay. That's all right. That interests me." And then I pursue it. The fact that it happened piques my interest and excitement. It gives me the energy to pursue that painting or drawing and the hope that the painting or drawing will work. Because giant kumquats and a tiny naked lady sitting alongside them contradict the rules of visual perspective is a good enough reason for doing it.

RP Sometimes, the colors in your still lifes are particularly unreal. I am thinking, for example, of *Blue Lemons.*

JW I don't ignore the actual color of the object, but sometimes it becomes unimportant. Sometimes, as in *Blue Lemons,* I deliberately change the color. It's an exercise—it's a putting on of something to show that the parochial character of the object is only part of its essence. In other words, the specific color of an object is only a minor part of what it is. Approximately ten years ago, I painted about a dozen still lifes in which I reversed the colors. I found about ten objects with which I could do that—where there was enough contrast between the actual color of the object and turning it around. *Blue Lemons* was part of that series. I wanted to indicate that this sort of specificity is only one part of the essence of the object depicted. The objects I paint are very important to me. That is, they are not important literally. Their *essence* is important to me. Somewhere I wrote that the reason I spent so many hours working on an object, a single passage in a painting, was due to the marvelousness of that object. Somehow, I worshiped this object in the process of painting it. This of course is only true when what is depicted in a painting has been inspired by some exterior reality, which, in my case, mostly applies to the still lifes.

RP So for you an object isn't just its appearance. Rather, it's a combination of what it is, what it looks like, and how you feel about it?

JW How I feel about it? Yes, in a certain sense. But that's not enough. You have to glorify the object. You have to feel very intensely about it. Otherwise, you could just say how you feel about it: "I feel about it like it's an orange." In my titles, I've used "the divine objects of nature." I don't mean this in the traditional religious sense at all. It's simply that these objects are so wonderful, out of this world, even though they are in the world.

RP Then you don't draw or paint just any object. Rather, you select objects to draw or paint because of their special significance to you?

JW Exactly. I have done a number of paintings that I call *Mostly Good Things,* in which I included numerous objects. These and certain vegetables—I like to garden—are special to me. I just love these things. I have a special feeling about them. As far as objects go, they are marvelous. These are the things I usually paint, but not simply to record them.

RP Does literature play a role in your work?

JW Yes, but again, *how* is mysterious to me. I am an avid reader, mostly of fiction. I like certain writers who are compatible with the way I think. During my military service I always carried two books with me: Céline's *Journey to the End of Night* and Hăsek's *The Good Soldier Schweik*. Sometimes these writers could express in words what I was thinking better than I could. I can only express my thoughts in my painting and drawing; I can't express them in words. I find the writers' expression of them stimulating, and sometimes I take off from it. The best examples are the Sanseverini paintings, which all came out of Stendhal, whom I started reading even before the war. I fell in love with his novels, which I read in translation, of course. I was especially intrigued by *The Charterhouse of Parma*. Stendhal's story needed to be elaborated in the way I depicted it in those paintings.

RP Knowing about this connection, I read *The Charterhouse of Parma*. I must confess that I do not understand how the book relates to the paintings. None of the scenes depicted in the Sanseverini paintings relates to anything specific in the book. In fact, what is quite jarring is that Stendhal's prose is rather understated, in that aristocratic nineteenth-century fashion: Everything violent or distasteful happens offstage. In the paintings, on the other hand, everything happens onstage. Did you try to fill in between the lines, so to speak, using your imagination?

JW No, I don't try to fill in the blanks. I just take off from the novel. Stendhal tells the whole story. He doesn't leave any blanks. But he stimulated my imagination and accelerated it to the point that it went off in its own direction. I think that comes closest to describing how the book influenced me.

RP Another thing that intrigues me about your Sanseverini paintings is how your interest in Stendhal and your interest in the art of the Renaissance seemed to come together. As you have just said, the inspiration, or the spirit, of these paintings arises from your fascination with *The Charterhouse of Parma*. Its visual articulation, on the other hand, evokes fifteenth-century Italian panel paintings. I am thinking about cassone panels and, more specifically, Botticelli's rendition of the story of *Nastagio degli Onesti* for some of the forest scenes with banquets and wolves chasing nude women.

JW Yes, that's probably a fair observation. But the influence of the Botticelli series is limited to the way the paintings were done, how their contents were arranged. If Renoir had ever done that same subject, it would have had no interest for me at all.

RP Let's speak a little about your interest in the art of the early Italian and German Renaissance. Did it inspire any of your subject matter?

JW Yes, but only insofar as the selection of subject carries concepts of design, of composition—what antique terms!—of ways of putting things together; not subject per se. Keep in mind that the most frequently depicted subjects of this period were Christian. I have no interest in Christian themes as subject. I also have little interest in the pagan iconography. Oskar Hagen, who taught in the art history department when I was a student at the University of Wisconsin, used to get very upset with me because of my indifference to this topic. But, on the other hand, I loved the paintings of the Renaissance, the way it all went together, all those crazy people—naked ladies running around being chased by wolves, as in Botticelli's *Nastagio degli Onesti,* which you mentioned. But I knew little about their iconographic meaning. I loved their composition. For me they were abstract paintings even though they were full of subject.

RP Who were some of the German and Italian Renaissance artists whose work interested you most?

JW I guess I can still name a few. I remember the pictures very well, but have a harder time remembering the names. Pisanello. I remember the silverpoint drawings most clearly, of course, especially those with renditions of animals and floral things. Simone Martini, Fra Angelico. I liked the primitives better than the more sophisticated artists, particularly those working on a smaller scale. Among the Germans, the obvious ones are Cranach, Dürer, and Hans Baldung Grien. And then, among Flemish and Netherlandish artists I should name van Eyck, Memling, Hugo van der Goes, Bosch, and the Brueghels. Also Joachim Patenier. As I said, the images come back much more clearly than the artists' names. I don't use the names much anymore.

RP What qualities in the work of these artists did you most value?

JW Intimacy. The works that interested me most were those in which there was a great deal of detail that had to be examined closely, detail that was sharp and focused. I am not interested in paintings that you can take in at a glance or appreciate from a distance. Also, I was very often entranced by color and technique. What I am calling technique is only partly the process that was used to make the painting. More often, it is the result of aging that gives a certain luster to the surface. I like old painting surfaces very much. Sometimes, in my earlier work, I tried to emulate that kind of surface quality.

Frequently in older paintings, the colors, as they age, become transparent. You actually look through layers of paint, not in the obvious way that you do in some contemporary paintings, but by a natural process of unveiling different layers of surfaces of the paint. I like to examine these old paintings very closely. Of course, I often found the subject interesting, but only on a certain level. The subject is not as important to me as the quality of the surface. I also liked the complexity of their compositions, especially those that contained numerous figures and/or objects.

RP When you tried to emulate the surfaces of these historical paintings, did you study the old techniques, or did it not ultimately matter whether or not your own painting technique was historically authentic?

JW As I mentioned earlier, I learned about the old techniques of painting and drawing at the university, from Jim Watrous. I know some of those processes: the way paint was applied in layers, about mixing egg with oil, and that sort of thing. But it is mostly the visual effects that I'm after. I do not try to duplicate historical techniques. In reality, however, the old processes were essentially the same as those I employ today, such as using glazes, overpainting, underpainting, et cetera.

Every step in painting is simply a step. One thing of which you become aware (and I think this is something that motivates certain contemporary artists) is that, as you mix paint on a palette or other surface, or even as you clean your palette, you see marvelous momentary effects in the paint that are absolutely fascinating. These, however, are immediately obliterated by the next step in the process. You always find these things until you arrive at the final surface, and that is a matter of the kind of surface that you want. Surface has to be gotten at laboriously, rather than with any kind of immediacy, which of course is antithetical to a great deal of contemporary thinking about painting.

RP You prepare your panels yourself, similarly to the way it was done by the Old Masters, don't you?

JW I don't buy prepared panels. I don't actually try to copy old techniques. On the other hand, the old techniques have not really changed very much. I do enjoy sawing a wood panel by hand. I like the fact that sometimes it comes out not quite square. Panels produced by mechanical means are always perfectly square; mine aren't. They wobble, just a little—not purposely but just because the human being is imperfect. Then comes the

process of glue sizing, applying the gesso, and sanding the gesso. Very often, while I'm sanding, the image begins to take shape in my mind. It starts to evolve beyond the original concept toward some sort of graphic existence related to the piece of material that I am working with. After all, the panel is part of the painting.

RP Do you prefer drawings or paintings by the Old Masters?

JW You inevitably see many more paintings than you do drawings. Drawings always take a little more effort to find. You have to get into the closet, because they rarely hang them in galleries. Mostly, they can only be found in special exhibitions. However, if they are available, I would rather look at drawings than at paintings.

RP Do you feel the same passion for painting that you do for drawing? I've heard you say over and over how much you love drawing, but I have never heard you speak the same way about painting.

JW That's true, especially if you use the word *passion*. For me, painting is intriguing and a wonderful process. But I don't feel passion. Drawing, on the other hand, is so natural, and I get so involved in it, that I really don't think of it as an effort at all. There is, of course, technique, but it's not consciously applied. Painting is much more deliberate: I think much more about the process, the way one layer goes on another layer and how this color mixes with that color, et cetera. With drawing, those things are really inconsequential and unimportant. It's the same when looking at drawings and paintings. When I look at drawings I really like, I fall completely in love with them. I look at paintings on a more intellectual level. It's a little like appreciating a novel, where I consciously examine its structure and everything that's gone into its making. But drawing totally absorbs me. It is much more liberated, much less conscious, and much more automatic.

RP What qualities do you value most in drawing, old or new?

JW Obviously, the qualities I look for are not just description, not just accuracy, not just perception, not just sureness of hand. Somehow, it is all these things and more. A drawing must have its own life to be of the highest quality. Some drawings that I do come to life. Other times this doesn't happen. When it doesn't happen, you can't make it happen. I don't really know what the reason is, but somehow when it doesn't happen, something is missing from the drawing; it is not alive. It's almost impossible to describe because even though it is accuracy, it is not accuracy. Even though it is sureness of hand, it is not sureness of hand. A very beautiful drawing can only have sureness of hand that is absolutely individual, like Paul Klee's. His sureness of hand is so individual that it becomes unique in itself. I guess it has something to do with comprehension and understanding. In other words, when somebody does a very good drawing, they know with absolute assurance and absolute certainty exactly what they are drawing. They comprehend the subject, whatever it may be, whether it is an object, a person, or another image. They have a totality of knowledge about that thing that allows that kind of description, that kind of drawing to take place. *Description* is not a good word here because that's only a small part of it, but description does allow the image to come into existence—it eventually allows the totality of comprehension or a manifestation of perceptions.

Before the camera became popular, many English and German travelers kept sketchbooks to record what they saw. Drawing an object or a landscape involves so much more than taking a photograph of it, as we do today. In order to draw an object, place, et cetera, you really have to look at it, to analyze it. The object really has to be perceived before any kind of resemblance can be put down

on paper. I think that's what takes place in drawing—that kind of totality of comprehension.

RP Occasionally, you draw with pencil, but mostly you use silverpoint. Is there a reason for your preference?

JW I use silverpoint for underdrawing purely for technical reasons. If you use imprimatura to tone your surface, or if, for example, you're working on a gessoed panel, pencil marks dissolve; you lose them. The silverpoint will only dissolve a little; most of it will remain. When I have a fairly complete drawing in silver, I put on what I call an isolation varnish, a Damar, with a certain amount of turpentine, because I don't want too hard a surface. If I brush that onto a pencil drawing, most of the pencil marks will disappear. If you apply it on silver, you lighten the drawing a little so it's not quite as hard, and it becomes more receptive to paint. It also takes on some of that illusionism that paint allows. A magical process takes place at that moment you apply the varnish. And another thing: I like silverpoint.

Right now I am doing a series of pen-and-ink drawings just to change from one method to another, although nearly always I select a point. I rarely draw with a broad piece of chalk or big piece of charcoal or anything like that. I love the point. I like to get right to that place where I want to get. So, it's usually a pointed tool—pen, pencil, silverpoint. I've done a few chalk drawings as exercises, but that's pretty much it.

RP Before actually drawing, do you do any kind of mental preparation? Do you think an idea through before picking up the silverpoint or pen, or do you let it flow as you work on the paper?

JW I start with an idea, but I don't think it through. I don't expect the drawing to evolve in any particular way. You might imagine that a drawing starts somewhere on the top and just works its way down the surface of the paper. But it's not like that at all. A drawing completes itself all at once, all in total. It is a matter of touching or marking the surface of the paper, first with a few little marks all over the place. These then suggest other touches or marks, which in turn suggest yet other touches or marks. It's evolutionary: The marks, which are all referential one to another, accumulate on the surface until, eventually, it becomes all mark. In this way, the idea is made concrete. It is also interesting that, as this process approaches the end, the next mark is almost inevitable. It has to happen because of everything that happened before. If the next mark isn't inevitable, then everything that preceded hasn't yet begun to make sense.

RP Many of your drawings are complex. How does your definition of drawing as an accumulation of marks harmonize with compositions including numerous figures and/or objects? For example, do you think of the individual figures and/or objects as marks in their own right, or does each figure come into being within the overall drawing through the general accumulation of marks as the whole drawing evolves?

JW The latter. The individual figure, or whatever the represented thing happens to be, has to result from an accumulation of marks; they all have to come together to make the thing that is represented concrete. The marks are always paramount, even though the image or images that ultimately appear were already in my mind even before I started. I don't know which one wins: the image or the mark. They coexist. They are inseparable, absolutely together. Sometimes, when I am drawing, I imagine I do this, then the image does that, then I do something else and the image responds with something else, and, eventually, it all gets to be something.

RP In academic traditions, artists generally looked to their notebooks and preliminary studies for figures, poses, gestures, objects, et cetera, which they then assembled into a

new, complex narrative composition. Your drawings are so finished that I wonder if you work that way, too.

JW All my drawings are finished drawings, even though I call some of them studies. However, references to earlier figures or objects do take place as I draw on a new panel. I make little references as I draw. If it fits, I make another little reference. Sometimes, the various things you draw come together, and sometimes they don't. But then they are erasable. I used to tell my students that an eraser is a great drawing tool that should be used whenever necessary. It's a little more difficult with silverpoint because it's not as erasable. But that, too, is a come-and-go process. In a sense, this process is like working with preliminary studies except that it's more immediate. Every new thing that appears in a drawing is a revelation to me. Then, I go on from there. Clearly, my drawing is not like that of the Old Masters, who produced very elaborate preparatory studies before the finished work for drawings as well as paintings.

RP One thing that has always aroused my curiosity is that, in spite of your passion for drawing, so many of yours ultimately disappear under a coat of paint.

JW The drawing is the critical part of the painting. A painting can only come into existence because of the structure of the drawing that exists underneath it. Without it, the painting would just be a non sequitur. So I don't mind that the drawings disappear. Although, particularly when I do fairly complete preparatory drawings, perhaps it would be okay if somebody would stop my hand and take it away.

RP In many of your early drawings, particularly those done during and after World War II, writing appears—not just a line or two but long columns extending the entire length of the paper. Is this integral to the drawing, or is it something independent?

JW I didn't originally think of the writing as a physical part of the drawing. It was always done after the drawing. But it flowed naturally and rationally from the drawing and, ultimately, almost became a necessary part of it. In other words, the text became a sort of *meisterstreik;* the drawing wouldn't have been finished without it. I really don't do that anymore, certainly not as much as I used to. It was another vehicle for relieving psychological tension.

RP What did you write about?

JW I very often started out from the visible subject in the drawing, a figure, a sword, or whatever happened to be there. I would begin to refer to that image, very often using made-up or pseudoclassical names for the different characters. The names were made up, but the people, the figures I had drawn were made up, too. They were all figments of my imagination. Then, on occasion, I would describe the activity in which they were engaged or what was taking place. Very often, however, the writing was not descriptive. It started out as descriptive, but then went way beyond into something quite different. Sometimes it was a stream of consciousness. Sometimes it almost became gibberish. In other words, the writing lost the pointed connotations from which it began and went on into a realm of its own, which is very similar to what happens in drawing. With any drawing, I believe, you start out with a concept, and then one thing leads to another until, frequently, all rational relationships between one thing and another are lost. But each new development was an inevitable outcome of what had come previously.

RP Do these characters whom you created out of your imagination represent different aspects of yourself? Are you trying to weave them together with the text, trying to reveal, in a sense, what is under the skin of the drawing?

JW To a degree. But very often, there is no rational relationship between the drawing and the writing. The writing starts out with references to the images depicted and then, as it evolves, goes way beyond them, creating still other worlds. And as a matter of fact, when I was doing a

great deal of writing on the drawing, the visual imagery for a drawing would sometimes develop from the writing that I had done on the preceding one. The writing would evoke new imagery that was meaningful to me, and I would start a new drawing from that, repeating the entire process all over again. So in a way, all of these drawings are one thing.

In quite a bit of contemporary art you see words or text. But very often, I think, these are primarily part of the design. Inevitably, the writing I did on my early drawings became part of the design because there was no way of separating one from the other. But the writing becoming part of the design was irrelevant at the moment I was drawing the images. It was as if I couldn't say everything I wanted to say with the drawing, and I had to add a little bit more to embellish, or to clarify, or to bring around to full meaning the thing I was trying to grapple with in the drawing itself. It seemed to be a necessary conclusion, and therefore it was valid.

RP So much of our conversation alludes to your interest in bringing all the different parts of your life and work together into some kind of coherent whole. Is this what is meant by "Wildeworld"?

JW In 1955 I completed a painting that I entitled *Wildeworld* [colorplate 61]. It has three facets that are blended together on one surface. To the left is what I call the provincial or immediate environment in which I exist. In ever diminishing layers, it is first of all America, then Wisconsin, then a small town in Wisconsin. My roots are there. That's where I came from, and it's of great interest to me. In the center of the painting are represented my concerns with what I call *naturlica,* or the natural world. This realm obviously is of a more universal nature than my provincial environment. In addition to local things, I included elephants and other exotic animals that do not exist in Wisconsin in this part of the painting. The right side of the painting represents what I call *classicum,* that is, my sense of history and its influence on me. For me this begins with the Greeks and Romans, proceeds through the Renaissance and forward from there.

In 1955 *Wildeworld* encapsulated everything that I'd done up to that time. I had been working seriously for about fifteen years. I remember consciously standing back and thinking, "I can lay it all out in one single painting, my position, how I've been formed, and what kind of situation I have created for myself." But I also realized that my private world existed in relationship to the external world, that is, everything that's out there. That external world had to be distilled through my basic beliefs and ideas in order to become a painting.

RP Forty years later, in 1995, you produced *Wildeworld Revisited* [colorplate 103]. How is it different from *Wildeworld*?

JW There really is very little difference between the two. Basically, it consists of the simple recognition that, since 1955, a lot of things had happened, a lot of time had gone by. The world about which I was so absolutely sure in 1955 had somehow changed. I'm not quite sure what those changes were, but I sensed the end of that earlier world.

The components and the basic structure of *Wildeworld* and *Wildeworld Revisited* are really the same, except that the various components are falling apart, that's all. The small town on the left has degenerated. The buildings are all empty. The folks walking on the street in *Wildeworld* have disappeared in *Wildeworld Revisited. Naturlica* is also falling apart, rapidly. It's being swallowed up by a vortex that can be taken as a symbol of man's unbridled consumption of the environment. *Classicum* is standing up better than the others, although it, too, shows signs of decay. However, there is more durability in this section because it entails man's intellectual accomplishments,

embodied in the tiny architectural fragments with names of historical thinkers—Sophocles, for example—scattered on the ground. These will persist, even in the face of the general decay of all the rest.

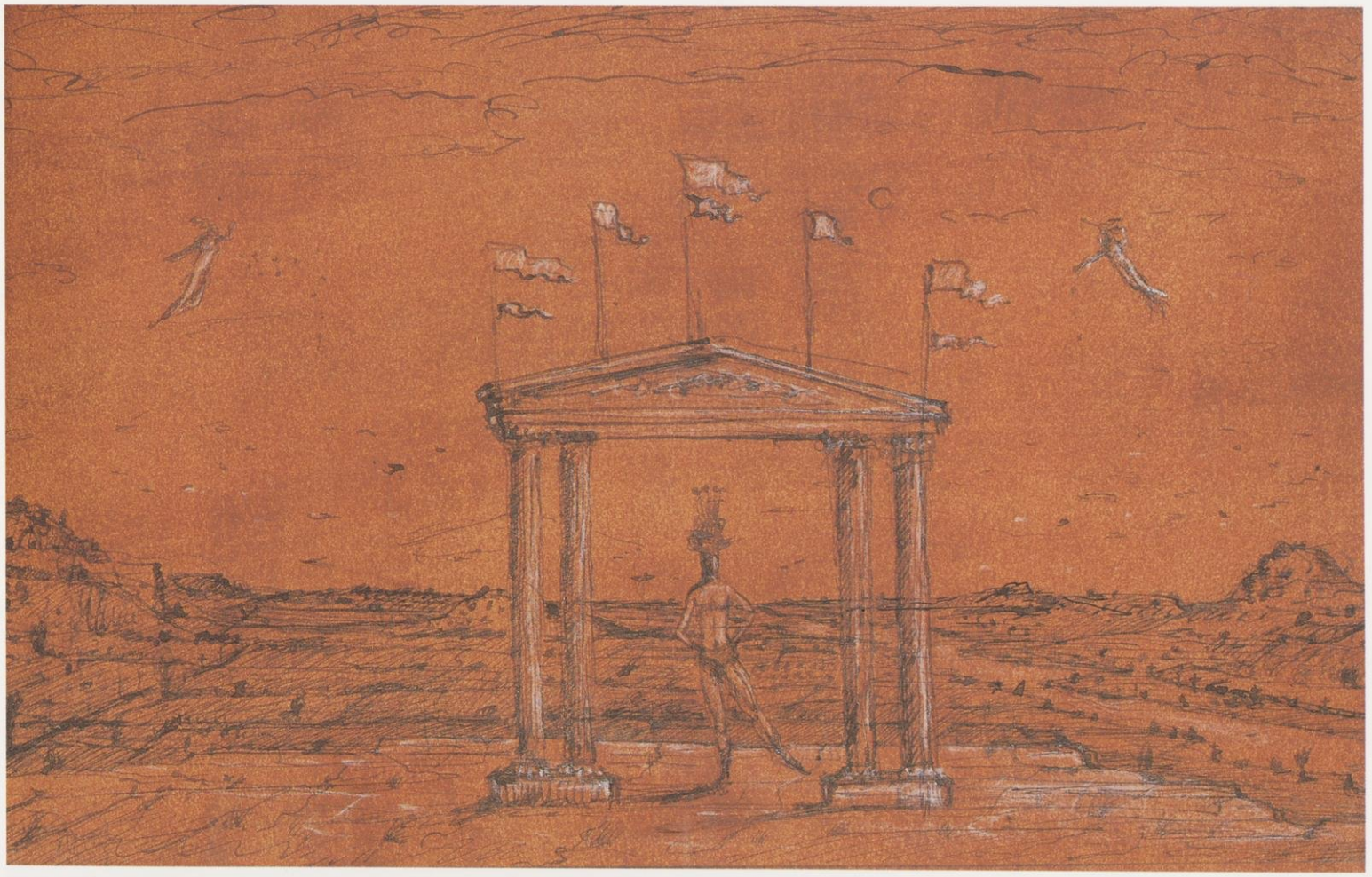
RP You also depict yourself differently in the latter painting. In *Wildeworld Revisited* you no longer appear as the blithe harlequin who, in *Wildeworld,* holds a sketch-board and measures the world before him with his silverpoint. In the 1995 painting you sit partially undressed, without the sketch-board, pointing into the vortex in the distance. Would you care to comment on this change?

JW The differences are due to the passage of time. In *Wildeworld,* an optimistic painting, I am a youngish man, roughly thirty-five years old, a little cocksure, self-conscious, and somewhat vulnerable. I appear as a harlequin because, in some way, the comic nature of such a figure relieves the intense seriousness of the painting. In 1995, obviously, I am physically different than I was in 1955. But intellectually, I am basically the same person, still treasuring my immediate environment, *naturlica* and *classicum*. However, as these three mainstays of my art have changed, I, too, have changed: The shirt is gone. I am stripped to the basics, without superficial cover. Also, in the earlier painting, I felt confident that, with my drawing tool and board, I could analyze and, ultimately, grasp all that is out there, reality, history, or whatever. In *Wildeworld Revisited,* that is no longer true: I am looking out and seeing things that are, ultimately, ungraspable.

COLORPLATES

Note to the reader

All works are by John Wilde. In dimensions, height precedes width.
Asterisks indicate works *not* included in the exhibition.



COLORPLATE 1

Wisconsin River Valley with a Nude under a Classical Tempietto, 1941

Pen on toned paper

10½ × 15 in.

Thea Tenenbaum-Malferrari.

COLORPLATE 2

The Smiling American Girl, 1942

Graphite on wove paper

18 × 12 1/16 in.

Milwaukee Art Museum. Centennial Gift of Kent and Ceil Anderson.

COLORPLATE 3

Myself Indicating Two Points of Neurasthenic Pain, 1943

Pencil on paper

16 × 12 in.

Yale University Art Gallery. Gift of John

COLORPLATE 4

Portrait of HDPRAW, 1943

Pencil with touches of wash on paper
18½ × 12³⁄₁₆ in.
Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Gift of John Wilde.

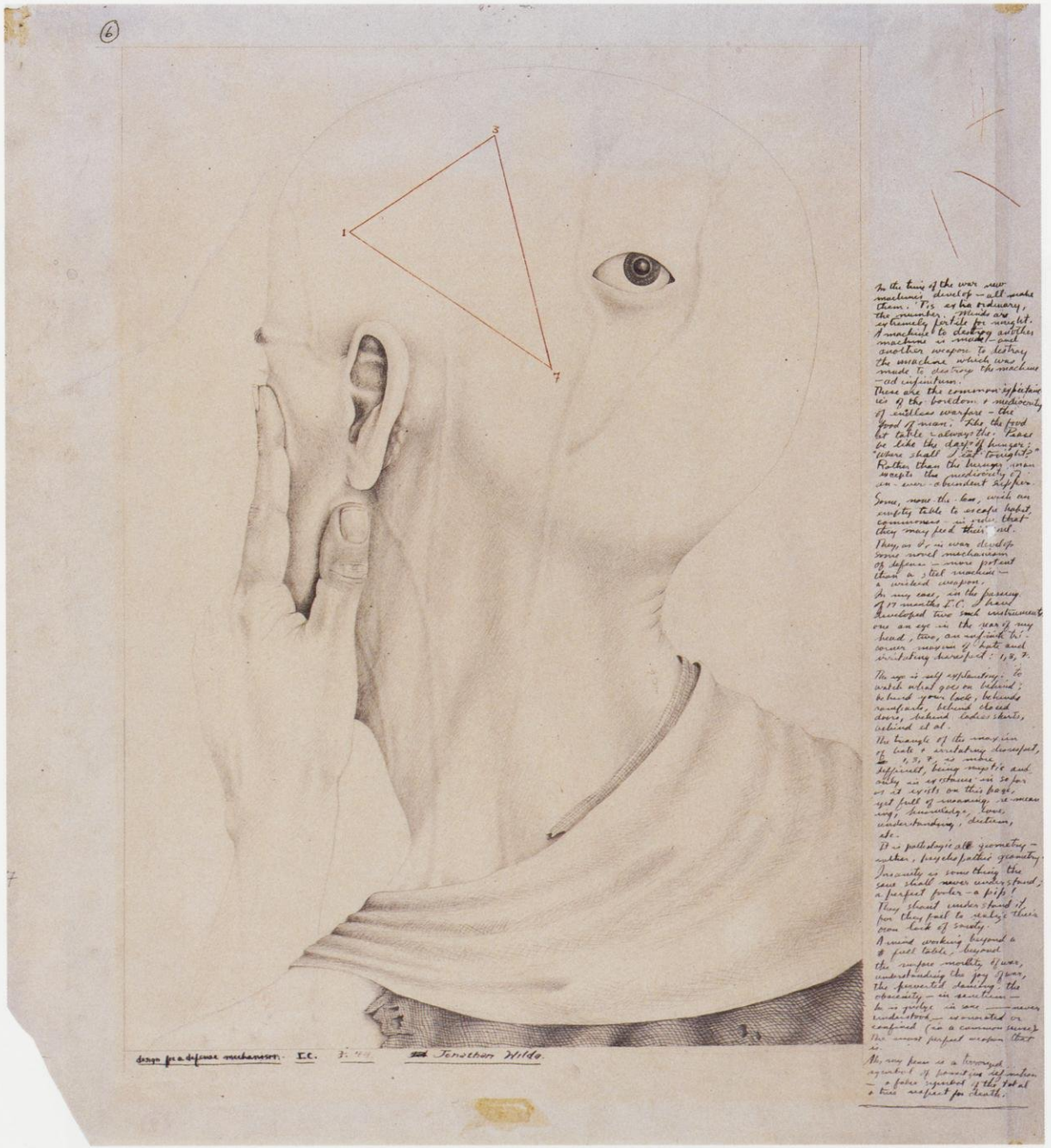
COLORPLATE 5

Wedding Portrait #2, 1943

Graphite on paper

27¾ × 17¼ in.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Gift of the Artist in Memory of Helen Wilde.



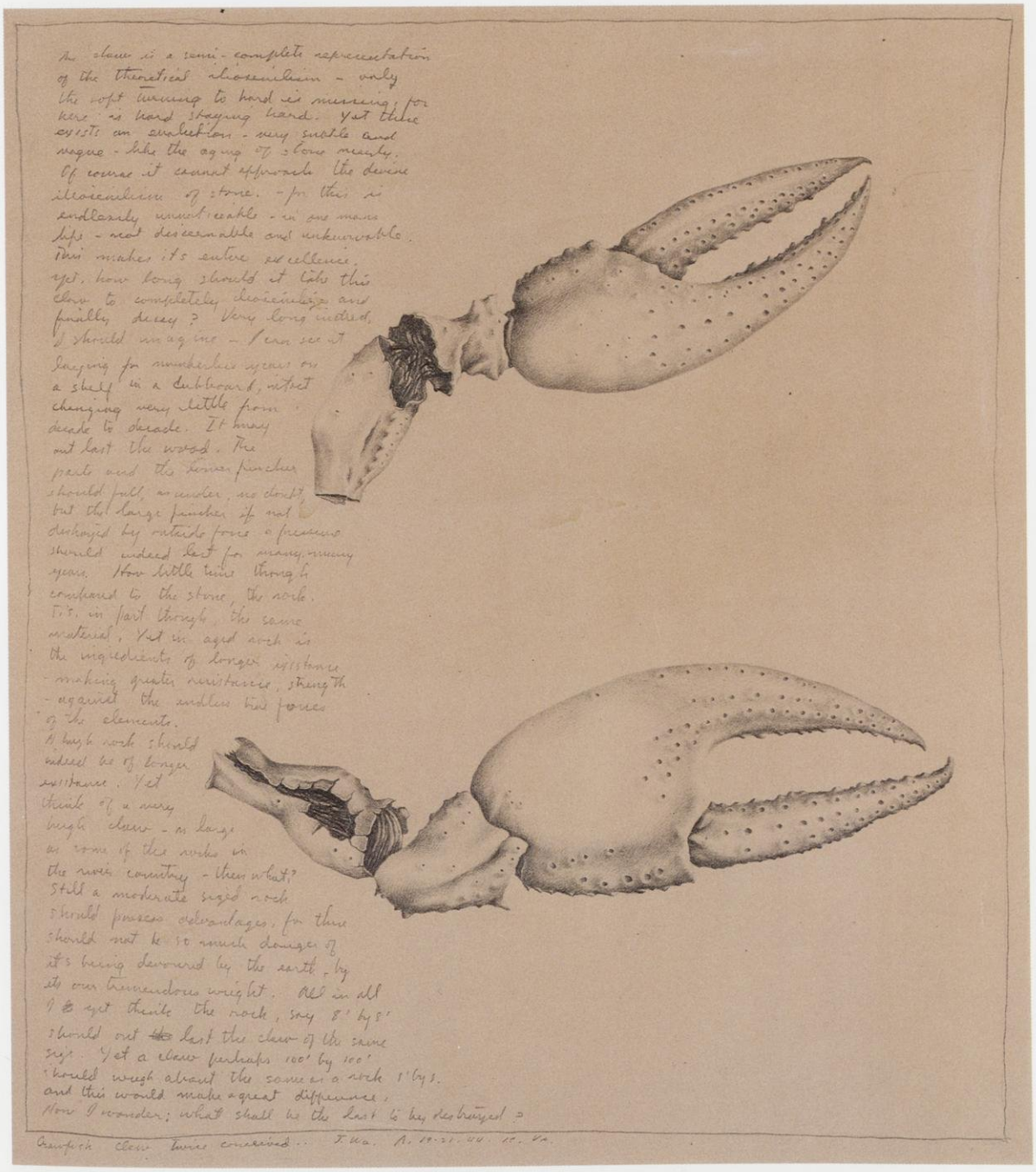
★COLORPLATE 6

Design for a Defense Mechanism, 1943

Graphite and red and black inks on paper

20 × 18⅜ in.

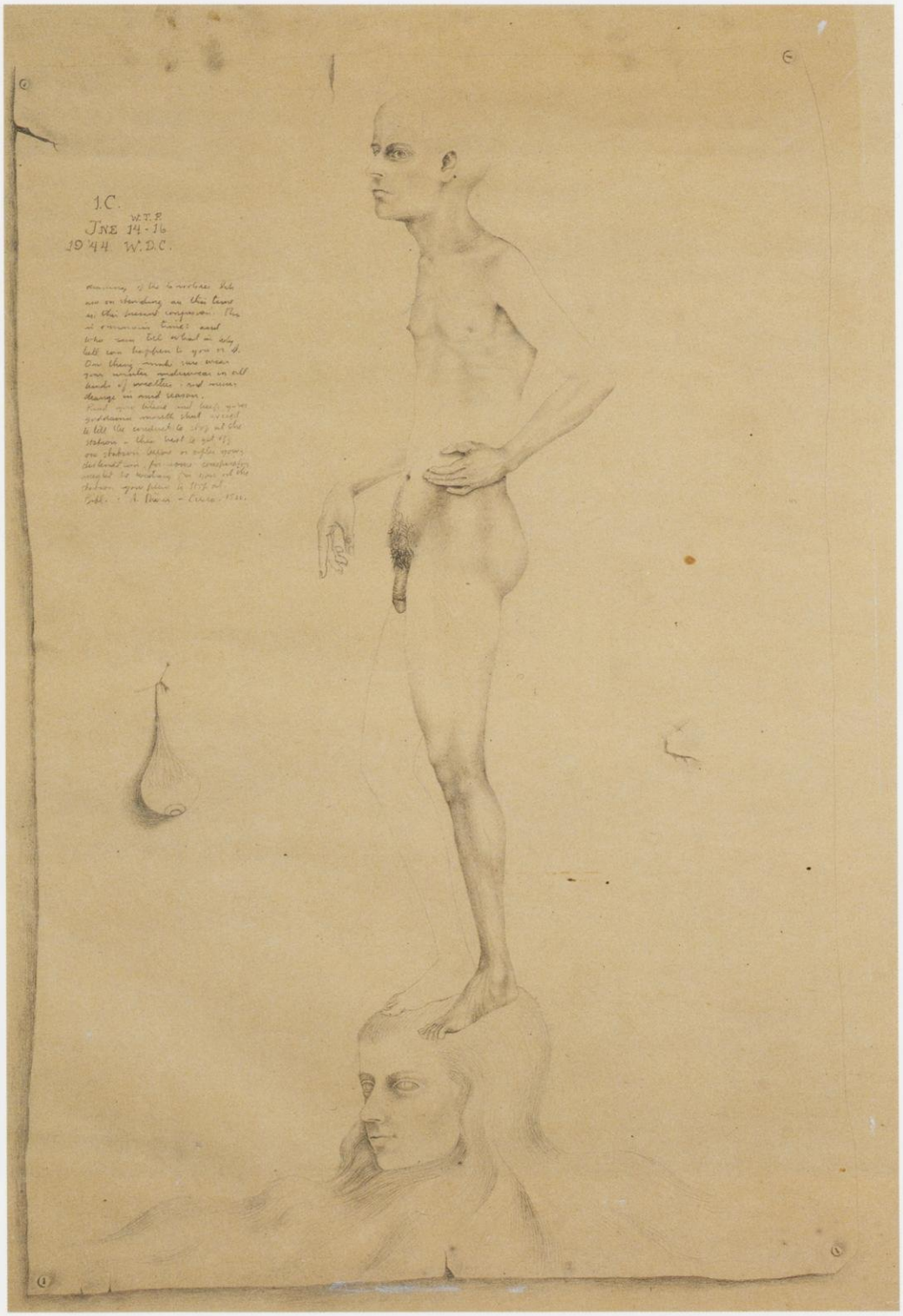
Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts. Director's Discretionary Fund.



COLORPLATE 7

A Crab Claw, Ileosenilatic, 1943

Pencil on paper
12 × 9 in.
John Wilde.



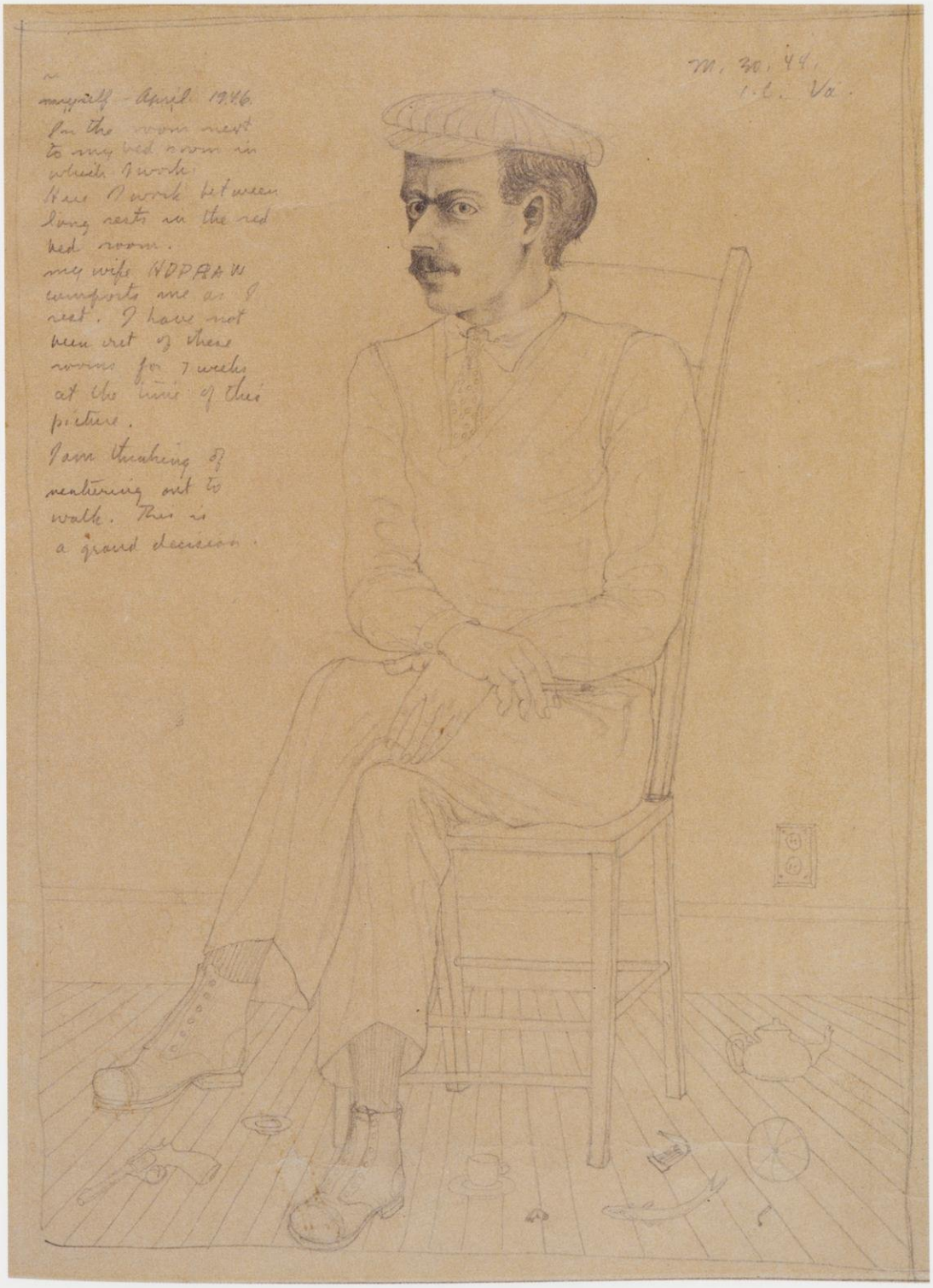
★COLORPLATE 8

Drawing of the La Rootsies Ich Am On Standing, 1944

Pencil on paper

24 × 18 1/16 in.

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Carl D. Lobell.



COLORPLATE 9

Myself, April 1946, 1944

Pencil on paper

11⅛ × 9½ in.

The Arkansas Arts Center Foundation Collection Purchase, 1985.

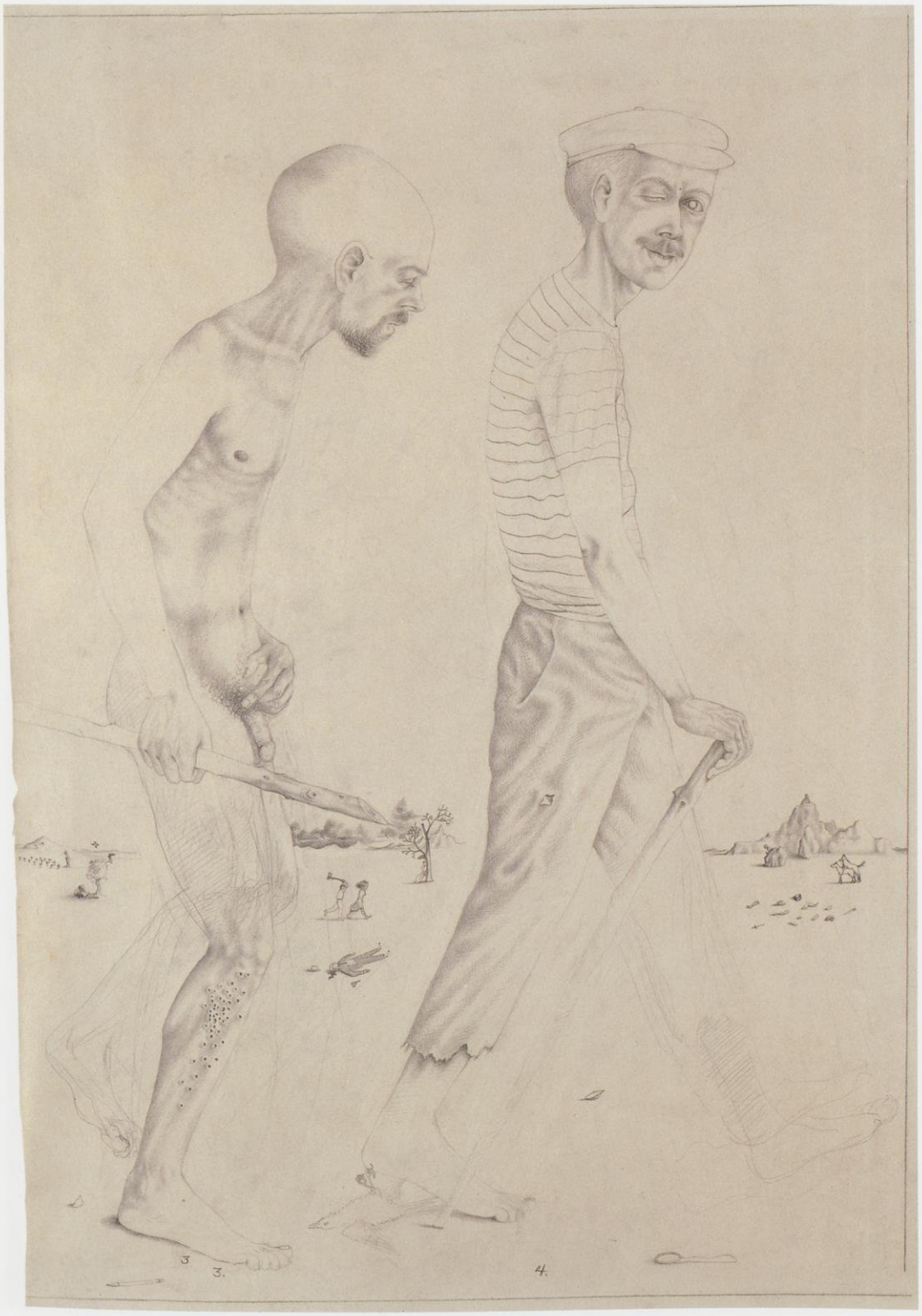
COLORPLATE 10

The Blind Lead the Blind, 1945

Pencil and wash on paper

21⅜ × 17 in.

Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Gift of Frederick K. Burkhardt.



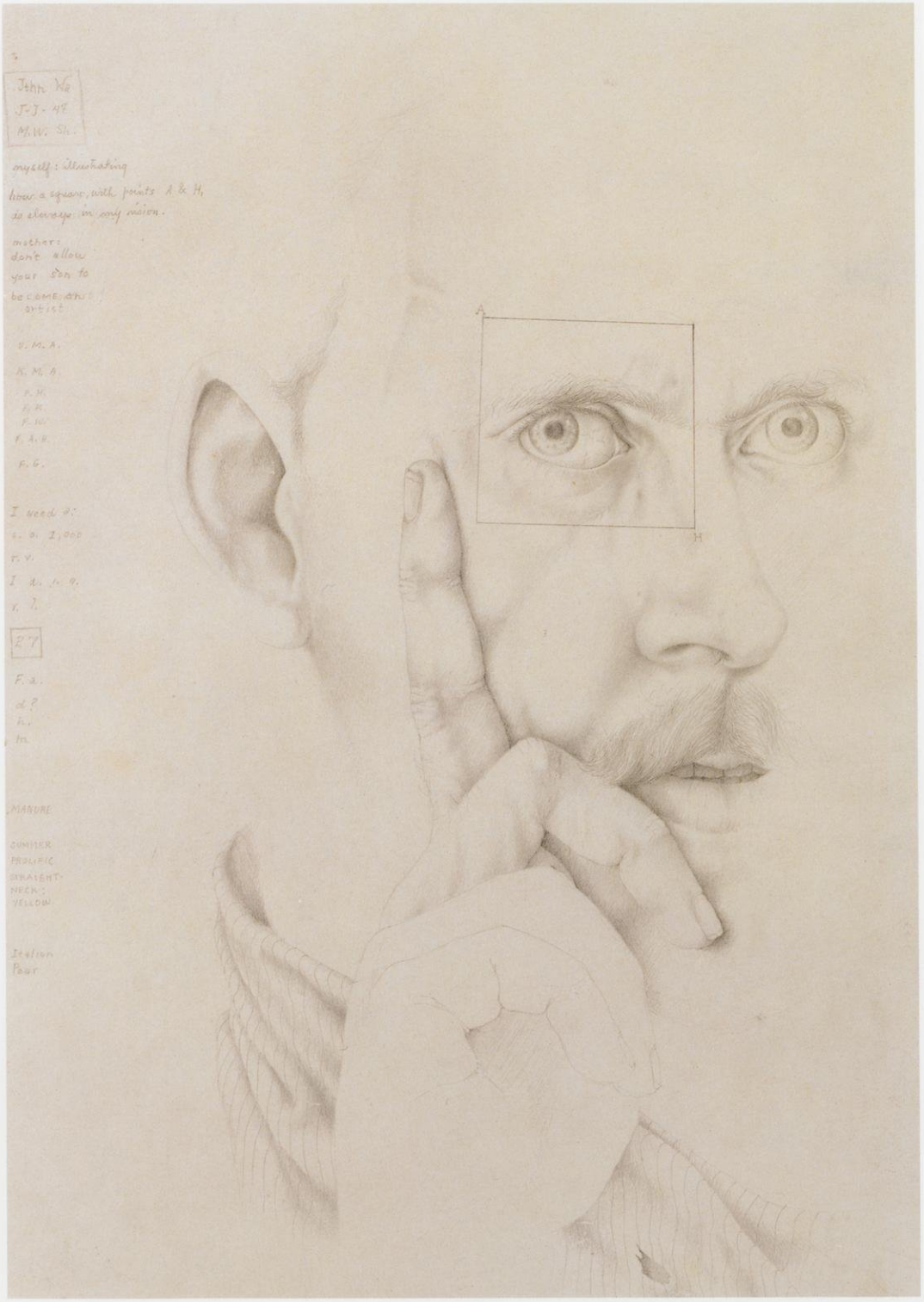
COLORPLATE 11

The Blind Lead the Blind, 1945

Pencil and wash on paper

21⅝ × 15¾ in.

Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Gift of Frederick K. Burkhardt.



COLORPLATE 12

Myself Illustrating How a Square with Points A. and H. Is Always in My Vision, 1947

Graphite on paper

13¼ × 9¼ in.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

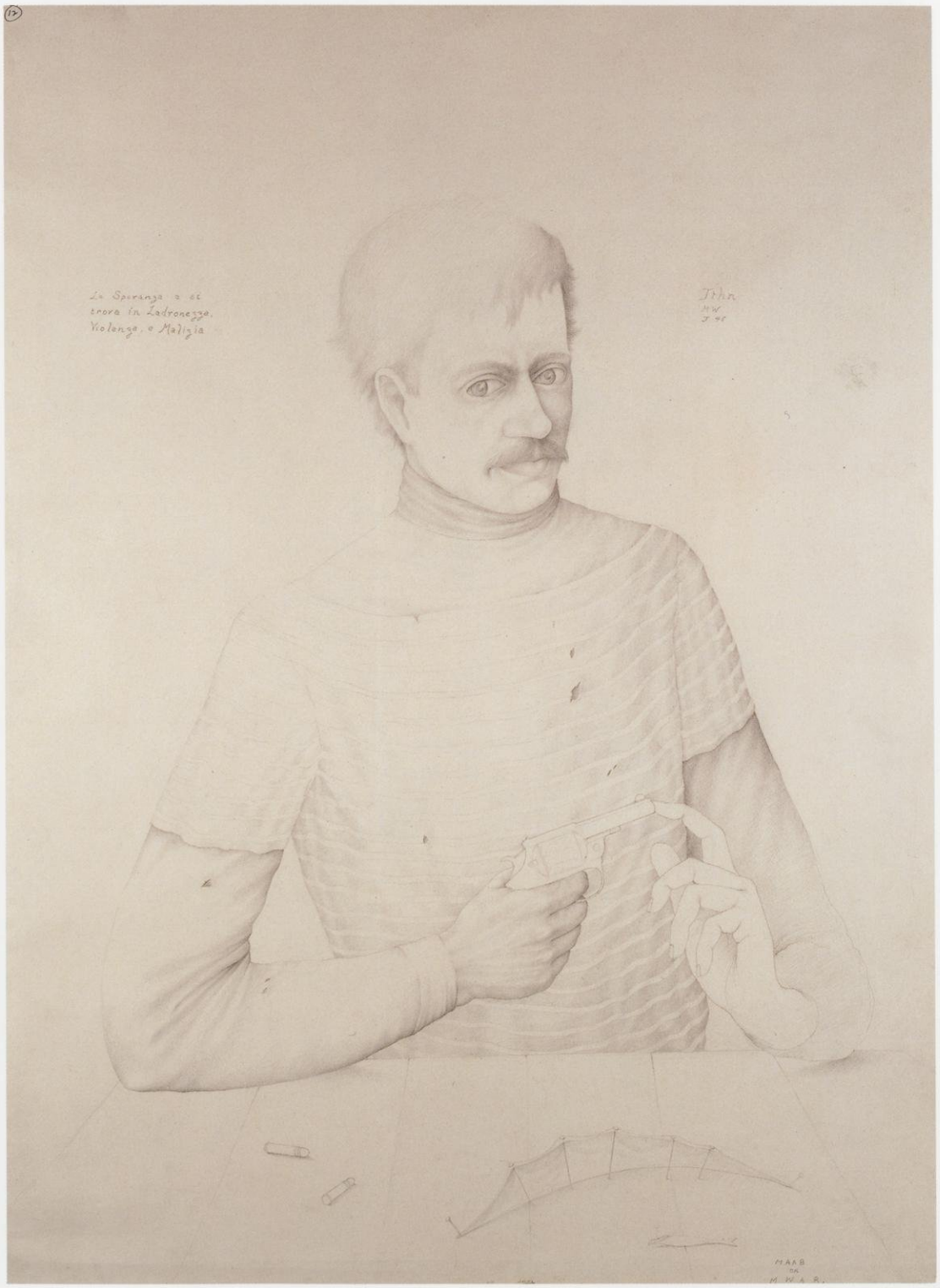
COLORPLATE 13

Portrait of D. H., 1947

Pencil on paper

24 × 18 in.

Thea Tenenbaum-Malferrari.



COLORPLATE 14

Myself as a Bandit, 1948

Graphite on cream wove paper
24 × 18 in.
The Art Institute of Chicago.
Gift of Mrs. Tiffany Blake.

★COLORPLATE 15 ▷▷

A Cicada, Thrice Conceived, 1949

Pencil, bistre ink, and wash on paper
16 × 14 in.
Wadsworth Atheneum,
Hartford, Connecticut.

COLORPLATE 16

How Do You Do, M. Gide?, 1951

Silverpoint with watercolor and fine brush; white gesso on cardboard panel

24⅛ × 12⅝ in.

Milwaukee Art Museum. Gift of the Artist.

COLORPLATE 17

Bloodroot and Ironstone, 1951

Pencil on paper

19½ × 13½ in.

Thea Tenenbaum-Malferrari.

★COLORPLATE 18

Self-Portrait with Milkweed, 1954

Graphite heightened with white on blue paper

22⅝ × 16 in.

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

★COLORPLATE 19 ▷▷

A Common Thrasher, Twice Conceived, 1955

Ink, pencil, and watercolor on paper

24⅛ × 20¾ in.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art.
Gift of Margaret Mallory.


The common Thrasher, Toxostoma rufum
TE Ty 11-12 1955

◁ COLORPLATE 20

An American Ash, 1962

Pencil on paper

20 × 17 in.

Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison.
Catherine Cleary Fund purchase.

COLORPLATE 21

A Box Elder Burl, 1963

Pencil on paper

13¼ × 20¼ in.

Lewton Gallery, University of Wisconsin–Green Bay.

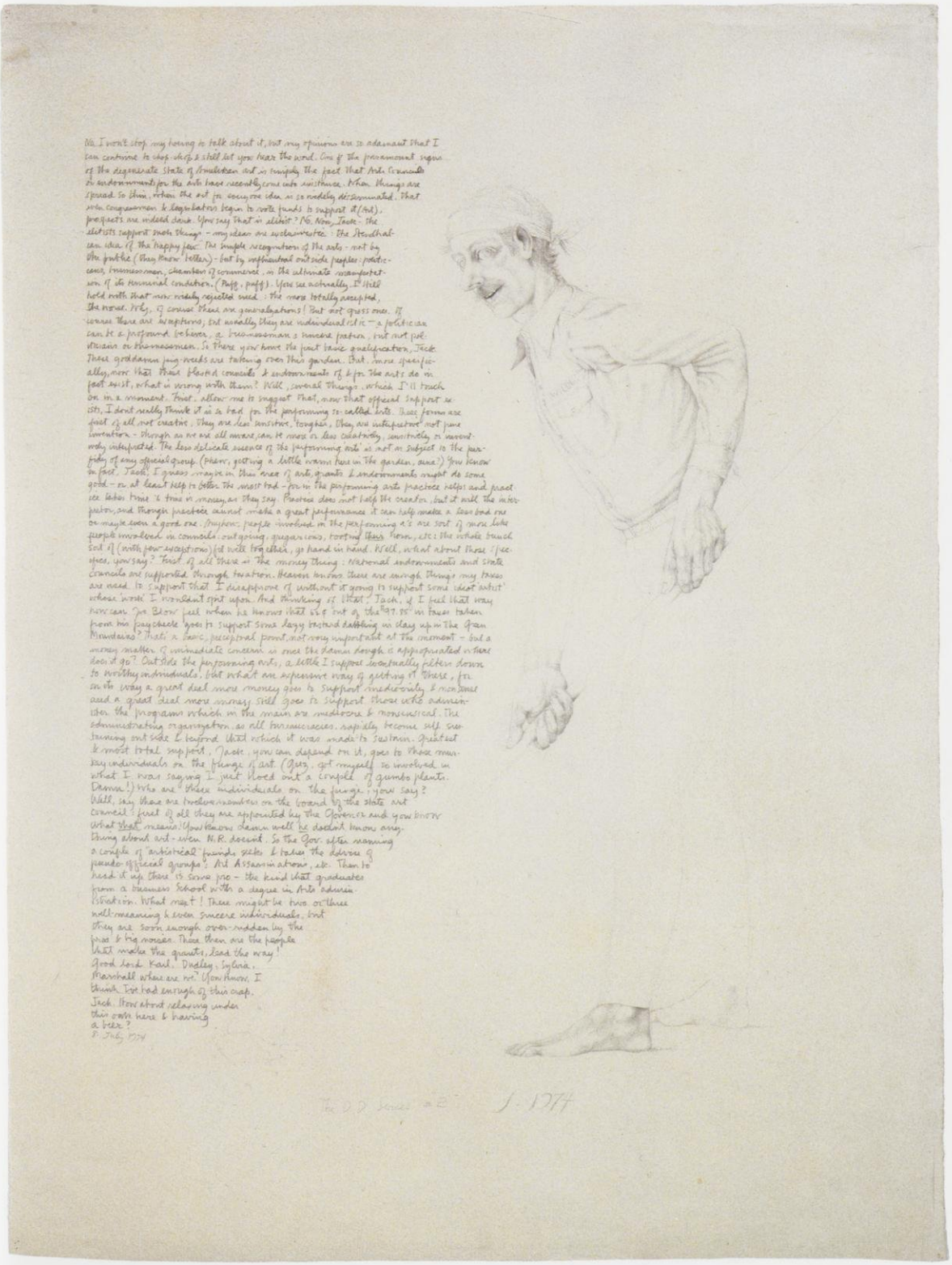
COLORPLATE 22

Portrait of S. G. W., 1967

Pencil heightened with white chalk on paper

14 × 17 in.

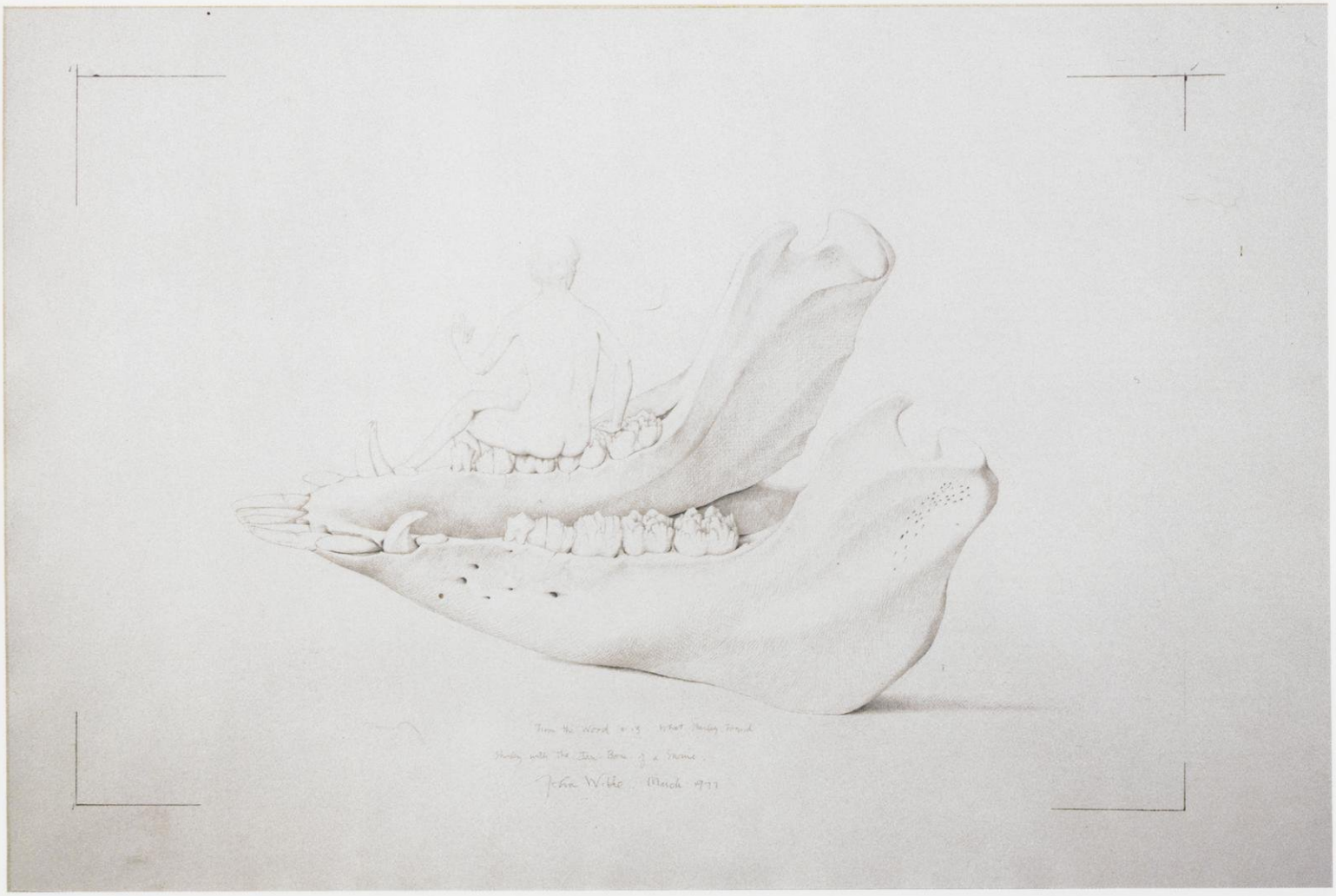
Shirley Gene Wilde.



COLORPLATE 23

The Speaking Drawings: Decisive Declamation Series #2: Hoeing, 1974

Pencil, wash, and pen on paper
25 × 18¾ in.
Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin.



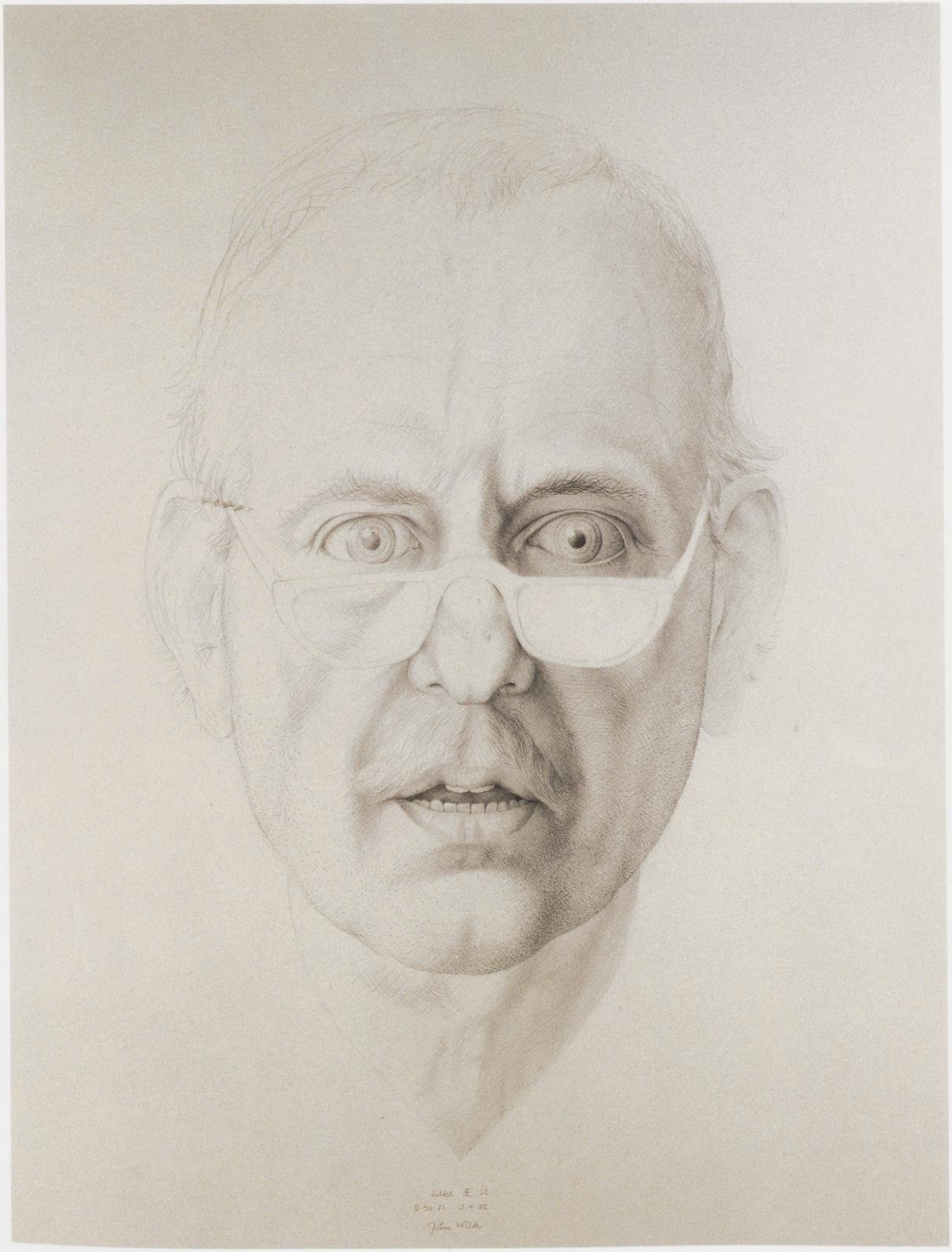
COLORPLATE 24

Shirley with the Jawbone of a Swine (What Shirley Found Series), 1977

Silverpoint on prepared paper

11½ × 17½ in.

Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, Racine, Wisconsin. Gift of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, Childe Hassam Fund.



COLORPLATE 25

Selbst AE 62, 1982

Pencil on paper

29 × 18 in.

Dr. and Mrs. Peter A. Gardetto.

★COLORPLATE 26

The Great Autobiographical Silverpoint Drawing, 1983–84

Silverpoint on panel

38 × 90 in.

The Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of Karen Johnson Boyd.

COLORPLATE 27

R.O.A.E.D. (Remnants of an Early Death), II, Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 1985

Silverpoint and watercolor on prepared paper

15⅝ × 12¾ in.

Milwaukee Art Museum. Gift of John and Shirley Wilde.

COLORPLATE 28

D. de la R. II: Study for a Portrait of D, 1986

Silverpoint on prepared paper
20¾ × 14½ in.
National Academy, New York.

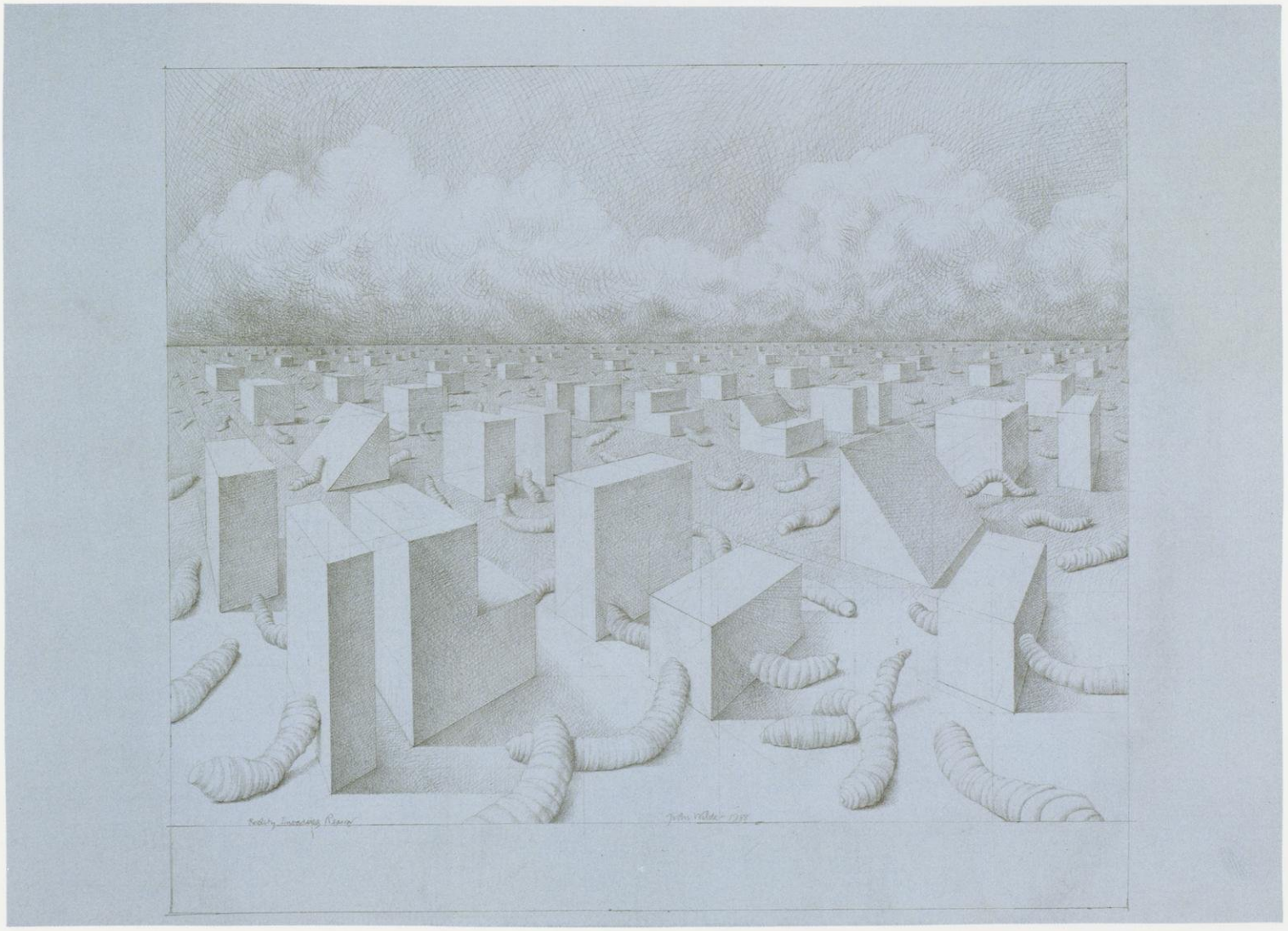
COLORPLATE 29

Myself, Age 67, 1987

Pencil on paper

20 × 11½ in.

Karen Johnson Boyd.



COLORPLATE 30

Reality Invading Reason, 1989

Silverpoint on blue-toned paper

11 × 14 in.

John Wilde.

COLORPLATE 31

The Terror of Antiquity, 1989

Silverpoint and watercolor on prepared paper

8 × 11 in.

William and Joyce Wartmann.

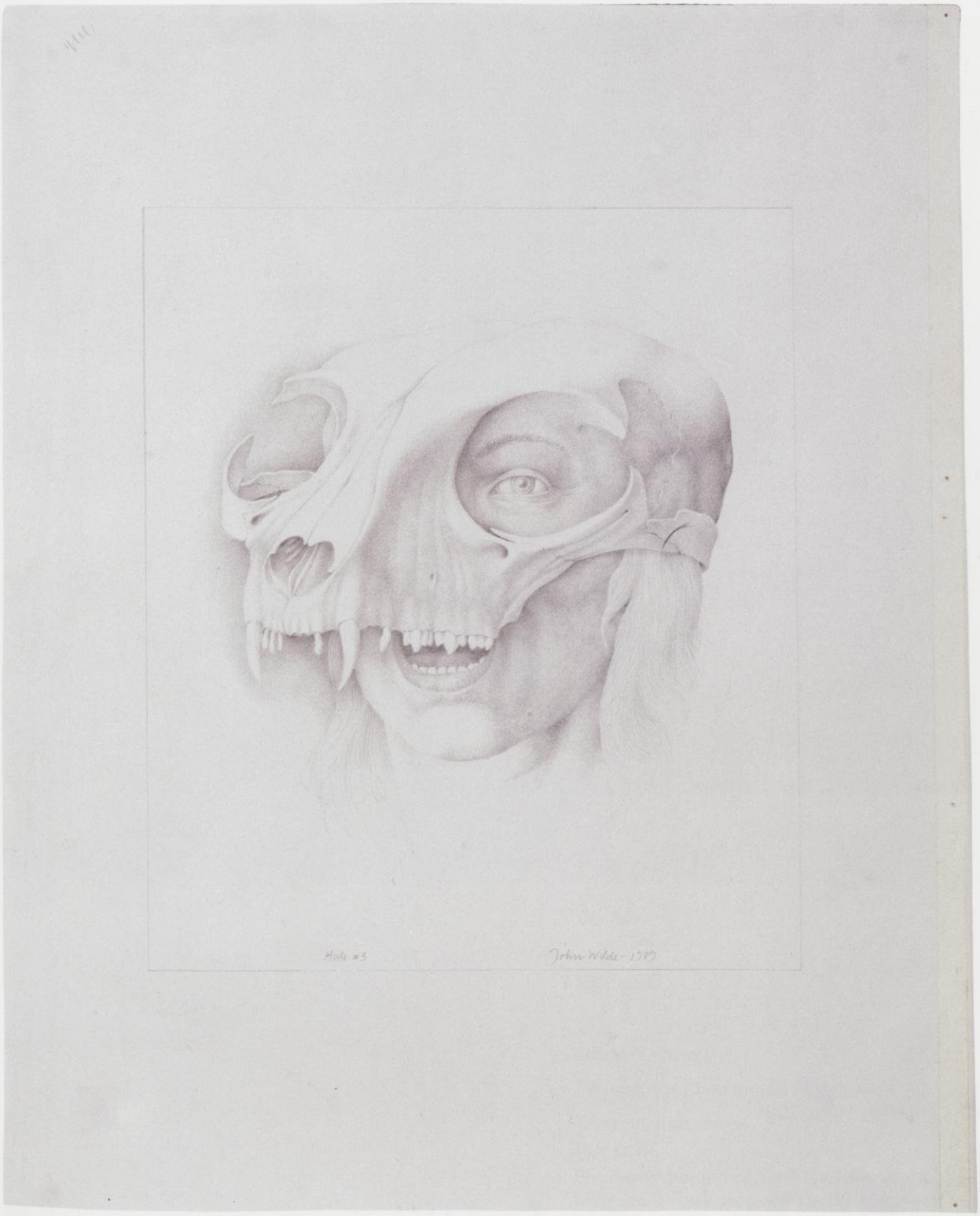
COLORPLATE 32

Hats #2, 1988

Silverpoint on prepared paper

16 × 9 in.

National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Museum purchase made possible by Elizabeth Stevens and Mrs. E. N. Vanderpoel.



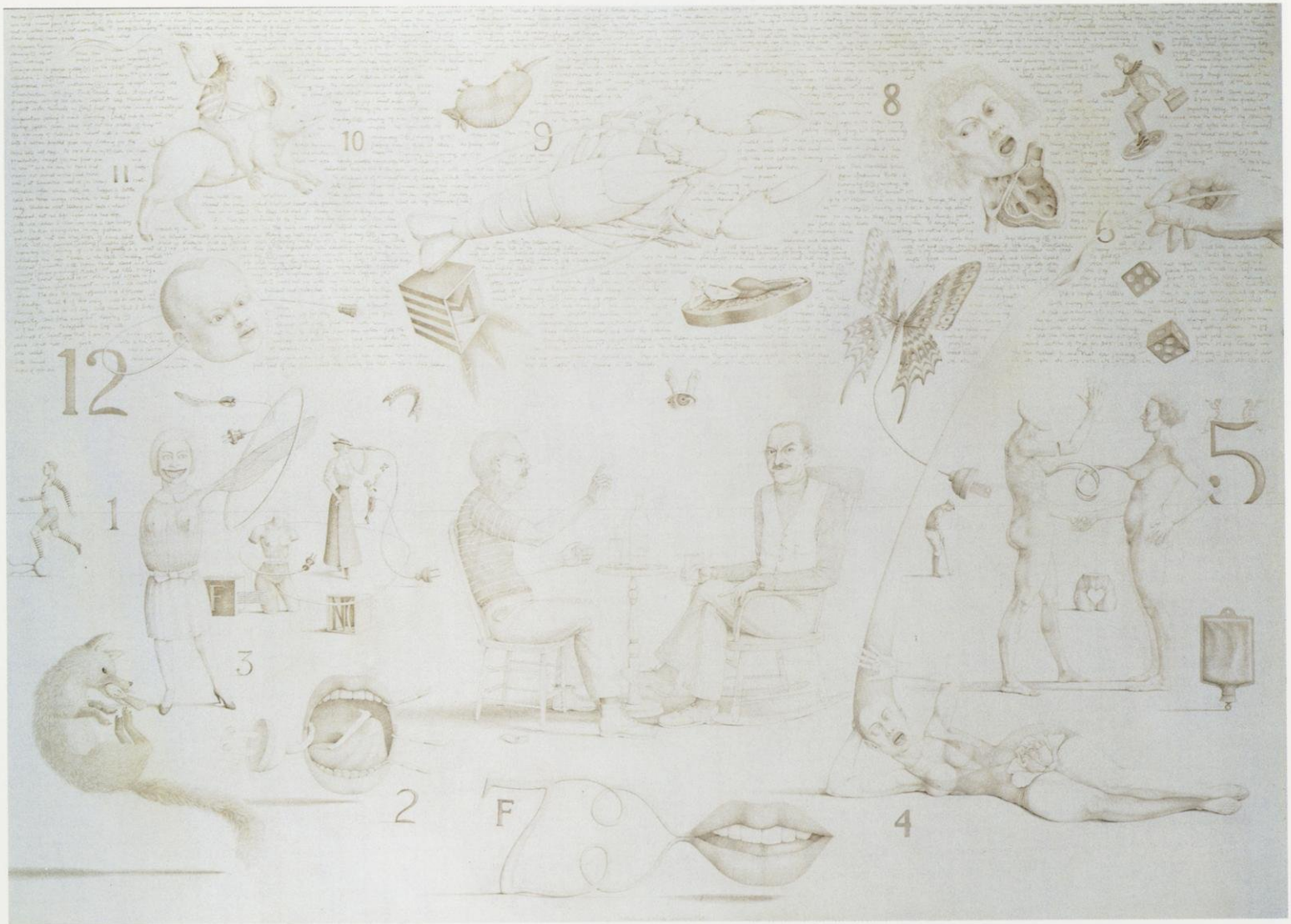
COLORPLATE 33

Hats #3, 1989

Silverpoint on prepared paper

10⅝ × 8⅞ in.

Milwaukee Art Museum. Gift of John and Shirley Wilde.



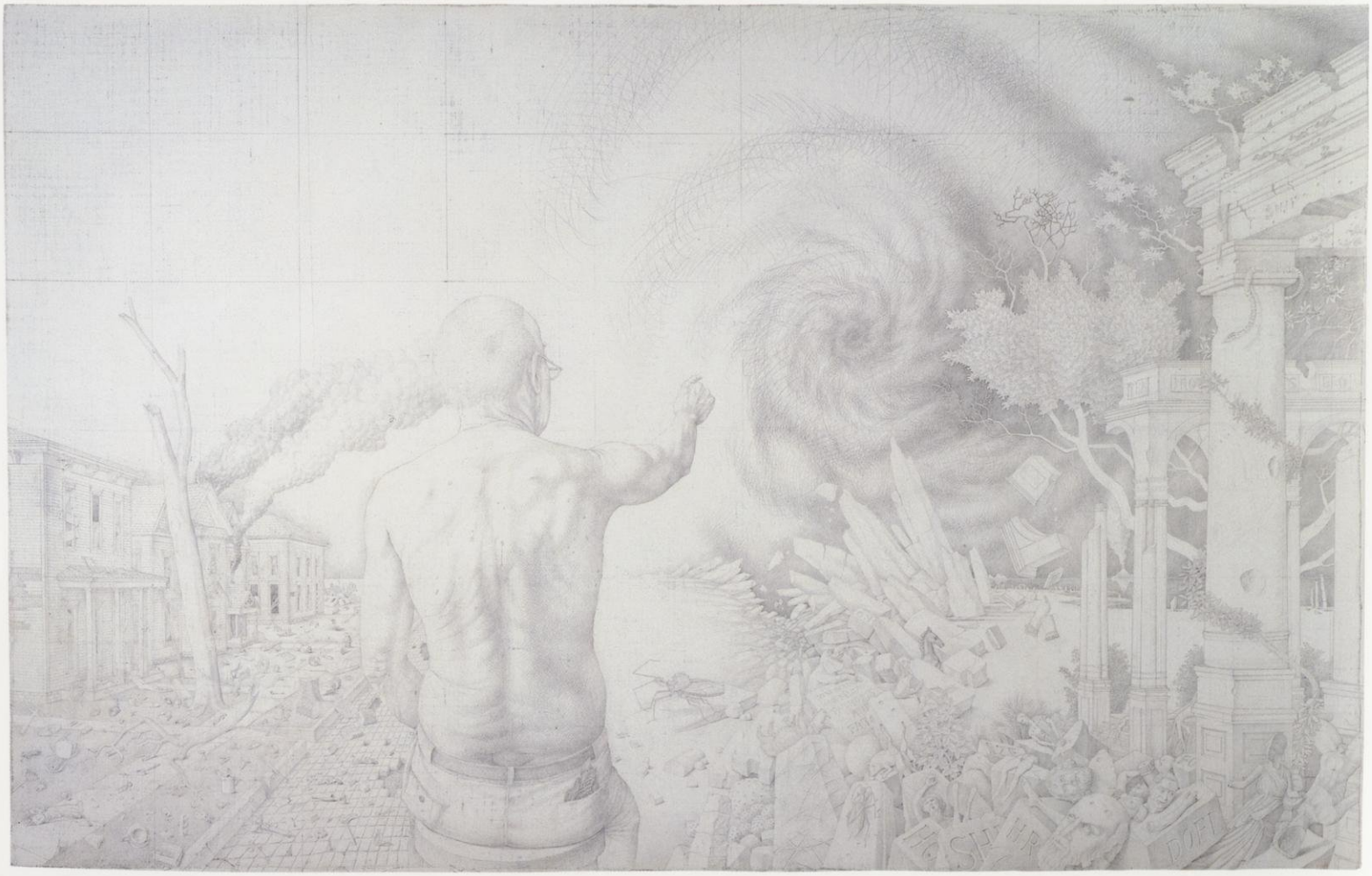
COLORPLATE 34

Walter Hamady and Myself Conjuring 1985, 1991

Silverpoint on prepared paper

39 × 53 in.

halley k harrisburg and Michael Rosenfeld, New York.



COLORPLATE 35

Preparatory Drawing for Wildeworld Revisited, 1994

Silverpoint on canvas

33 × 52 in.

Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Harry and Margaret P. Glicksman and Bertha Ardt Plaenert Endowment Funds purchase.

COLORPLATE 36

In My Studio, 1996

Silverpoint and wash on prepared paper

16 × 20 in.

Nathan and Evelyn Grossman.

COLORPLATE 37

Wrestling with Death, 1997–98

Silverpoint on prepared paper

24 × 72 in, reproduced in three sections

Columbus Museum, Columbus, Georgia. Museum purchase made possible by Norman S. Rothschild in honor of Dr. and Mrs. Philip Brewer.

COLORPLATE 38

An American Interior, 1942

Oil on panel

36 × 50 in.

John Wilde.

COLORPLATE 39

A Near Miss, 1945

Oil on panel

10 × 8 in.

Christopher and Ruby Wilde, Mount Vernon, Washington.

COLORPLATE 40

Exhibiting the Weapon, 1945

Oil on panel

10 × 8 in.

Collection of Frederick Burkhardt.

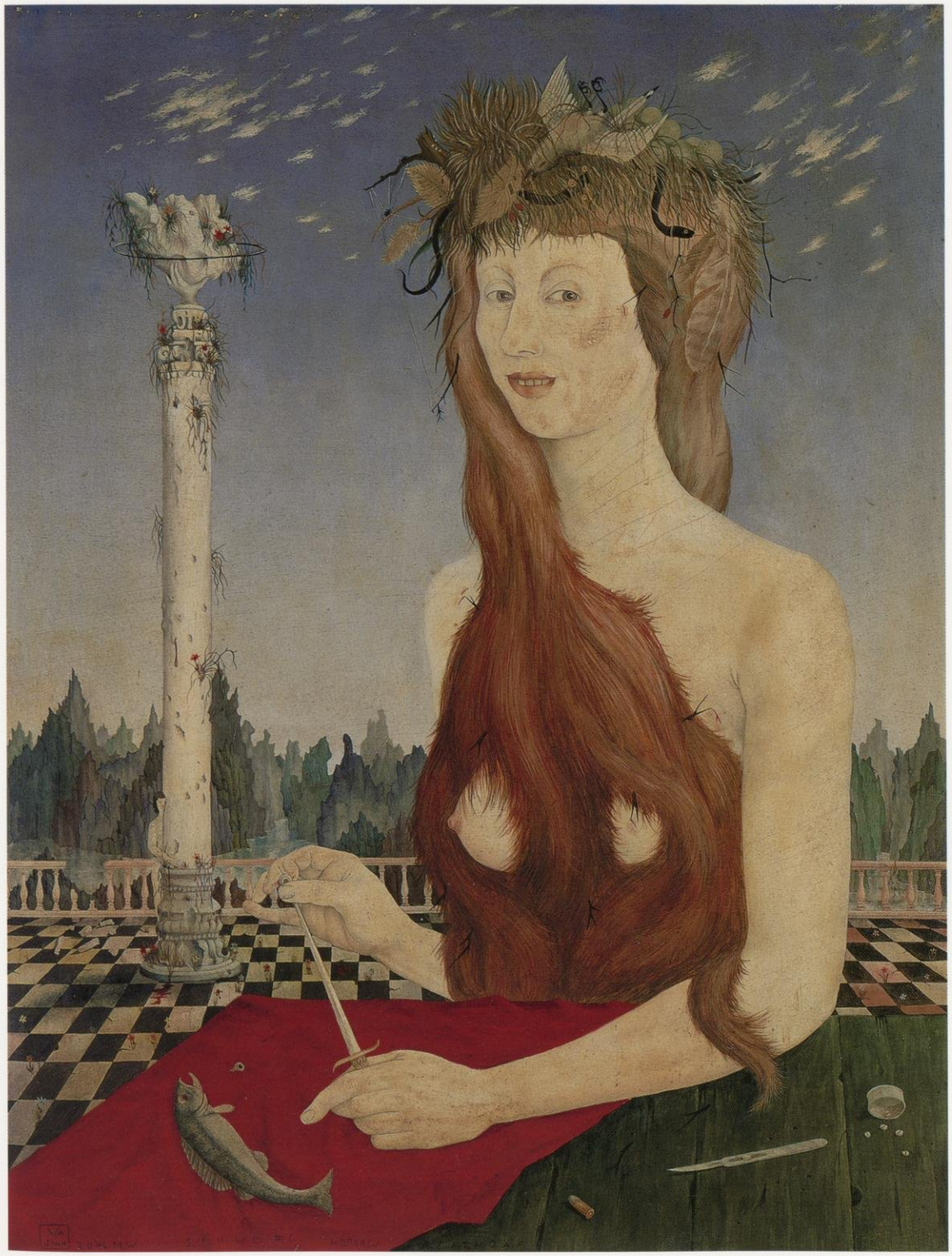
COLORPLATE 41

Myself Contemplating the Wolf-Desecrated Body of H., 1946

Oil on board

7 × 9½ in.

Kenneth J. Urlakis.



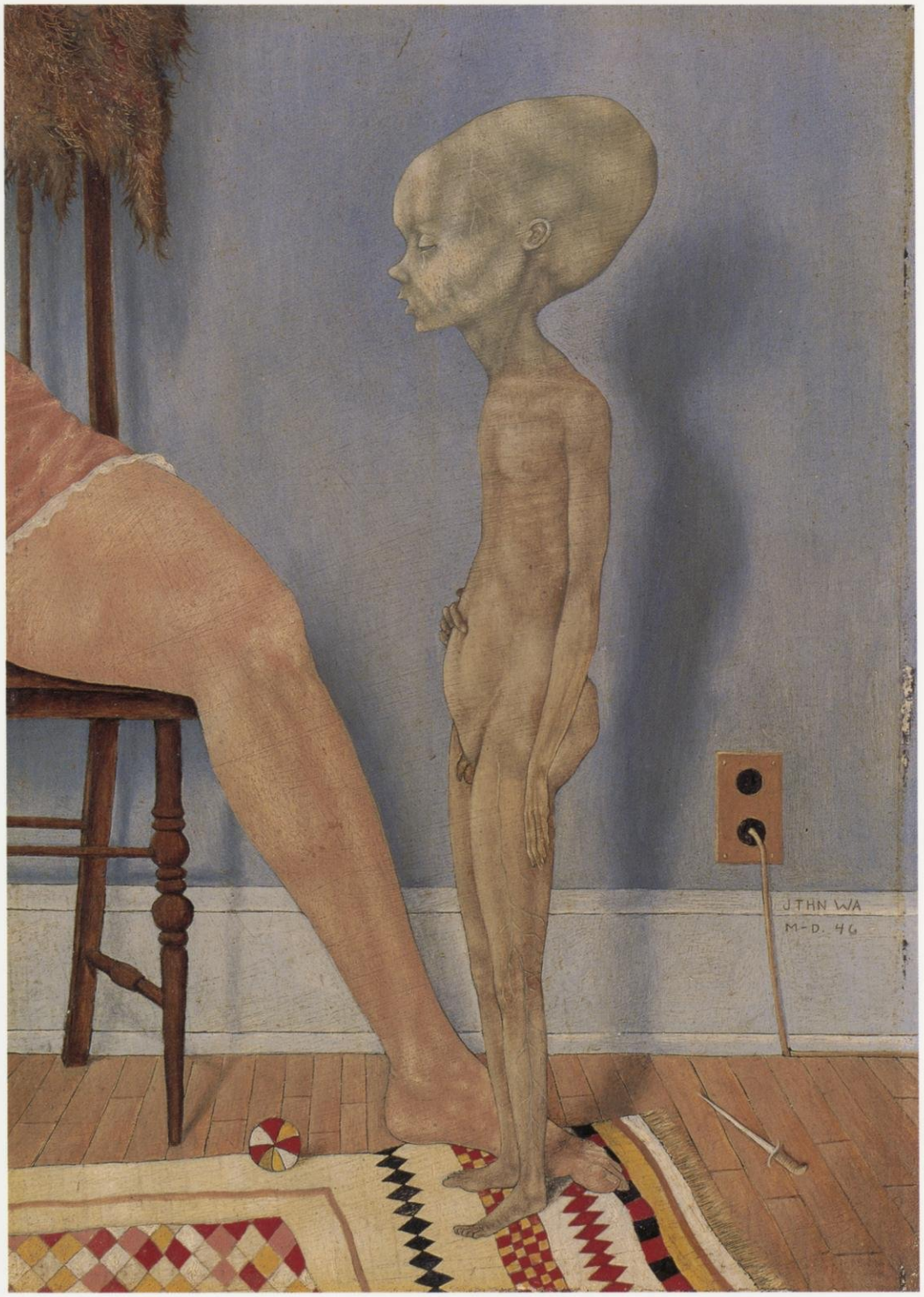
COLORPLATE 42

Suggestions for Hot Weather Entertainment #1, 1946

Oil on panel

28½ × 22 in.

Private collection.



★COLORPLATE 43

Mother and Sick Child, 1946

Oil on panel

8½ × 6 in.

James M. Ray.

COLORPLATE 44

The Cotton House, 1947

Oil on panel

8 × 10 in.

Shirley Gene Wilde.

COLORPLATE 45

Myself Working from the Nude in Silver, 1948

Oil on Masonite panel

14⅛ × 11⅛ in.

Milwaukee Art Museum. Purchase, Doerfler Fund.

COLORPLATE 46

A Winter Hunter, 1949

Oil on panel

12 × 16 in.

Milwaukee Art Museum. Gift of Gimbel Brothers.

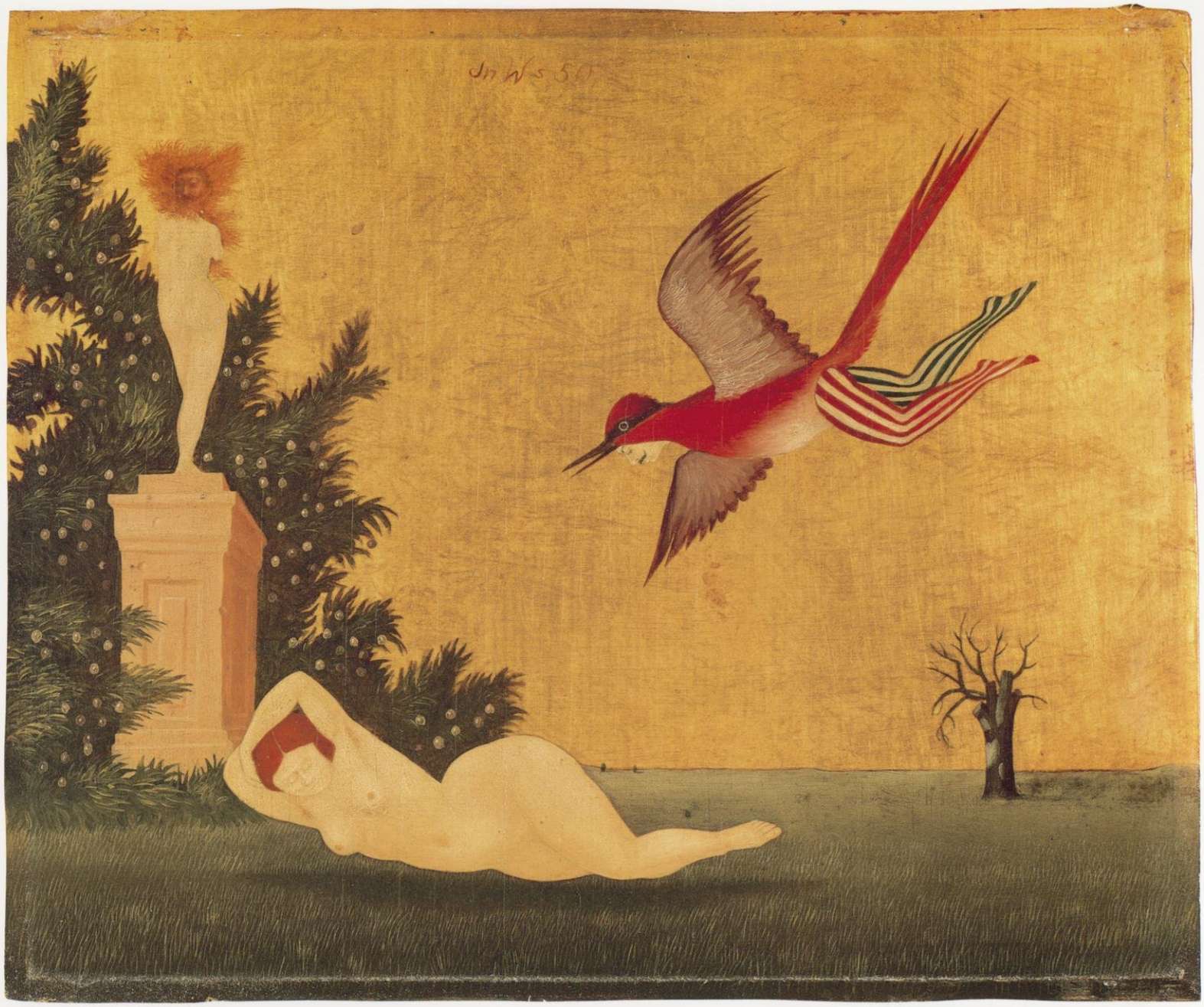
COLORPLATE 47

A Subtle Tribute to Watteau, 1949

Oil and gold leaf on panel

10 × 12 in.

Estate of Alexander E. Racolin.



COLORPLATE 48

The Dream, 1950

Oil and gold leaf on panel

8 × 10 in.

Thom Kohloff.

COLORPLATE 49

Work Reconsidered #1, 1950

Oil on panel

30½ × 25 in.

Dr. and Mrs. Peter A. Gardetto.

COLORPLATE 50

Portrait of Jesper Dibble (Work Reconsidered II: A Wedding Portrait), 1958

Oil on wood

25 × 21 in.

Private collection.

★COLORPLATE 51

Myself Experiencing a Unique Shower of Rubber Balls, 1950

Oil on panel

11 × 8 in.

Private collection.

COLORPLATE 52
A Tribute to Feb. 11, 1951, 1951
Oil on linen
9 × 7 in.
Private collection.

★COLORPLATE 53

Further Festivities at the Contessa Sanseverini's, 1950–51

Oil on panel

15 × 28 in.

Private collection.

COLORPLATE 54

More Festivities at the Palazzo Sanseverini, 1951–52

Oil on wood panel

20 × 24¼ in.

halley k harrisburg and Michael Rosenfeld, New York.

COLORPLATE 55

Fabrizio's Adventure, 1951

Oil on panel

22 × 35 in.

Dr. and Mrs. Peter A. Gardetto.

COLORPLATE 56

Just Help Yourself,
1951

Oil on panel
24 × 18 in.
halley k harrisburg
and Michael
Rosenfeld, New York.

COLORPLATE 57

Fruits of the Season (Still Life with Melon), 1952

Oil on wood

14 × 19½ in.

Kenneth J. Urlakis.

COLORPLATE 58

Memorabilia, 1952

Oil on wood

8 × 14 in.

Florence Ely Nelson.

COLORPLATE 59

Christmas Candy, 1952

Oil on wood

8 × 10 in.

The Detroit Institute of Arts. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. George Kamperman.

★COLORPLATE 60

Sleight of Hand,
1952
Oil on panel
12 × 10 in.
Florence Ely Nelson.

COLORPLATE 61

Wildeworld, 1953–55

Oil on canvas

32½ × 52 in.

Milwaukee Art Museum. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fitzhugh Scott through the Northwoods Foundation.

COLORPLATE 62

Downstairs, the Red Cat, 1955

Oil on panel

14 × 24 in.

Anne and Warren Weisberg.

COLORPLATE 63

Still Life with Kohlrabi, 1956

Oil on panel

7⅝ × 9⅜ in.

Milwaukee Art Museum. Gift of Mrs. Edward Wehr.

★COLORPLATE 64

Bloodroot, 1955

Oil on canvas

12 × 10 in.

Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, Burlington. Gift of Henry Schnakenberg.

★COLORPLATE 65

Nightshade, 1956

Oil on canvas

16 × 20 in.

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Nebraska Art Association Collection. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frank H. Woods in Memory of Mrs. Minnie Latta Ladd.

COLORPLATE 66

In the Hand, 1957

Oil on panel

$9^{15}/_{16} \times 13^{7}/_{8}$ in.

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. John Lambert Fund.

COLORPLATE 67

Parade, 1957

Oil on panel

18 × 30 in.

Spanierman Gallery.

COLORPLATE 68

In the Barn, 1959

Oil on panel

20 × 16 in.

Private collection.

COLORPLATE 69

Still Life with Kumquats, 1960

Oil on panel

8 × 10 in.

Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison.
Frank J. Sensenbrenner Endowment Fund purchase.

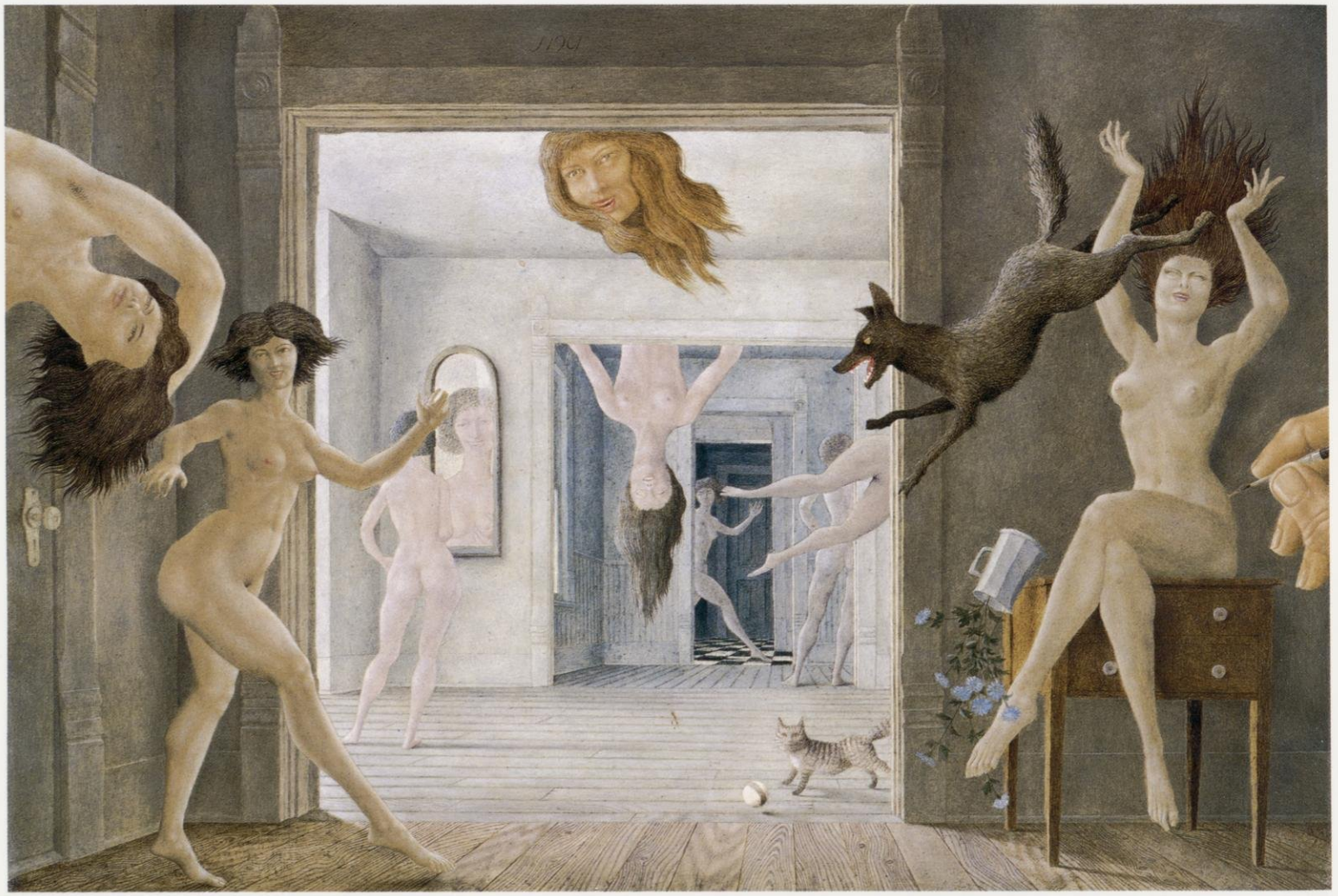
COLORPLATE 70

Still Life with the Artist Reading, 1960

Oil on panel

14 × 20 in.

Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, Milwaukee. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond F. Newman.



COLORPLATE 71

Nine Crazy, Smiling American Girls, a Dog and a Cat at My Place, 1961

Oil on panel

12 × 18 in.

The Revington Family Collection.

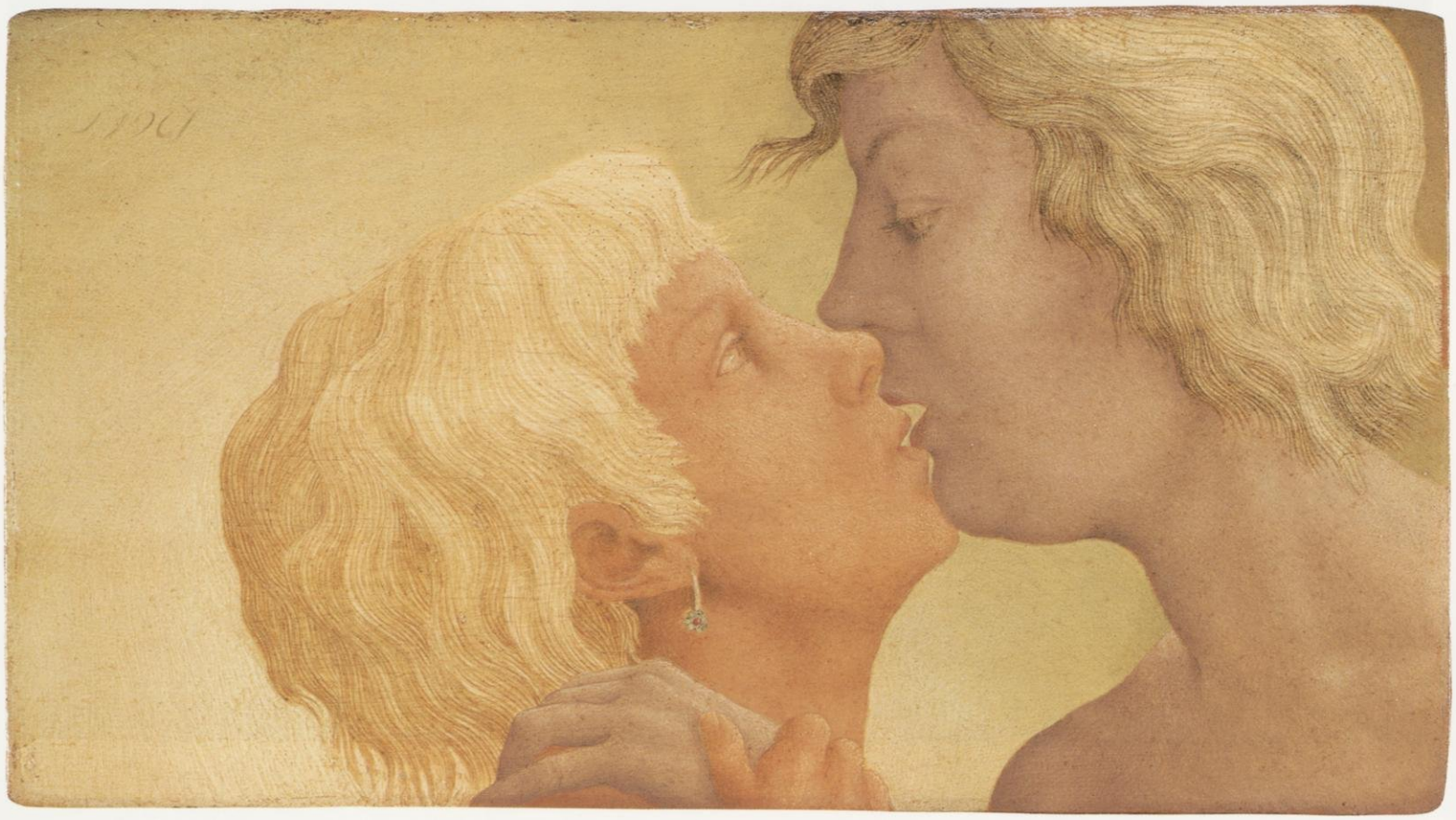
COLORPLATE 72

Happy, Crazy American Animals and a Man and a Lady at My Place, 1961

Oil on wood

12 × 17⅞ in.

National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of S. C. Johnson & Son, Inc.



COLORPLATE 73

The Kiss, 1961

Oil on panel

3 3/16 × 7 in.

Private collection.

COLORPLATE 74

My Grandparents, 1962

Oil on panel

12 × 14 in.

Private collection.

COLORPLATE 75

Peeling (a Banana),
1962

Oil on panel
12 × 10 in.
Thea Tenenbaum-
Malferrari.

COLORPLATE 76

A Sparrow Hawk, 1963

Oil on board

10 × 12 in.

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts Collection. Gift of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, Childe Hassam Fund.

COLORPLATE 77

The Way Things Seem to Be, 1964–65

Oil on panel

21½ × 33 in.

James M. Ray.

COLORPLATE 78

Nighttime Festivities at the Contessa Sanseverini's, 1966

Oil on panel

12 × 33 in.

Dr. and Mrs. Peter A. Gardetto.

COLORPLATE 79

The Great Bird Painting,
1967–68

Oil on panel
24 × 18 in.
Leonard P. Eager, Jr.

★COLORPLATE 80 ▷▷

Still Life with Hepaticas,
1968

Oil on panel
10 × 12 in.
Private collection.

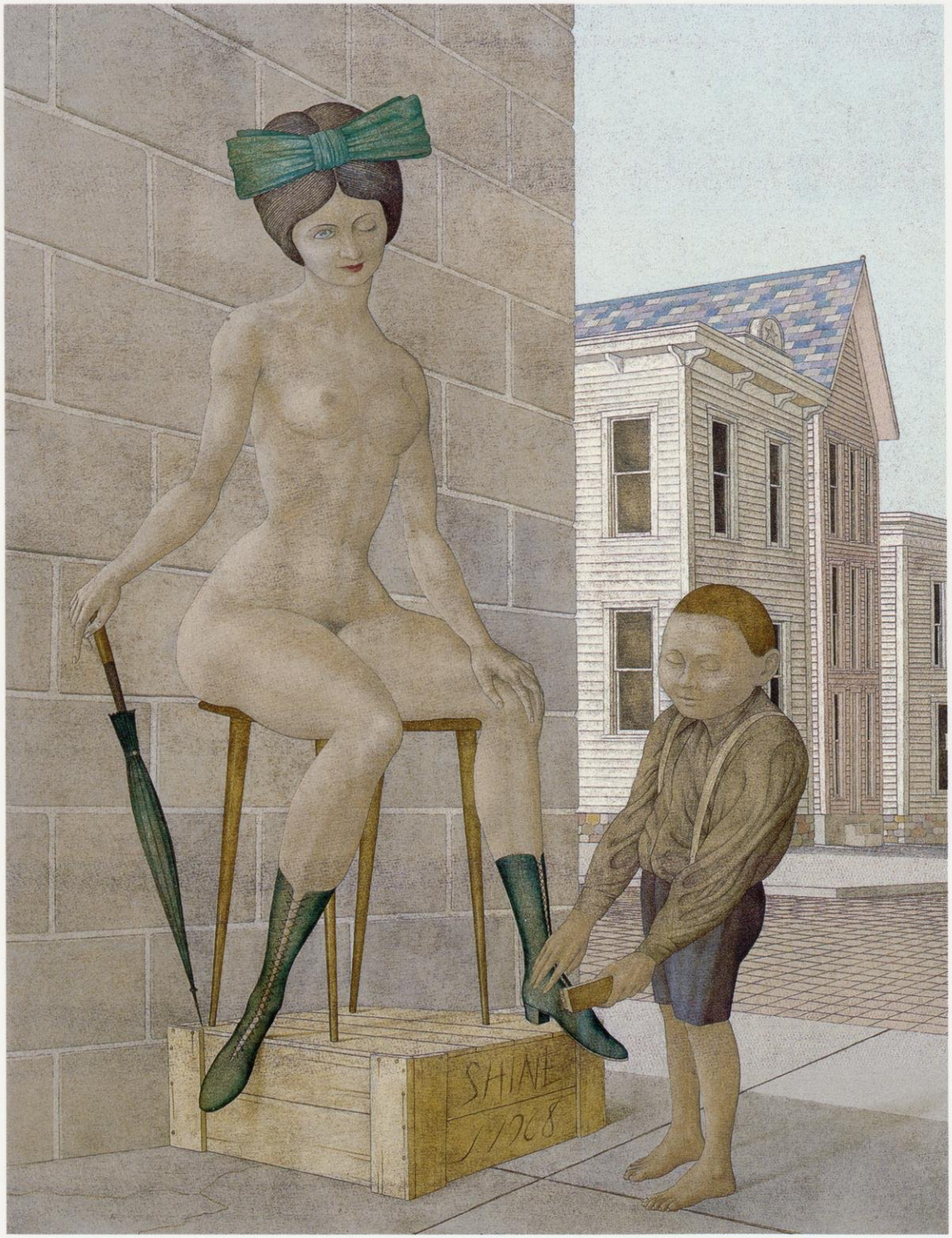
COLORPLATE 81

H. and Death, 1968

Oil on panel

7 × 9 in.

Louis K. and Susan Pear Meisel, New York.



★COLORPLATE 82

The Lady and the Shoeshine Boy, 1968

Oil on canvas

45 × 35 in.

Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio.

★COLORPLATE 83

A Panel of Mostly Good Things, 1972–73

Oil on wood

28 × 43½ in.

Nikoline Keland.

COLORPLATE 84

The Isle, 1976

Oil on panel

19 × 28 in.

Nikoline Keland.

★COLORPLATE 85

Still Life with a Green Basket, 1978

Oil on panel

18 × 28 in.

Malcolm and Karen Whyte.

COLORPLATE 86

Shirley with a Dead Junco, 1978

Oil on panel

8 × 10 in.

Dr. and Mrs. Peter A. Gardetto.

COLORPLATE 87

Muss Es Sein? Es Muss Sein!, 1979–81

Oil on panel

19 × 35 in.

Private collection.

COLORPLATE 88

A Red-Breasted Nuthatch (Lady Bird Series), 1982

Oil on panel

7½ × 9½ in.

Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin.
Gift of Bill and Lucinda McClain Family.

COLORPLATE 89

The Great Dog of Night, 1984

Oil on panel

10 × 12 in.

Private collection.

COLORPLATE 90

View near Stebbinsville Road with a Giant Kohlrabi, 1983

Oil on panel

10 × 12 in.

The Seavest Collection.

★COLORPLATE 91

An Homage to Lorenzo Lotto I, 1985

Oil on panel

9 × 7 in.

Estate of Laila Twigg-Smith.

★COLORPLATE 92

An Homage to Lorenzo Lotto II, 1985

Oil on panel

9 × 7 in.

Estate of Laila Twigg-Smith.

COLORPLATE 93

A Necessary, Enigmatic Murder, 1985

Oil on panel

8 × 10 in.

Collection of Dennis Sisco and Alexine Lesko.

COLORPLATE 94

Wildeview, 1985–86

Oil on panel

19 × 36 in.

halley k harrisburg and Michael Rosenfeld, New York.

COLORPLATE 95

The Good Policeman, 1986

Oil on panel

10 × 11 in.

Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Gift of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

COLORPLATE 96

An Homage to Alfred Rethal, 1987

Oil on canvas

15½ × 19½ in.

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Restricted gift of the Richard Florsheim Art Fund and gift of Perimeter Gallery.

★COLORPLATE 97

With Friends, 1987–88

Oil on canvas mounted on wood

42 × 84 in.

Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Membership Art Purchase Fund.

COLORPLATE 98

Portrait of D, 1988

Oil on panel

62 × 29 in.

Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin. Purchase through Rudolph and Louise Langer Fund and Gift of Karen Boyd.

COLORPLATE 99

Work Reconsidered: Love after Murder, 1989

Oil on wood

13 × 20 in.

William and Joyce Wartmann.

COLORPLATE 100

Still Further Festivities at the Contessa Sanseverini's, 1991

Oil on wood

20 × 30 in.

William and Joyce Wartmann.

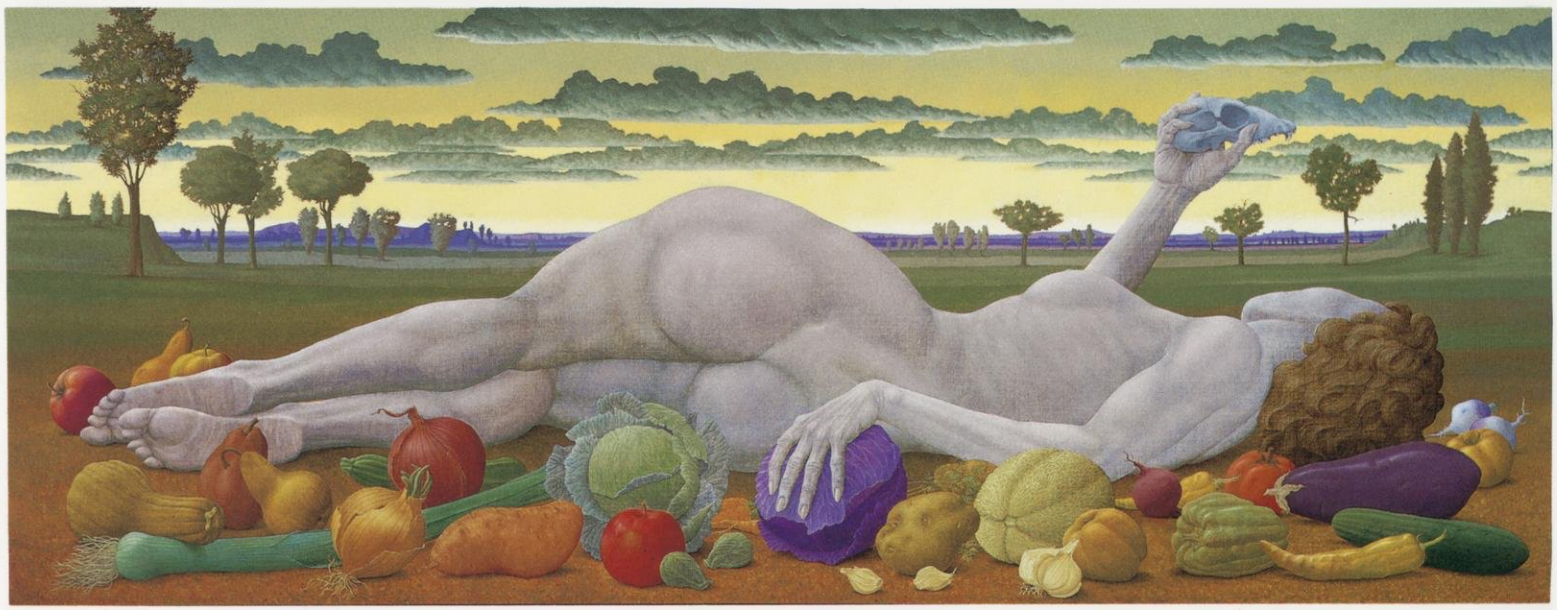
★COLORPLATE 101

May 1985, *with a Churchian Landscape,* 1991

Oil on panel

11½ × 14 in.

Sydney and Walda Besthoff Foundation.



COLORPLATE 102

September Eve, 1993

Oil on canvas mounted on wood

29 × 74 in.

Milwaukee Art Museum. Purchase, Doerfler Fund.

COLORPLATE 103

Wildeworld Revisited, 1995

Oil on canvas mounted on wood

33 × 52 in.

Joann and David Honigman.

COLORPLATE 104

A Grand Finale at the Contessa Sanseverini's, 1996–97

Oil on canvas mounted on wood

24 × 95½ in.

Private collection, Columbus, Georgia.

Chronology

Compiled by Robert Cozzolino

The primary sources for this chronology were conversations with John Wilde; Wilde's personal papers; the Art Institute of Chicago Archives; the University of Wisconsin–Madison Archives; and the following holdings of the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Gertrude Abercrombie Papers, 1888–1986; Maurice W. Berger Correspondence with John Wilde, 1953–1959; Robert Isaacson Gallery Records; and John Wilde Papers, 1935–1991.

1919 Born December 12 in Milwaukee to Mathilda and Emil Wilde.

1925–37 Attends Milwaukee public schools. At Washington High School, his interest in art is encouraged by teachers Dewey Foss, Fred Logan, and Ruth Lohr. In his junior and senior years, frequents studio of Milwaukee painter Paul Clemens, performing various apprentice-like tasks. Also visits studio of Alfred Sessler and Santos Zingale, as well as those of other local artists.

1936 Drawing *The Winter's So Far Gone I Needn't Hide My Feet Now, John* exhibited in *5th Wisconsin Salon of Art;* wins honorable mention.

1938–42 Attends University of Wisconsin, Madison, focusing on fine arts and humanities. Studies with Frederick Burkhardt, Harold Taylor, and Eliseo Vivas in philosophy; Robert Reynolds and George Sellery in history; Edward A. Ross in sociology; Glenn Trewartha in geography; and John Kienitz and James Watrous in art history. In 1938, meets art students Helen Ashman and Sylvia Fein. Also gets to know local artist Marshall Glasier and artist-writer Dudley Huppler. With these friends, makes visits to Milwaukee artist Karl Priebe, who in turn introduces them to artists Gertrude Abercrombie, Charles Sebree, and Julia Thecla, among others, in Chicago. In 1940, has first solo exhibition, Zona Gale Museum, Portage, Wisconsin. Also that year, travels to Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., to visit museums and galleries. From 1940 to 1942, serves on university gallery committee and meets such artists as Thomas Hart Benton, Reginald Marsh, and Grant Wood, who serve as exhibition jurors.

1942–46 In 1942, drafted into U.S. Army. Begins a journal/sketchbook that he will keep throughout his military service. Assigned to medical corps, receives front-line aid-station training. Produces drawings for Army's venereal disease-prevention program. In June 1943, marries Helen Ashman. Later that year, transferred to Army Air Corps; works on camouflage design and briefly instructs on the subject. In 1944, reassigned to Office of Strategic Services (precursor of Central Intelligence Agency), in Washington, D.C.; makes maps and terrain models for Army intelligence. Also that year, painting *Myself as a Reader* shown in *Eleventh Annual Wisconsin Salon of Art,* Wisconsin Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin, Madison; wins honorable mention. In 1945, painting *Exhibiting the Weapon* (colorplate 40) shown in *Twelfth Annual Wisconsin Salon of Art,* Wisconsin Memorial Union; wins outstanding work in exhibition award (jurors: Katharine Kuh and Yasuo Kuniyoshi). Also that year, has solo exhibition of drawings, David Porter Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Sylvia Fein and John Wilde, 1941.

Dudley Huppler (left) and Wilde, ca. 1947.

(Left to right) James Watrous, Marshall Glasier, John Wilde, and Dudley Huppler in the Wisconsin Union Gallery, ca. 1947.

1946–48 In 1946, discharged from Army. Returns to University of Wisconsin for graduate studies in art history; writes master's thesis on Max Ernst. Transfers to art department. Degree exhibition consists largely of drawings done while in the military. In 1947, work included in *Fifty-eighth Annual Exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture: Abstract and Surrealist American Art,* Art Institute of Chicago.

1948 On September 22, son, Jonathan, is born. Joins art department faculty, University of Wisconsin, Madison, as instructor.

1950 Has solo exhibition, consisting mainly of wartime drawings, Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York; brochure text by Lincoln Kirstein. Painting *Work Reconsidered* included in *American Painting Today–1950,* Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. This is the first of many works to bear that title; stemming from earlier paintings and drawings or from notebooks, sketches, and ideas, they are often produced decades after being conceived.

1950–51 Paints *Further Festivities at the Contessa Sanseverini's* (colorplate 53), inaugurating a series of works—initially inspired by the setting and characters of Stendahl's 1839 historical novel, *The Charterhouse of Parma*—to which he returns throughout his career.

1951 Takes one-semester leave of absence for winter solo show of paintings, Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York. This is the first of several such leaves he will take during teaching career to concentrate on studio work. Edward James, renowned English art collector and advocate of the surrealists, purchases Wilde's silverpoint drawing *A Dead Carp.* On June 7, daughter, Phoebe, is born.

1952 In May, buys and moves into nineteenth-century house in Evansville, Wisconsin; establishes studio there.

Wilde in his Evansville studio, December 1958, with works to be included in his 1959 Robert Isaacson Gallery solo show, New York. Visible over his right shoulder, *Still Life with Hanging Grapes* (1958); back wall middle row (left to right), *The Very Best* (1957) and *Bloodroot* (1955; colorplate 64); back wall bottom row (left to right), *Still Life with Plums* [n.d.], *Love* (1958), and *The Mirror* (1950); foreground, *Portrait of Jesper Dibble (Work Reconsidered II: A Wedding Portrait)* (1958; colorplate 50).

1953 Joins Newman Brown Gallery, Chicago. Begins *Wildeworld* (colorplate 61), a painting that encapsulates his work to that point and sums up his artistic position; completed 1955.

1954 Joins Everett Oehlschlaeger Galleries, Chicago.

1955–60 Included in annual *Festival of Two Worlds* exhibitions, Spoleto, Italy.

1957 Joins Robert Isaacson Gallery, New York.

1960–62 Serves as chairman of art department, University of Wisconsin, Madison. In 1961, joins Durlacher Brothers gallery, New York. In 1962, acquires fifteen acres in Cooksville, near Evansville; builds new home, studio, and private arboretum there.

Karl Priebe (left) and Wilde bird-watching and sketching, ca. 1960.

Wilde (center) and Alfred Sessler (right) during an informal painting critique, University of Wisconsin, Madison, ca. 1960.

Wilde working on underdrawing in his Evansville studio, ca. 1961.

1964 Wins American Academy of Arts and Letters-National Institute of Arts and Letters Childe Hassam Award; first of three he will receive.

1966 On December 21, Helen Wilde dies.

1967 Has retrospective exhibition, Milwaukee Art Center (now Milwaukee Art Museum); documentary film, *Wilde World,* produced in conjunction with exhibition.

1969 Named Alfred Sessler Professor of Art, University of Wisconsin, Madison. Painting *The Lady and the Shoeshine Boy* included in *34th Annual Mid-Year Show,*

Wilde in front of his Cooksville studio, 1971.

Shirley and John Wilde with Banjo at their home in Cooksville, 1986.

Wilde working on *A Grand Finale at the Contessa Sanseverini's* (colorplate 104), early 1997.

Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; wins purchase award. In August, marries Shirley Gene Miller.

1971 Begins longterm series of collaborations with artist and publisher Walter Hamady and Perishable Press, Mount Horeb, Wisconsin. These will include the publication in 1977 of twelve sequential etchings, *The Story of Jane and Joan,* as a boxed, limited-edition volume.

1971–78 Celebrating second marriage, produces two series of paintings, *Shirley in the Kitchen* and *What Shirley Found.*

1979–80 Produces *Celebration of the Months* series of paintings.

1982 Retires from teaching; becomes professor emeritus. Elected Fellow of Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters.

1984 Has solo exhibition of drawings, David Findlay, Jr., Gallery, New York; first New York show since 1972. Has retrospective of drawings, Elvehjem Museum of Art.

1985–87 Paints a series of homages to artists such as Gertrude Abercrombie, Richard Dadd, Otto Dix, Max Ernst, Alfred Rethal, Otto Runge, and Julia Thecla.

1986 Joins Schmidt-Bingham Gallery, New York.

1987 Joins Perimeter Gallery, Chicago.

1991–92 Completes *1985,* a group of twelve paintings illustrating Walter Hamady's journals; published by Perishable Press in 1992.

1993 Has retrospective of paintings and drawings, *John Wilde: Eros and Thanatos,* Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin.

1994 Elected Academician of the National Academy of Design.

Selected Exhibition History

Compiled by Robert Cozzolino

John Wilde's oeuvre includes more than six hundred drawings and an equivalent number of paintings. In a career that has spanned six decades, his work has been included in an impressive array of solo and group shows, both in Wisconsin and around the nation. The present exhibition history, while by no means complete, is offered to provide readers and researchers alike with a sense of the range of Wilde's activity as a professional artist.

Sources for the information given here include: John Wilde Papers, 1935–1991, Robert Isaacson Gallery Records, and Maurice W. Berger Correspondence with John Wilde, 1953–1959 (all in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.); the Art Institute of Chicago Archives; and Wilde's personal papers.

Exhibitions accompanied by catalogues are indicated with the abbreviation *cat.* Exhibition titles and dates are provided where known, as are the number and media of Wilde works included in a given one-, two-, or three-person show. Titles are presented here as given in those publications or other available printed matter.

Finally, note that the University of Wisconsin, Madison, became the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1973; the names of the other campuses in the university's system underwent the same punctuation change that year.

One-, Two-, and Three-Person Exhibitions

1940 Zona Gale Museum, Portage, Wisconsin.

1942 University of Wisconsin, Madison.

1945 David Porter Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

1947 *John Wilde, Dudley Huppler: An Exhibition of Artwork,* Memorial Union Gallery, University of Wisconsin, Madison, January 30–February 19 (13 paintings, 20 drawings). Traveled to: Layton Art Gallery, Milwaukee, March 1–18.

1948 Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Milwaukee Art Institute.

Exhibition of Paintings by John Wilde and Dudley Huppler, Gallery Studio, Chicago, May 29–June 25.

1949 Pennsylvania College for Women, Pittsburgh.

E. H. Bresler Co. Gallery, Milwaukee, December.

1950 *Drawings by John Wilde,* Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, May 15–June 3 (21 works).

E. H. Bresler Co. Gallery, Milwaukee.

1951 *Paintings by John Wilde,* Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, January 30–February 17 (36 works).

Paintings and Drawings by John Wilde, E. H. Bresler Co. Gallery, Milwaukee, December 1–29 (24 paintings, 11 drawings).

1953 *John Wilde.* Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, January 12–31 (22 paintings, 7 drawings).

An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by John Wilde, Newman Brown Gallery, Chicago February 28–March 20.

John Wilde, E. H. Bresler Co. Gallery, Milwaukee, December 1–31 (28 paintings).

1954 Everett Oehlschlaeger Galleries, Chicago.

1955 *An Exhibition of Paintings by John Wilde,* Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, October 17–November 5.

An Exhibition of Paintings by John Wilde, Newman Brown Gallery, Chicago, December 1–24.

1956 *An Exhibition of Paintings by John Wilde,* Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin, Madison, April 9–27 (approximately 50 works). Traveled to: Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin, May 7–26.

1957 Robert Isaacson Gallery (formerly Edwin Hewitt Gallery), New York.

1958 *Drawings by Three Wisconsin Artists* [Harold Altman, Dorothy Zupancich, and John Wilde], Milwaukee Art Center, November 11–December 7 (18 works) (cat.).

An Exhibition of Paintings by John Wilde, E. H. Bresler Co. Gallery, Milwaukee, December 5–31 (31 works).

1959 *John Wilde,* Robert Isaacson Gallery, New York, January 27–February 21 (27 paintings).

Wilde, Lane Galleries, Los Angeles, May 25–June 13 (12 works).

1960 *The Magic Eye of John Wilde,* Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, South Carolina, September 4–October 2.

Little Gallery, Lewis State Bank, Tallahassee, Florida, October 20–November 30.

Paintings by John Wilde, Robert Isaacson Gallery, New York, November 22–December 10 (28 works).

Lane Galleries, Los Angeles.

Wisconsin State University, Stevens Point.

1961 Durlacher Brothers, New York.

An Exhibition of Paintings by John Wilde, E. H. Bresler Co. Gallery, Milwaukee, December 1–30 (31 works).

1962 *John Wilde,* Durlacher Brothers, New York, September.

John Wilde One Man Show, John Nelson Bergstrom Art Center and Museum, Neenah, Wisconsin, September 19–October 14.

1963 30 *Drawings by John Wilde,* University of Wisconsin, Madison, Memorial Library, March 30–April 26.

John Wilde Drawings, Durlacher Brothers, New York, May 21–June 14 (30 works).

An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by John Wilde, E. H. Bresler Co. Gallery, Milwaukee, December 7–31 (19 paintings, 16 drawings).

1964 Paine Art Center and Arboretum, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, November 1–29 (15 drawings).

1965 Durlacher Brothers, New York, March 30–April 24.

John Wilde: Drawings and Paintings, Lane Galleries, Los Angeles, May 25–June 13.

John Wilde, Durlacher Brothers, New York, October 5–30 (37 works).

John Wilde, E. H. Bresler Co. Gallery, Milwaukee, December 1–24 (32 paintings).

1966 Northern Illinois University, Dekalb, March.

1967 *Wilde: A Retrospective,* Milwaukee Art Center, February 10–March 5 (64 works) (cat.).

1968 *John Wilde: Recent Paintings,* Banfer Gallery, New York, December 11–28 (36 works).

1970 *John Wilde,* Veldman Galleries, Milwaukee, November 23–December 24 (21 paintings, 11 drawings).

1972 Lee Nordness Galleries, New York, September 28–October 25 (21 works).

John Wilde: Recent Super-Real Oils, Whimsies of Family Life, Indoors, Outdoors (and in the Garden), Veldman Galleries, Milwaukee, October 28–November 16.

1973 *John Wilde: New Work* 1971–1973, *"Mostly Good Things,"* Veldman Galleries, Milwaukee, November 27–December 22.

1974 *John Wilde,* Everett Oehlschlaeger Galleries, Chicago, April 19–May 11 (40 works).

Albrecht Museum of Art, St. Joseph, Missouri.

Bradley Galleries, Milwaukee.

1976 Joint exhibition with Karl Priebe, John Nelson Bergstrom Art Center and Museum, Neenah, Wisconsin, September 15–October 17.

1977 Bradley Galleries, Milwaukee.

Mt. Alverno College, Milwaukee.

1978 *John Wilde,* Everett Oehlschlaeger Galleries, Chicago, April 14–May 6.

John Wilde, Bradley Galleries, Milwaukee, October 21–November 15.

1979 *John Wilde,* Fanny Garver Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin, March 31–April 27.

A Visual Feast: Paintings and Drawings by John Wilde, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, May 27–July 15.

1981 *Paintings and Drawings by John Wilde,* Jane Haslem Gallery, Washington, D.C., February 24–March 21.

1982 *Leaders in Wisconsin Art,* 1936–1981: *John Steuart Curry, Aaron Bohrod, John Wilde,* Milwaukee Art Museum, April 4–May 23 (cat.).

Brothers Wilde, John Nelson Bergstrom Art Center and Museum, Neenah, Wisconsin.

1984 *John Wilde:* 1984, David Findlay, Jr., Gallery, New York (39 works) (cat.).

John Wilde: Drawings, 1940–1984, Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison, November 17–January 6 (111 works) (cat.).

1987 *John Wilde: Paintings and Drawings,* Perimeter Gallery, Chicago, October 23–November 28.

1990 *John Wilde: Paintings and Drawings,* Perimeter Gallery, Chicago, May 4–June 5.

John Wilde, Schmidt-Bingham Gallery, New York, September 5–29.

1991 *Ghosts: Spells of the Past in Contemporary Painting* [Fred Stonehouse, Donna Tadelman, and John Wilde], Dean Jensen Gallery, Milwaukee, April 26–June 1.

1992 *John Wilde: Recent Work,* Perimeter Gallery, Chicago, October 16–November 16.

Schmidt-Bingham Gallery, New York.

1993 *John Wilde: Eros and Thanatos,* Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, June 26–August 22 (21 paintings, 6 drawings) (cat.).

1994 *John Wilde,* Schmidt-Bingham Gallery, New York, April 6–30.

John Wilde: Silverpoint Drawings, Perimeter Gallery, Chicago, September 9–October 2.

1996 *John Wilde: Looking Forward and Back,* Schmidt-Bingham Gallery, New York, May 1–June 1.

1997 *John Wilde: Paintings and Drawings,* Tory Folliard Gallery, Milwaukee, June 1–28.

1998 *John Wilde,* Schmidt-Bingham Gallery, New York, April 1–25.

John Wilde: Silverpoint Drawings, 1947–1997, Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, Madison, June 2–30.

John Wilde: Recent Work, Perimeter Gallery, Chicago, October 9–November 14.

Group Exhibitions

1936 *5th Wisconsin Salon of Art,* Wisconsin Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

1940 *19th Annual International Exhibition of Watercolors,* Art Institute of Chicago, April 25–May 26 (cat.).

Seventh Wisconsin Salon of Art, Wisconsin Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin, Madison, November 20–December 12 (cat.).

1941 *136th Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture,* Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January 26–March 2 (cat.).

45th Exhibition of Works by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity, Art Institute of Chicago, March 11–April 1 (cat.).

The University of Wisconsin Eighth Salon of Art, Wisconsin Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin, Madison, November 5–December 4 (cat.).

1942 *46th Exhibition of Works by Artists of Chicago and Vicinity,* Art Institute of Chicago, March 12–April 26 (cat.).

Ninth Annual Wisconsin Salon of Art, Wisconsin Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin, Madison, November 4–December 3 (cat.).

1943 *Tenth Annual Wisconsin Salon of Art,* Wisconsin Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin, Madison, November 4–29 (cat.).

1944 *Eleventh Annual Wisconsin Salon of Art,* Wisconsin Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin, Madison, November 11–27 (cat.).

1945 *Milwaukee Artists,* Milwaukee Art Institute, March. Traveled to: Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, August 1945; Cleveland Museum of Art, October 1945; Springfield Art Museum, Springfield, Missouri, November 1945; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, January 1946; Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon, February 1946; Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, Michigan, March 1946.

Twelfth Annual Wisconsin Salon of Art, Wisconsin Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

1946 *141st Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture,* Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January 26–March 3 (cat.).

1947 *First Biennial Exhibition of Paintings and Prints,* 1947, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, August 21–September 28 (cat.). Traveled to: Cedar Rapids Art Association, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, February 8–29; Baltimore Museum of Art, March 14–April 4; Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, April 14–May 5; Western College, Oxford, Ohio, May 19–June 10; San Francisco Museum of Art, June 20–July 18; William-Rockwell-Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, August 1–22; Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis, Tennessee, September 5–26; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, October 10–31.

Fifty-eighth Annual Exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture: Abstract and Surrealist American Art, Art Institute of Chicago, November 6–January 11, 1948 (cat.).

1948 *University of Illinois Competitive Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting,* College of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Illinois, Urbana, February 29–March 28 (cat.).

Wisconsin State Centennial Exhibition of Contemporary Wisconsin Art, Layton Art Gallery, Milwaukee, April 3–May 3.

The 6th Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Paintings, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, April 11–May 9 (cat.).

59th Annual Exhibition of Watercolors by American Artists, Art Institute of Chicago, November 4–January 2, 1949 (cat.).

1949 *One Hundred and Eight American Drawings; American Drawing Annual IX,* Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York, February 10–March 6 (cat.).

Second Biennial Exhibition of Paintings and Prints, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, November 13–January 22, 1950 (cat.).

1950 *Critics Discover New Talent,* Artists' Gallery, New York, January 3–26.

Paintings, Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, January 11–28.

145th Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January 22–February 26 (cat.).

The Tradition of Trompe l'Oeil, Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, February 8–March 4.

Symbolic Realism, Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, April 3–22.

48th Annual Exhibition of Watercolors and Prints and the 49th Annual Exhibition of Miniatures, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, October 28–November 26 (cat.).

Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 10–December 31 (cat.).

American Painting Today–1950, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, December 8–February 25, 1951 (cat.).

The National Institute of Arts and Letters, Candidates for Grants in Art for the Year 1951, National Institute of Arts and Letters, New York, December 8–January 15, 1951.

1951 *5th Old Northwest Territory Art Exhibit,* Illinois State Fairgrounds, Springfield, August 10–19 (cat.).

60th Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by American Artists, Art Institute of Chicago, October 25–December 16 (cat.).

3rd Biennial Exhibition of Paintings and Prints from the Upper Midwest, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, October 28–December 30 (cat.).

The New Reality, Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, November 1–17.

1952 *Contemporary American Painting,* University of Illinois, Urbana, Galleries, Architecture Building, College of Fine and Applied Arts, March 2–April 13 (cat.).

Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Sculpture, Watercolors, and Drawings, Whitney Museum of American Art, March 13–May 4 (cat.).

38th Wisconsin Painters and Sculptors Inc. Exhibition of Wisconsin Art, Milwaukee Art Institute, April 4–May 11.

50th Annual International Exhibition of Watercolors, Prints, and Drawings, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, October 19–November 23 (cat.).

Contemporary Drawings from 12 Countries, 1945–1952, Art Institute of Chicago, October 23–December 14 (cat.).

Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 6–January 4, 1953 (cat.).

Gallery artists group show, Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, December.

1953 *148th Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture,* Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January 25–March 1 (cat.).

Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture, University of Illinois, Urbana, Galleries, Architecture Building, College of Fine and Applied Arts, March 1–April 12 (cat.).

Nebraska Art Association 63rd Annual Exhibition, University Galleries, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, March (cat.).

23rd Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Paintings, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., March 15–May 3 (cat.).

An Exhibition of Contemporary Art Collected by American Business, Meta-Mold Company, Cedarburg, Wisconsin, April (cat.).

40th Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, June–August.

18th Annual Mid-Year Show, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, July 4–Labor Day (cat.).

Gallery artists group show, Edwin Hewitt Gallery, New York, September–October.

Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, October 15–December 6 (cat.).

1954 *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture, Watercolors, and Drawings,* Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, March 17–April 18 (cat.).

Reality and Fantasy, 1900–1954, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, May 23–July 2 (cat.).

New Accessions USA, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado, July 1–September 5 (cat.).

Le Dessin Contemporain aux Etats-Unis, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, July–August (cat.). Organized by the Art Institute of Chicago. Traveled to: Musée Grenoble, Aix-en-Provence, France.

61st Annual Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by American Artists, Art Institute of Chicago, October 21–December 5 (cat.).

52 Americans under 35, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

1955 *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture, Watercolors, and Drawings,* Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, January 12–February 20 (cat.).

Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture, University of Illinois, Urbana, Galleries, Architecture Building, College of Fine and Applied Arts, February 27–April 3 (cat.).

The 61st Annual Exhibition, Denver Art Museum, June 13–August 3 (cat.).

20th Annual Mid-Year Show, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, July 1–Labor Day (cat.).

Graphic Gala, Artists' Gallery, New York, September 9–October 6 (cat.).

Exhibition of paintings by Wisconsin artists, Everett Oehlschlaeger Galleries, Chicago, November.

3rd International Hallmark Art Awards, Wildenstein Gallery, New York, December 20–January 7, 1956.

1956 *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture, Watercolors, and Drawings,* Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, April 18–June 10 (cat.).

Recent Drawings–USA, Museum of Modern Art, New York, April 24–August 5 (cat.).

1956 *Biennial of Paintings, Prints, and Sculpture from the Upper Midwest,* Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, May 13–summer (cat.).

62nd Annual for Western Artists, Denver Art Museum, June 11–July 30 (cat.).

National invitational drawings show, Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin.

Annual Exhibition: Sculpture, Paintings, Watercolors, Drawings, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 14–January 6, 1957 (cat.).

1957 *Drawings by Invitation,* Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, Michigan, February 19–March 9.

Nebraska Art Association Sixty-seventh Annual Exhibition, University of Nebraska Art Galleries, Lincoln, February 24–March 24 (cat.).

Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture, University of Illinois, Urbana, Galleries, Architecture Building, College of Fine and Applied Arts, March 3–April 7 (cat.).

22nd Annual Mid-Year Show, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, June 30–Labor Day (cat.).

Annual Exhibition: Sculpture, Paintings, Watercolors, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 20–January 12, 1958 (cat.).

4th International Hallmark Art Awards, Wildenstein Gallery, New York, December 3–28.

1958 *153rd Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture,* Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January 26–February 23 (cat.).

Contemporary American Art, Enos and Sarah De Waters Art Center, Flint, Michigan, August 7–September 15 (cat.).

The 1958 Pittsburgh Bicentennial International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture, Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, December 5–February 8, 1959 (cat.).

1959 *154th Annual International Exhibition of Watercolors, Prints, and Sculpture,* Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January 25–March 1 (cat.).

Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture, University of Illinois, Urbana, Galleries, Architecture Building, College of Fine and Applied Arts, March 1–April 5 (cat.).

Leading Wisconsin Artists, John Nelson Bergstrom Art Center and Museum, Neenah, Wisconsin, August 10–September 1.

2nd Biennial of American Painting and Sculpture, Detroit Institute of Arts, November 24–January 3, 1960 (cat.); also shown as *155th Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture,* Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January 24–February 28, 1960 (cat.).

1960 *Illinois State Fair, Fourteenth Professional Art Exhibit,* Fine Arts Gallery Exposition Building, Springfield, August 12–21.

First National Bank Exhibition, 1960, First National Bank, Minneapolis, November 1–30 (cat.).

Annual Exhibition: Contemporary Sculpture and Drawings, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, December 7–January 22, 1961 (cat.).

1961 *Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture,* Krannert Art Museum, College of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Illinois, Urbana, February 26–April 2 (cat.).

Illinois State Fair, Fifteenth Professional Art Exhibit, Fine Arts Gallery, Exposition Building, Springfield, August 11–20.

The Lambert Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, October 10–November 18 (cat.).

Drawings: USA, St. Paul Art Center, Minnesota, November 16–January 20, 1962 (cat.).

1962 *157th Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture,* Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January 12–February 25 (cat.).

American Watercolors and Drawings from 1900, Juster Gallery, New York, April 23–May 12.

Ravinia Festival Art Exhibit, Casino Gallery, Highland Park, Illinois, July 3–August 12 (cat.).

Art USA Now: The S. C. Johnson and Son, Inc. Collection of Contemporary American Paintings, Milwaukee Art Center, September 20–October 21. Toured internationally.

3rd fall invitational show, The Gallery, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, October 18–November 10.

1962 Biennial of Painting and Sculpture, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, October 21–November 25 (cat.).

Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Sculpture and Drawings, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, December 12–February 3, 1963 (cat.).

1963 *Eleventh Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture, 1963,* Krannert Art Museum, College of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Illinois, Urbana, March 3–April 7 (cat.).

Drawing USA, St. Paul Art Center, Minnesota, November (cat.).

Painting and Drawing: The Nude, Banfer Gallery, New York, December.

1964 *Fine Arts Festival,* South Dakota State University, Brookings.

Max 24:64. National Exhibit of Small Paintings, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, November 1–30.

1965 *A Decade of American Drawings,* Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

The American Academy of Arts and Letters, The National Institute of Arts and Letters Exhibition of Paintings Eligible for Purchase under the Childe Hassam Fund, National Institute of Arts, New York, February 6–21.

Drawings from Seventeen States: A Regional Exhibition in Collaboration with the Drawing Society, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, February 11–March 14.

Contemporaries #1, Gallery of Modern Art, New York, February–March.

Art across America, M. Knoedler and Co., New York, September 16–October 1.

Group show, Lane Galleries, Los Angeles, October 18–30.

Group show, Banfer Gallery, New York, December 5–30.

1966 *Drawings USA '66: Third Biennial Exhibition,* St. Paul Art Center, Minnesota, April 7–June 5 (cat.).

Max. 24/66, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, November 3–30 (cat.).

The First Flint Invitational: An Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture, Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, Michigan, November 4–December 31 (cat.).

1967 *162nd Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture,* Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, January 20–March 5 (cat.).

Fifth Annual National Invitational Exhibition, Frank H. McClung Museum Gallery, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, April 16–May 14 (cat.).

32nd Annual Mid-Year Show, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, July 2–September 4.

1968 *Drawings 1968,* Ithaca College Museum of Art, Ithaca, New York, January 23–February 24.

Collector's Choice Exhibition, Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma, February 4–27.

1969 *144th Annual Exhibition,* National Academy of Design, New York, February 27–March 13 (cat.).

Max 24–69, National Biennial Small Painting Show, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, March 8–23.

Invitational Drawing and Small Sculpture Exhibition, Illinois State University, Normal, April.

34th Annual Mid-Year Show, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, June 29–September 1.

Art for Christmas: American Realism, Banfer Gallery, New York, December 9–27.

The H. Marc Meyers Collection: A Selection of Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., December 12–January 18, 1970 (cat.).

1970 Group show, Banfer Gallery, New York, February 17–March 7.

1972 Wisconsin painters invitational show, Bradley Galleries, Milwaukee, November 5–30.

1973 *Drawing America, 1973,* Albrecht Museum of Art, St. Joseph, Missouri, January 10–February 10 (cat.).

1974 *Revington Collection/74,* Gallery II, Creative Arts Department, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, January 7–February 1.

The Department of Art Faculty Exhibition: Celebrating the 125th Anniversary, Elvehjem Art Center, University of Wisconsin–Madison, March 24–May 12 (cat.).

1975 *150th Annual Exhibition,* National Academy of Design, New York, February 22–March 16 (cat.).

Summer Painting Show, Fanny Garver Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin, July 13–August 30.

1976 *Bicentennial Exhibition,* Everett Oehlschlaeger Galleries, Chicago, June 11–July 3.

American Master Drawings and Watercolors: Works on Paper from Colonial Times to the Present, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 23–January 23, 1977 (cat.).

1977 *Contemporary Figurative Painting in the Midwest: An Invitational Exhibition at the Madison Art Center,* Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, February 26–April 10 (cat.).

Invitational American Drawing Exhibition, Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego, California, September 17–October 30 (cat.).

1978 *New Art Works: Department of Art Faculty Exhibition,* Elvehjem Art Center, University of Wisconsin–Madison, January 29–March 19.

Things Seen, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, September 5–October 1 (cat.).

1980 *American Portrait Drawings,* National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C., May 1–August 3 (cat.).

1982 *Realism and Realities: The Other Side of American Painting, 1940–1960,* Rutgers University Art Gallery, New Brunswick, New Jersey, January 17–March 26 (cat.).

Art Faculty Exhibition, Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison, April 4–May 30 (cat.).

1984 *Wisconsin Directions 4,* Milwaukee Art Museum, September 14–October 28 (cat.).

Hamady's Perishable Press: A 20th Anniversary Sampling of Handcrafted Books, Gallery 210, University of Missouri, St. Louis, October 3–November 4 (cat.).

1985 *The Fine Line: Drawing with Silver in America,* Norton Gallery and School of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida, March 23–May 5 (cat.).

1986 *Views 86: The Art Faculty,* Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison, March 15–May 4 (cat.).

Marriage à la Mode: The Aesthetics of Mating, Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, Racine, Wisconsin, June 7–August 3 (cat.).

The Changing Likeness: Twentieth Century Portrait Drawings, Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, New York, June 27–September 4 (cat.).

1987 *20th Century Drawings from the Whitney Museum of American Art,* National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., May 21–September 7; Cleveland Museum of Art, September 30–November 8; Achenbach Foundation, California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, March 5–June 5, 1988; Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, June 30–August 28; Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield County, Stamford, Connecticut (organizing institution), November 17–January 25, 1989 (cat.).

1988 *Realisms,* Fine Arts Galleries, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, February 28–April 10 (cat.).

100 Years of Wisconsin Art, Milwaukee Art Museum, September 24–November 6 (cat.).

The Face, Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, December 1–January 16, 1989 (cat.).

1989 *Drawing Conclusions: An Invitational Drawing Exhibition,* Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, February 8–23.

The Figure: Selections from the Arkansas Arts Center Foundation Collection, Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, November 16–February 11, 1990 (cat.).

1990 *For the Birds: Artists Examine Aviary Abodes,* Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, Racine, Wisconsin, June 10–September 12 (cat.).

Wisconsin Triennial, Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, September 22–November 9 (cat.).

University of Wisconsin–Madison Department of Art Faculty Exhibition, Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison, December 8–January 20, 1991 (cat.).

1991 *Artists and the American Yard: Lawn Gnomes, Pink Flamingos and Bathtub Grottos,* Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, Racine, Wisconsin, June 7–September 15 (cat.).

1992 *Just Plain Screwy: Metaphysical and Metaphorical Tools by Artists,* Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, Racine, Wisconsin, June 7–September 13 (cat.).

Silverpoint Et cetera: Contemporary American Metalpoint Drawings, Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, August 27–October 11 (cat.).

1993 *Pets: Artists and an American Obsession,* Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, Racine, Wisconsin, June 13–September 5 (cat.).

Wisconsin Triennial, Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, September 11–November 14 (cat.).

1994 *"Unstill" Still Life: An Exhibition of Contemporary Painting in Oil,* Main Gallery, Fine Arts Center Galleries, Department of Art, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, October 6–November 5.

University of Wisconsin–Madison Department of Art Faculty Exhibition, Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison, December 9–February 12, 1995 (cat.).

1995 *170th Annual Exhibition,* National Academy of Design, New York, February 25–April 2 (cat.).

Let's Play House: Artists and the Domestic Environment, Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, Racine, Wisconsin, June 11–September 6 (cat.).

American Art, 1940–1965: Tradition Reconsidered, San Jose Museum of Art, California, December 2–February 2, 1996.

1996 *Peep Show, Summer 1996,* Schmidt-Bingham Gallery, New York, June 7–August 9.

Just Add Water: Artists and the Aqueous World, Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, Racine, Wisconsin, June 9–September 1 (cat.).

Wisconsin Triennial, Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, September 8–November 17 (cat.).

Self-Portraits: Wisconsin Artists, Charles Allis Art Museum, Milwaukee, December 8–January 19, 1997 (cat.).

1997 *Food, Glorious Food: Artists and Eating,* Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts, Racine, Wisconsin, June 1–August 31 (cat.).

Realism in 20th-Century American Painting, Ogunquit Museum of American Art, Ogunquit, Maine, August 19–September 30.

172nd National Academy of Design exhibition, New York.

1998 *Making Marks: Drawing in the 20th Century, from Picasso to Kiefer,* Milwaukee Art Museum, June 12–August 23 (cat.).

Surreal Wisconsin: Surrealism and Its Legacy in Wisconsin Art, Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, August 23–November 15.

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John Wilde: Eros and Thanatos. Interview by Tina Yapelli. exh. cat. Madison, Wis.: Madison Art Center, 1993.

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Acknowledgments

Many individuals participated in the creation of this exhibition and catalogue. First, I wish to thank Theodore F. Wolff, the *Christian Science Monitor*'s art critic from 1977 to 1990, for so freely sharing his knowledge and ideas as well as for his excellent and sensitive essay on John Wilde. He began his study of drawing under Wilde at the University of Wisconsin five decades ago and has assiduously followed his career ever since. I also wish to recognize the efforts of Robert Cozzolino, a graduate student in the department of art history at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Intelligent, affable, and admirably knowledgeable about mid-twentieth-century American figurative painting, he contributed scholarly and curatorial skills that proved to be invaluable to the success of this project.

A number of people facilitated Robert Cozzolino's research. His fellow art department students Theresa Hargreaves, Michelle Johnson, and Andrea Roemhild served as temporary registrarial assistants at the Elvehjem Museum of Art. Supporting him at the Art Institute of Chicago were: Pam Steudemann and Iris Wong of the Department of Imaging and Technical Services; Mark Pascale of the Department of Prints and Drawings; and Bart Ryckbosch and Deborah Webb of Institutional Archives.

Others who shared information and enthusiasm were: Penelope Schmidt of Schmidt-Bingham Gallery, New York City; Charles Savage, formerly of the Minnesota Museum of American Art, St. Paul; John LeGloahec of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York; Frank Paluch of Perimeter Gallery, Chicago; Judy Throm of the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; and Peter A. Gardetto and William McClain, two passionate Wisconsin collectors of Wilde's art.

I extend a special thanks to the public and private lenders to the exhibition; they are listed on page 164. In addition, I wish to recognize the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Foundation; the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; the Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, Burlington; the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California; the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut; and the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts. Malcolm and Karen Whyte kindly permitted us to illustrate works from their collection, even though those works could not be included in the exhibition.

The expertise of various Elvehjem Museum of Art staff members was essential in mounting the exhibition and preparing this book. Editor Patricia Powell helped edit the manuscript and gather illustrations. Registrar Pam Richardson deftly planned and carried out complex shipping and crating arrangements. Exhibition Designer Jerl Richmond designed and supervised the installation of the exhibition. Development Specialist Kathy Paul prepared grant proposals. Assistant Director for Administration Corinne Magnoni assisted with plan-

ning and oversaw funding details. Curator for Education Anne Lambert helped with numerous details involving university and community programming.

I am grateful to Paul Anbinder of Hudson Hills Press for his masterly production of this book, to Martin Lubin for his supple and engaging design, and to editor Phil Freshman for his careful reading and shaping of the manuscript. Susan Curvin Jones offered Mr. Freshman sound assistance.

Funding for the catalogue and exhibition was generously provided by Karen Johnson Boyd; the Erdman Family Foundation; the Evjue Foundation, Inc./The Capital Times; the Hilldale and Brittingham Funds at the University of Wisconsin–Madison; the Elvehjem's 1929 Endowment Fund; the Richard A. Florsheim Fund; the Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission with additional support from the Madison Community Foundation and the Overture Foundation; and an anonymous donor. To all of these we owe a profound debt of gratitude.

Finally, I offer an especially heartfelt thanks to John Wilde and his charming wife, Shirley, for so generously giving of their time, patience, and gracious hospitality.

Russell Panczenko
Director
Elvehjem Museum of Art
University of Wisconsin–Madison

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