



N.C. Wyeth

Title

The American Mother

Medium

Oil on hardboard (Renaissance Panel)

Date

1941

Dimensions

33 7/8 × 25 in. (86 × 63.5 cm)

Accession number

77.7

Credit Line

Gift of E. R. Squibb & Sons, 1977

Web Description

Beginning early in his career, N. C. Wyeth created pictures for the advertising industry—a practice he came to dislike but accepted nevertheless for the lucrative fees. In April 1941, he was contacted by the advertising manager of the E. R. Squibb Corporation, a leader in the pharmaceutical industry, with a vague direction for this commission: "What I should like most of all is to leave you free to create a picture built around the theme of the mother and her interest and concern in the health and welfare of the family" (Clyde Eddy to NCW, 4/17/1941, Wyeth Family Archives). The artist developed this picture based on modeling sessions with his daughter Ann and her son, John Denys McCoy. Wyeth referred to the painting as "The Madonna of the Tiled Room" and completed it by June 5, 1941. According to the artist's 1941 income tax notes, he was paid \$1,200 for this commission. Squibb reproduced this image on poster boards of various sizes, for display in drugstores and other markets for their products. The image reflects a rosy view of the role of the American mother—after December 1941, many women would have their lives changed as they entered the workforce to bolster the war effort.