



Jamie Wyeth, Rudolf Nureyev

Title

Nureyev - Don Quixote - Yellow Background

Medium

Combined mediums on brown cardboard

Date

2001

Dimensions

47 3/4 × 36 in. (121.3 × 91.4 cm)

Accession number

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Web Description

Beginning in 1976, the artist Jamie Wyeth and the dancer Rudolf Nureyev partnered in an artistic conversation that resulted in a series of portrait studies. Always one to know his subject well, Wyeth measured Nureyev's muscled frame with calipers, a method of the Old Masters, taking down detailed notes for the dancer's anatomy in his sketchbooks. The studies from 1976 and 1977 came into service for a second series of portraits Wyeth embarked upon well after the dancer's death in 1993. From the dancer's estate, Wyeth acquired a number of Nureyev's costumes worn in his famous classical ballet roles, such as Don Quixote and Swan Lake. With the return of the costumes to Wyeth's consciousness, the dancer's form returned to Wyeth's work. While the 1970s studies are exacting and careful renderings, the twenty-first century works are colorful, daring, and vivacious. Some of the 1970s works were even repurposed and revised, combining Wyeth's first-hand observations of Nureyev with an expressionistic memorial to the man now gone.