



Peter Hurd

Title

Blowing a Nor'wester

Medium

Oil on canvas

Date

ca. 1940

Dimensions

32 1/4 × 24 1/8 in. (81.9 × 61.3 cm)

Accession number

96.1.97

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Credit Line

Bequest of Carolyn Wyeth, 1996

Web Description

Peter Hurd (1904-1984) was an illustrator, muralist, lithographer, and painter. Born and raised in Roswell, New Mexico, he had strong ties to the region and was often described as a regionalist painter of the American Southwest. In 1921 he traveled East to attend West Point, from which he resigned (in good standing) after two years in order to pursue his true calling as an artist. He subsequently moved to the Philadelphia region and enrolled at Haverford College to study liberal arts. In late 1923, when he was 19 years old, Hurd became acquainted with the famous illustrator, N. C. Wyeth, who he persuaded to accept him as a pupil in 1924. Hurd therefore left Haverford College after one semester and moved to Chadds Ford, PA, where he lived with the Wyeth family, attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and began studying under N. C. Wyeth, which he did for about six years. Many of Hurd's early works were inspired by the farmland and gentle rolling hills of the Chadds Ford area. In 1929, Hurd married Wyeth's eldest daughter, Henriette Wyeth, and in the late 1930s the two moved back to Hurd's home state of New Mexico, where they lived on their ranch, not far from Roswell. While seascapes were a rare subject for Hurd, he painted "Blowing a Nor'wester" for the front cover of an edited volume by N. C. Wyeth entitled "Great Stories of the Sea and Ships." Hurd produced an additional twenty full-page illustrations for the book. "Blowing a Nor'wester" illustrates "North-Wester," a story included in this volume by Richard Henry Dana, Jr. In this image we see a clipper ship being tossed about in high winds and a wild sea during a storm, while five sailors struggle against the elements in order to furl the upper sails, while two others

appear to reef the smaller sails below. Hurd captures the scene as Dana describes it: "...we were fast going off to the land of Nod, when—bang, bang, bang—on the scuttle, and 'All hands, reef topsails, ahoy!' started us out of our berths...one reef after another, we took in the topsails, and before we could get them hoisted up, we heard a sound like a rattling of thunder, and the jib was blown to atoms..."