



Andrew Wyeth

Title

Raccoon

Medium

Tempera on panel

Date

1958

Dimensions

48 1/8 × 48 1/8 in. (122.2 × 122.2 cm)

Catalogue Number

83.15

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Credit Line

Acquisition in memory of Nancy Hanks made possible by David Rockefeller, Laurance S. Rockefeller, Mimi Haskell, and The Pew Memorial Trust, 1983

Web Description

The haunting gaze of a dog named Jack immediately commands attention in the painting *Raccoon*. In the work, Andrew Wyeth depicts three dogs chained to a wall in an old mill in Chadd's Ford. Kept by their owner exclusively for raccoon hunting, the dogs spent most of their lives tethered in these meager conditions which the artist faithfully depicted. The oversized ring on Jack's collar reinforces his captivity, though he sits calmly even as another dog, partially visible on the left, strains the limits of his chain, pulled taut across the entire width of the panel. A shaft of light falls across the rough-hewn stone wall—painstakingly rendered with a palette knife to achieve the texture of the building's heavy masonry—illuminating Jack like the saints and martyrs of Italian Baroque paintings, called out of darkness by a heavenly light. Strong shapes add drama to the picture's emotional subject matter. Wyeth wished to buy Jack, but the owner refused and the dog was later shot. While Wyeth worked on *Raccoon*, his wife, Betsy, explored the surrounding buildings of the mill complex along the Brandywine River. Discovering the property was for sale, the Wyeths purchased the buildings and painstakingly renovated them. They became the family home and the inspiration for many more of Wyeth's paintings.