



N.C. Wyeth

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Title

Rose Salterne and the White Witch

Medium

Oil on canvas

Date

1920

Catalogue Number

96.1.20

Credit Line

Bequest of Carolyn Wyeth, 1996

Web Description

In 1920, both N. C. Wyeth and Thornton Oakley, a fellow alumnus of the Howard Pyle School, were commissioned

to illustrate editions of *Westward Ho!* In this incident, the story's heroine, Rose Salterne, prepares to follow the advice of the White Witch to undress, immerse herself three times in the sea, and then repeat an incantation. Wyeth concentrated on solid "flesh and bones" people, his Rose clearly experiencing doubts any young woman in her position would have. Oakley chose to depict Rose actually in the water and emphasized the element of magic by visual cues. Wyeth's realistic approach makes his image (and by extension the relevant passage) a timeless study in shared human experiences. The image appeared on the dust-jacket of a later (ca. 1924) Scribner's edition. Wyeth was a great admirer of the work of Winslow Homer, and he would occasionally take inspiration from Homer's work for both his commissioned and personal painting. Here the figures of the two women on a long beach dramatized by long shadows suggest similar scenes by Homer. In preparation for this commission, the artist read and annotated a 1907 edition published in London by Thomas Nelson Sons (Brandywine River Museum library, #22481). According to Scribner's records, all paintings in the set were the property of the artist and returned to him on Aug. 19, 1921. Scribner's paid Wyeth \$3,500 for the commission.