



## Andrew Wyeth, Siri Erickson

### Title

The Virgin

### Medium

Tempera on panel

### Date

1969

### Dimensions

47 × 34 1/2 in. (119.4 × 87.6 cm)

### Catalogue Number

75.1.2

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### Web Description

Andrew Wyeth met Siri Erickson the summer before his longtime friend and model Christina Olson died, and the following summer, after Christina's death, he began painting her. These are Wyeth's first publicly known paintings of the nude figure. He explained his use of the figure to express a concept beyond the actual model: "To me, these pictures of the young Siri are continuations of Olsons, and at the same time they are sharp counteractions to the portraits of Christina, which symbolize the deterioration and dwindling of something. With Siri, you suddenly get this change of such an invigorating, zestful, powerful phenomenon. Here was something bursting forth, like spring coming through the ground. In a way Siri was never a figure to be painted, but more a burst of life." Although intended as a symbol, the figure is rendered with intense attention to detail, including specific elements such as tan lines and the pattern of sunlight on the girl's upper body. The figure emerges from the dark background in a classical pose, her weight resting on one leg while the other leg bends slightly. Wyeth worked for four weeks to capture the proportions of the standing figure, incorporating several viewpoints into the finished piece. The artist said: "You will notice there's no real location.... You're looking down at the feet and up to the head at the same time. You couldn't get that angle with a photograph. She moved in different positions to get the right pose. I wasn't particularly located in any spot. There is a floor there in the painting, but it isn't there, in a sense. I

started working on the body and began to paint it in. The sun came out one day, in the morning, and she stepped back...and her head just hit the sun, which fell against her face and upper body for a short time. I painted like mad. She stepped up the steps a little just to catch that, and it made the picture. It has a marvelous bit of gold with the rest of the room in the shadow."