

Only In Your State

By Kathleen McShane

Part 4: New Mexico to South Carolina

New Mexico

Everyone knows about Georgia O’Keeffe’s connection to New Mexico, so I chose someone less obvious: **Henriette Wyeth** (1907-1997). Yes, those Wyeths. Henriette was the sister of Andrew Wyeth, daughter of N.C. Wyeth, aunt to Jamie Wyeth. Henriette contracted polio at age three, which affected her right hand. As a result, she learned to draw with her left hand; she painted with her right. She first studied art with her brother, Andrew, under their father’s tutelage. By age 16, she was already known as a fine portrait artist. At age 21, she married fellow art student and later well-known artist Peter Hurd (whose art is also associated with New Mexico). In the mid-1930s, the couple moved to New Mexico, where they resided for the rest of their lives. Henriette was the only one of the Wyeths to leave the East Coast.

Henriette was best known for her portraits, including the official portrait of former First Lady Pat Nixon. Her portrait of her brother, Andrew, graced the cover of *Time Magazine* on December 27, 1963. Wyeth and Hurd were jointly commissioned to paint a portrait of Lyndon Johnson for the January 1, 1965, cover of *Time Magazine*. She loved painting children, capturing their youth and innocence. The first picture below is of Wyeth’s and Hurd’s daughter, Ann Carol. Although best known for her portraits, her still-life paintings include close-ups of vibrantly colored flowers.



Henriette Wyeth, *Ann Carol with Iris*, 1943



Henriette Wyeth, *Andrew Wyeth*, 1963



Henriette Wyeth, *Patricia Ryan Nixon*, 1978

New York

George Bellows (1882-1925) was born in Ohio but went to New York after graduating from college. Bellows studied with Robert Henri in New York, who pioneered the Ashcan School of American Realism. Bellows became the leading young member of that art movement known for his realistic depictions of urban life in New York City. Robert Henri introduced him to the works of Goya and Honoré Daumier, whose influence can be seen in Bellows' works of art. When he died at 42 from a ruptured appendix, Bellows was known as one of America's greatest artists (according to the Metropolitan Museum of Art). His gritty, realistic boxing scenes are among the most recognized American works of art.



George Bellows, *Cliff Dwellers*, 1913



George Bellows, *Dempsey and Firpo*, 1924

North Carolina

Romare Bearden (1911-1988) was born in Charlotte, NC. Although he and his family left North Carolina when Romare was very young, the artist said, “Most artists take someplace, and like a flower, they sink roots, looking for universal implications... My roots are in North Carolina.” Many of his paintings and collages were drawn from memories of his time in North Carolina. In Romare Bearden Park in Charlotte, visitors will find an abstract sculpture nearly 30 feet tall entitled *Spiritual Odyssey* (2017) by Richard Hunt. Bearden and Hunt were contemporaries and the first African American artists to have solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC in 1971.

Bearden’s art career started with illustrations and cartoons for magazines and newspapers. In the early 1940s, his work often featured the everyday life of African Americans in a style that revealed the influence of the Mexican muralists, e.g., Diego Rivera and the Cubists. After serving in the army during World War II, his work frequently had religious themes in a style that combined aspects of Cubism, Abstract Expressionism, and the Old Masters. During the early 1950s, Bearden took a hiatus from painting, concentrating on composing music. In 1954, he co-wrote the jazz classic *Seabreeze*, which Billy Eckstine recorded.

During the 1960s, Bearden moved into the art forms he is most associated with: collage and photomontage (collage with photographs). The artist referred to his technique as “collage painting,” as he often painted over the fragments of paper, photos, illustrations, and fabric that were the basis of his artwork. The works usually reflect Bearden’s love of music and his memories of rural life in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, where he was born. The artist said, “My purpose is to paint the life of my people as I know it.”



Romare Bearden, *Conjur Woman*, 1964



Romare Bearden, *The Block*, 1971



Romare Bearden, *Guitar Music*, 1986

North Dakota

James Rosenquist (1933-2017) was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He was one of the seminal proponents of the Pop Art movement. His first foray into commercial art was at age 18, painting Phillips 66 signs from North Dakota to Wisconsin. He then spent three years painting billboards. Rosenquist took the techniques he learned from painting billboards to the large-scale works he began creating in 1960. Rosenquist drew upon the iconography of advertising and mass media to depict everyday life and to address social issues. One of Rosenquist's best-known works is *President-Elect* (1960-61), a collage/painting that includes a poster from John F. Kennedy's Presidential campaign juxtaposed with images of middle-class consumerism. Kennedy was the first Presidential candidate to fully utilize the mass media in his campaign. The painting itself seems to be about the man advertising himself.



James Rosenquist, *President-Elect*, 1960-61

Rosenquist achieved international acclaim with his monumental *F-111* (1964). The work extends 89 feet, is 10 feet tall, and has 59 interconnected panels. It is currently on display at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC. It isn't easy to appreciate the scale and detail of the work in the photograph below. To see the detail more clearly and hear the artist discuss *F-111*, click on the following link to a short video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txHg9ItLH3Y>



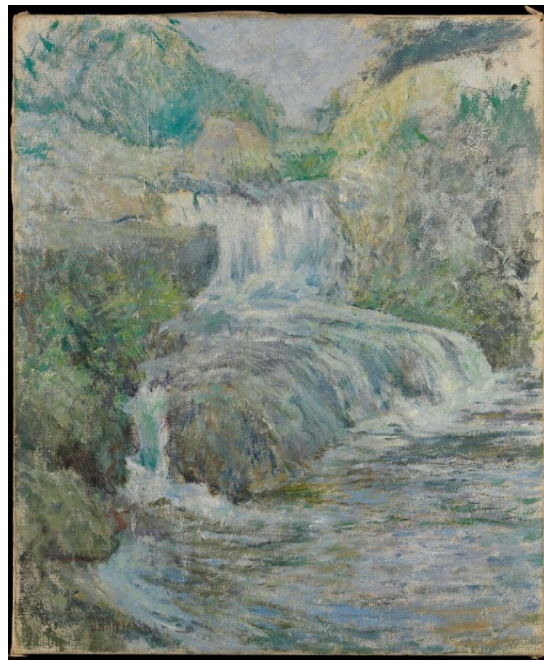
James Rosenquist, *F-111*, 1964

Ohio

John Twachtman (1853-1902) was a native of Cincinnati, Ohio. Today, he is considered one of the most progressive and poetic landscape painters of his time.

Twachtman was an Impressionist and a founder of the Ten. The Ten was a loose alliance of artists who banded together in 1898 to exhibit their work as a unified group. This group included Julian Weir (Connecticut), Twachtman's best friend. The two shared a love of fishing, painting outdoors, and long walks in the country. Also, like Weir, Twachtman was part of the Cos Cob Artists' Colony in Greenwich, CT. He painted many landscapes of his farm and garden in Greenwich, often when they were covered with snow. His artwork includes dozens of paintings of a small waterfall on his property, capturing the scene in different seasons and times of day.

Twachtman's early death of a brain aneurysm at age 49 cut his promising art career short. "By the death of John H. Twachtman, the world has lost an artist of the first rank," wrote artist Thomas Dewing (also one of The Ten). Dewing said, "He is too modern, probably, to be fully recognized or appreciated at the present, but his place will be recognized in the future."



John Twachtman, *Waterfall*, 1890-1891



John Twachtman, *Old Holley, House Cos Cob*, 1901



John Twachtman, *Fishing Boats at Gloucester*, 1901

Oklahoma

Charles Banks Wilson (1918-2013) spent his childhood in Miami, Oklahoma, part of the federally recognized Miami Tribe of Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Historical Society says, “Few other artists have become so identified with their state as Oklahoma’s Charles Banks Wilson.”

As a student at the Art Institute of Chicago, Wilson was often asked questions about the Native Americans in Oklahoma. Inspired by his fellow students’ interest, he began sketching and painting Native Americans from different Oklahoma tribes on his trips back home. Wilson’s endeavors resulted in more than 100 depictions of individuals from 65 tribes. The artist’s collection of images of “purebloods” (Native Americans of a single tribal heritage) was the subject of a book by Wilson entitled *Search for the Native American Purebloods* (1983)

Wilson’s works hang in the Oklahoma State Capitol, including life-sized portraits of Will Rogers, Woody Guthrie, Jim Thorpe, and Sequoyah. There are also four murals of Wilson’s under the Capitol dome in the rotunda that depict the state’s early history, 110 feet in length. Wilson’s portrait of Will Rogers is in the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery collection. The artist also illustrated 28 books during his lifetime, including a version of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, published in 1948.



Charles Banks Wilson, *Will Rogers*, 1933-1936



Charles Banks Wilson, *Shawnee Ribbon Bets*, 1948



Charles Banks Wilson, *Sequoia*, 1965

Oregon

Louis Bunce (1907-1983) moved to Oregon with his family in 1913 and died at 75. The *Oregon Encyclopedia* describes him as “a legend in Oregon modernism.”

For a significant retrospective of Bunce’s work organized by the Hallie Ford Museum of Art in Salem, Oregon, the Senior Faculty Curator and Professor of Art History at Willamette University said, “Bunce was Oregon’s archetypal modern artist of the mid-twentieth century. 'Louie,' as he was called, was ambitious, gregarious, fun-loving, women-loving, antic and outrageous. He was deadly serious when it came to artmaking and engaged with it all: Cubism, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Post-Modernism, and at the end of his life, almost operatic Romanticism.”

In 1958, he completed a major mural (11’ x 20’) for the Portland International Airport depicting "whirling propellers and shadows of the concourse as seen from above." At the time of its installation, the mural created huge controversy across the State of Oregon, being called too abstract for a public art project. Cultural conservatives were so enraged that Bunce received death threats, had garbage dumped on his lawn, and had to be under police guard.

After months of controversy, *The Oregonian* announced it would publish no more letters to the editor. The newspaper said, “There are some things, such as Elvis Presley, Limburger cheese, and the sack dress, of which readers either approve or disapprove...There is no middle ground, no basis for compromise, and no hope that the most forceful arguments put forth by believers will persuade nonbelievers. In this category, we would place the question of abstract art.” The mural is still there for airport visitors to admire.



Louis Bunce, *Portland Airport Mural*, 1958



Louis Bunce, *Untitled*, 1959



Louis Bunce, *Habitat*, 1976

Pennsylvania

Alice Neel (1900-1984) was born and educated in Pennsylvania. She is known for her Expressionistic and daringly honest portraits of friends, family and lovers. Neel is widely regarded as one of the foremost American figurative artists of the 20th century. She called herself “a collector of souls.” In 2021, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC, presented her solo retrospective exhibition, *Alice Neel: People Come First*.

Neel led a troubled life. Her first child died of diphtheria just before her first birthday. Another daughter was lost to her estranged husband’s family in Cuba two years later. That daughter later committed suicide. As a single mother, she raised two sons in Spanish Harlem while on welfare. (The portrait of one of the two sons, Hartley, exhausted after his first year of medical school, appears below). Neel herself attempted suicide twice, once by eating glass. She was a neglected artist for most of her life, achieving acclaim only towards the end of her life.

In 1980, four years before her death at age 84, Neel painted her first self-portrait, a nude. Though her body appears physically fragile, her gaze is formidable (see below).

In 2007, Neel’s filmmaker grandson, Andrew Neel, directed a documentary of his grandmother’s life and work, entitled *Alice Neel*, which explores Neel’s struggles the artist as a single mother, a female artist, and a non-conformist (available for rent on Amazon Prime).



Alice Neel, *Hartley*, 1966



Alice Neel, *Andy Warhol*, 1970



Alice Neel, *Self-Portrait*, 1980

Rhode Island

Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828) was the preeminent portrait artist of Federal America. Of him, the National Gallery of Art states, “He combined a talent for recording likeness with an ability to interpret a sitter's personality or character in the choice of pose, color and style of clothing, and setting.”

Stuart was born in North Kingstown, RI, and grew up in Newport, RI. His birthplace is now a museum called “One of Rhode Island’s Best Kept Treasures.” His father ran a snuff mill, which may explain why the artist was addicted to it. Stuart spent the American Revolution in London (after his Loyalist family fled to Nova Scotia), where he worked for five years as the assistant to the artist Benjamin West. He returned to America in 1793 with a plan to paint George Washington’s portrait and make a fortune. He painted his first portrait of George Washington two years later (1795).

Stuart painted 100 portraits of George Washington, almost all replicas of three “originals.” Washington's most reproduced image is the Athenaeum portrait (1796), named for the Boston library that acquired it after Stuart’s death. Although the Athenaeum portrait was never finished, Stuart used it to make approximately 75 replicas. It has been said that, although that portrait is one of Stuart’s most accomplished, it was one of the more difficult. Washington had recently obtained a set of false teeth that created a bulge around his mouth and distorted his jawline. It is the Athenaeum portrait that is featured on the US dollar bill.

By the end of his career, Stuart would have painted more than 1,000 portraits, including those of four more US Presidents: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe.



Gilbert Stuart, *The Skater*, 1782



Gilbert Stuart, *George Washington (The Lansdowne Portrait)*, 1796



Gilbert Stuart, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1821

South Carolina

Anna Hyatt Huntington (1876-1973) was one of the most prominent American sculptors of the early 20th century. Unlike most women artists of her time, Hyatt Huntington had a thriving career, known for her animal sculptures. She became interested in animal anatomy at an early age; her father was a professor of zoology and paleontology at Harvard and MIT. One of her earliest art teachers threw her out when she pointed out the anatomical errors in his work. She later studied with Gutzon Borglum (Idaho) at the Art Students League of New York.

In 1923, at the age of 47, Anna Hyatt married Archer Milton Huntington, heir to a railroad construction fortune, philanthropist, and art lover. She had previously turned down his proposals because she feared marriage would interfere with her art career. Hyatt finally agreed when Huntington assured her that it would not.

In 1927, Anna Hyatt Huntington contracted tuberculosis, and the couple decided to move to a warmer climate. They bought three plantations totaling thousands of acres near Murrell's Inlet, South Carolina. On the property, they built Antalya Castle, a winter retreat designed by Archer in a Spanish Moorish style. The home remains are now part of Huntington Beach State Park; Antalya is on the National Register of Historic Places.

1931, the couple incorporated the not-for-profit Brookgreen Gardens, A Society for Southeastern Flora and Fauna. Brookgreen Gardens became the first public sculpture garden in the United States. The garden has the country's most comprehensive collection of American figurative sculpture. Its collection contains over 2,000 works by 430 artists. In 1992, Brookgreen Gardens was designated a National Historic Landmark. Hyatt Huntington's sculptures are featured prominently at Brookgreen, including several large-scale pieces. Several of those pieces are pictured below. The third sculpture pictured, *Visionaries*, is of Anna Hyatt and Archer Huntington.



Anna Hyatt Huntington, *Don Quichote*, 1947



Anna Hyatt Huntington, *Fighting Stallions*, 1950



Anna Hyatt Huntington, *The Visionaries*, 1954