

the warhol: resources & lessons

Artists Past & Present: Grant Wood

Grant Wood was born in 1892 on his parents' farm in Anamosa, Iowa. He stayed in the midwest for the majority of his life, where he taught painting and drawing at a high school in Cedar Rapids. His rural midwestern upbringing profoundly influenced his artwork. He made several trips to Europe. A visit to Germany introduced him to 15th-century Northern Gothic works and to the primitive paintings of earlier Flemish and German artists. While there, he also became acquainted with the contemporary artists of the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) movement, which rejected abstraction in favor of a more realistic and orderly art. Upon his return to Iowa, Wood applied characteristics of these other styles to his paintings depicting rural life in America.



Wood's style became known as the School of American Regionalism. Idiosyncratic depictions of rural America and minute attention to detail are characteristic of his paintings. *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* (1931) exemplifies his meticulous approach to landscape. While referring to the narrative subject of this titular ride, Wood does not attempt historical accuracy. In fact, he shows little interest in the event itself, and instead, depicts the landscape and vernacular architecture of colonial Massachusetts. It is a highly personal vision of American culture, which some claim is an ambiguous mixture of adoration and satire. Purportedly the source and inspiration for the horse, and the painting itself, was a child's rocking horse. The bird's eye view of the town and surrounding countryside becomes ethereal when rendered with Wood's formal and emotional precision. Much like his legendary American Gothic (1930), *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* (1931) draws its power from formal inventiveness and moral ambiguity.

"Technique does not constitute art. Nor is it a vague, fuzzy romantic quality known as 'beauty,' remote from the realities of everyday life. It is the depth and intensity of an artist's experience that are the first importance in art."

--Grant Wood quoted in "Grant Wood Revisited," Midwest Today, April/May 1996

"All my pictures are first planned as abstractions. When I think it's a sound design, then I start very cautiously making it look like nature. But I'm so afraid of being photographic that maybe I stop too soon."

-- Grant Wood quoted in "Grant Wood Revisited," Midwest Today, April/May 1996

Research:

American Regionalism
Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity)

Links:

Grant Wood, 5 Studio Alley. The artist's former studio and the largest collection of his paintings:
<http://www.grantwoodstudio.org/index.html>

Going Back to Iowa, a University of Virginia website about Wood's life and art:
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA98/haven/wood/home.html>

The Art Institute of Chicago's bio of Grant Wood:
http://www.artic.edu/artaccess/AA_Modern/pages/MOD_5.shtml

"Grant Wood: Famous Paintings by Iowa's Most Beloved Artist Assembled for Sesquicentennial Exhibit," Midwest Today April/May 1996:
http://www.midtod.com/9603/grant_wood.phtml

"Grant Wood: A Certain Misunderstanding," from Great Masters November 1999:
<http://www.artcult.com/wood.html>

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Grant Wood

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere, 1931

Oil on Masonite, 30 x 40 in. (76.2 x 101.6 cm)

Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1950 (50.117)

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