

GREENVILLE COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

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News Release

Jamie Wyeth, Rockwell Kent, and Monhegan on view at the GCMA

Though the two never met in person, both Rockwell Kent and Jamie Wyeth share the inspiration of the rocky shores that have lured artists to Monhegan Island, Maine for more than 150 years. Kent's large-scale canvases survey Monhegan's rugged landscape while Wyeth's paintings focus on the island's residents and a few quirkier subjects. The stereotypical Monhegan scenes of buoys and lobster boats are nowhere to be found in this exhibition organized by the Farnsworth Museum and now on view at the Greenville County Museum of Art.

Jamie Wyeth first began visiting Monhegan Island in the late 1950s, when he traveled there to paint with his father, iconic American artist Andrew Wyeth. The younger Wyeth purchased several pen-and-ink drawings by Kent that had been used as studies for his illustrations of *Moby Dick*, one of Kent's most celebrated book projects. Several years later, Wyeth bought several of Kent's paintings from around 1907 as well as Kent's former home and studio on Monhegan, a property where Wyeth continues to go to paint. Wyeth has pronounced Kent "the preeminent painter who's ever painted out there," saying, "I thought his works went beyond anything that had been done out there. Very simple and abstract. I became wild about his work."

Rockwell Kent first visited Monhegan in 1905 at the urging of his teacher, Robert Henri. Kent returned many times, even spending a few bitterly cold winters in the isolated location. Respectful of the fishermen and other year-round residents, Kent loved Monhegan and sought to blend in with the locals. His first contact with Jamie Wyeth was decades later, when Wyeth wrote Kent to tell him that he had purchased the elder artist's house and studio in 1970. The two exchanged several friendly letters before Kent's death a year later.

The exhibition includes 10 works by each artist. All of the paintings are large-scale and dramatic interpretations of the island, but as Farnsworth curator Michael Komenecky cautions, "This is not an exhibition that intends to suggest any kind of influence of Rockwell Kent on Jamie Wyeth, other than Monhegan serving as an incredible source of inspiration for both of them over a long period of time."

Kent's paintings steer well clear of such iconic Maine subjects as lobster traps and buoys and instead focus on the elemental shapes and colors of the island and the sea.

Wyeth's works, many painted on cardboard, capture yet another side of island life. One painting depicts a shower of carved Jack-o-Lanterns tumbling over the cliffs into the sea. In another, a small dog stares defiantly below a skeletal shark jaw, mounted on the wall. The painting *A Recurring Dream* depicts Jamie Wyeth's grandfather, N.C., and his father, Andrew, standing on a rocky point overlooking the stormy surf.

The exhibition *Jamie Wyeth, Rockwell Kent and Monhegan* is on view at the Greenville County Museum of Art through April 21, 2013. There is no admission charge.

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