WALTER QUIRT

revolutions unseen

WALTER QUIRT

revolutions unseen

(WAS)
WILSON ART SERVICE

This catalog is published on the occasion of the exhibition

WALTER QUIRT: ***revolutions unseen***

February 6, 2015

Exhibition organized by Wilson Art Service (WAS)

Exhibition coordination by Travis Wilson

Special thanks to Elizabeth Wilson, Zeb and Wendy Haney, and Andrew Teufel

Printed by Edition One Books

All artwork © 2015 Walter Quirt

Introduction © 2015 Peter Selz

Essay © 2015 Travis Wilson

Chronology © 2015 Francis V. O'Connor
(based on a detailed chronology by Dr. Francis V. O'Connor, prepared for Eleanor Quirt)

(WAS)
Wilsonartservicellc.com

Front cover: Compulsion to Anger *(detail) (see page 20)*

Opposite: *Walter Quirt with a student at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1960s*

The act of creating is first and foremost selfless; it requires giving without return. Art offers the artist no personal security. It is a risk the artist undertakes because, to him, creating is a method of learning. Yet in submitting to the disciplines of his calling, the artist often discovers what many seek but seldom find: his individuality.

—Walter Quirt, 1963

INTRODUCTION

Peter Selz

THE PASSAGE FROM SOCIAL REALISM TO POLITICAL SURREALISM TO ABSTRACTION followed by Walter Quirt, is characteristic of the progression of American art in the last century. Quirt, who was born in rural Michigan in 1902, moved to New York in 1929 just prior to the Stock Market crash, the Depression and the resultant politicizing of art, be it the Nationalistic Regionalism of the Right to the pro-Communist Socialist Realism of the Left. The Marxist Social Realists firmly believed that art could be a weapon in the class struggle. Quirt became a member of the John Reed Club, a Communist organization of writers, intellectuals and artists. Among these were William Gropper, Louis Lozowick, Anton Refregier, Charmon von Weigand, and Raphael Soyer, who remembered Quirt's work as "deeply American. . . in light of American history of the 1930s." Quirt contributed drawings and cartoons to the *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker*. While describing himself as a "Proletarian Artist," he also perfected his skill as a painter, admired the Mexican muralists, but we can also detect his knowledge of the work of the Northern Renaissance painters, Hieronymus Bosch and Matthias Grünewald.

Like many of his fellow artists, Quirt broke with the Communist Party, aggravated by Stalin's purges and his 1939 pact with the Nazis. This was also the time when he became acquainted with the Surrealists, many of whom had escaped Paris once the Nazis occupied most of France. As early as 1936, Quirt had a solo show at the Julien Levy Gallery, the showplace of the Surrealists. He studied the paintings by Salvador Dali, Joan Miró, André Masson and Matta. In his own painting he now gave freer reign to his emotion and became aware of the Surrealist's technique of automatism. Quirt's turning from Social realism became a matter of controversy. The radical critic Margaret Duroc berated Quirt and Louis Guglielmi, asserting that "Surrealism is a false medium for the revolutionary artist." Quirt, however, now felt that Social Realism did not allow the artist to define his own personality and emotion.

A fine painting in Quirt's new style is *Separate Worlds* (1942) (page 15); we see semi-Cubist human heads emerge from a great tumult of mostly red and green pigments, applied with a sweeping brush. Similar in composition, but even more vehement, is *Shipwrecked* (1943). When painting this work the artist must have been familiar with Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (1818–19). Both paintings deal with a deadly disaster at sea, but the Romantic 19th century artist was able to bring the calamity to a dramatic conclusion no longer available to the existential terror of the artist working during the unabated terror of World War II. There was, however, also place for humor in Quirt's work as seen in the 1943 painting *How The Rabbit Lost Its Life* (page 22). Done with a lighter green, red, and white palette and using sweeping curves and counter-curves, the painter leads the viewer from a little creature on the lower right toward a possible image of a human on the upper left. Quirt's use

of color combinations and figurative abstraction makes us think of Stuart Davis; indeed the two artists were close friends, and when Quirt left New York in 1944 they carried on a lively correspondence. In 1947 Quirt settled in Minneapolis where he taught at the University of Minnesota and produced increasingly gestural paintings until he died in 1968. "Quirt may be virtually forgotten today, but in 1944, he and Pollock seemed like promising young artists of comparable importance," wrote Pepe Karmel for the MoMA publication on Jackson Pollock in 1999, and the time has come to reconsider the work of Walter Quirt.

Walter Quirt ***Shipwrecked*** 1943 Oil on canvas 40 x 48 inches

Théodore Géricault ***Raft of the Medusa*** 1818–19 Oil on canvas

WALTER QUIRT: *revolutions unseen*

Travis Wilson

WALTER WELLINGTON QUIRT WAS BORN ON NOVEMBER 24, 1902 IN THE SMALL town of Iron River, Michigan. His earliest influences were a product of the rugged environment in which he was raised. The hardship of growing up in a mining community would forever impact his work and stood symbolically in striking contrast to the cultural richness that would encompass the artist's life. According to his widow, Eleanor Quirt, "He was for a long time colored by Iron River." His family had little wealth and was far removed from the American mainstream, yet he managed to recognize and cultivate the sensibilities of a painter within himself. Despite the lack of art training in his hometown schools, Quirt began drawing well before he had entered his teens. As he grew up he began working in local mines and lumber camps; these early experiences performing hard labor and interacting with the other workers galvanized the radical beliefs that defined him for the entirety of his career.

Walter left Iron River to attend the Layton School of Art in Milwaukee in 1921. His quick progress there led to dividing his time as a student, drawing instructor and laborer, and by 1926, while continuing to teach drawing and outdoor sketching classes, he also stepped into the role of a Union organizer. Quirt produced his earliest paintings at Layton, which were well received. These paintings were exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1926, the *International Watercolor Exhibitions of 1929* and the Milwaukee Art Institute. During this time he also studied at the historic McDowell Colony in New Hampshire.

Quirt's newfound recognition prompted him to take a major leap, and in 1929 he left Milwaukee for New York City. He arrived just before the stock market crash and ensuing depression. Soon he was deeply involved in the causes that would fuel his work throughout the 1930s. Recognizing Quirt's talent, influential magazines such as *Art Front* and *New Pioneer* were quick to publish his politically charged drawings. These early drawings proved to be a springboard to Quirt's future paintings, both politically and stylistically.

Raphael Soyer's painting of Walter Quirt, c. 1930s

In 1931, Quirt married his first wife Martha Pearse. Shortly thereafter he became secretary of the art division of the John Reed Club, a Socialist organization that was committed to developing young artists that shared their leftist beliefs. The John Reed Club became a fertile meeting place for such artists as James Guy, Raphael Soyer and William Gropper, who, along with Walter Quirt, artistically defined the dire conditions of the Great Depression while

Original sketch by Walter Quirt for The Growth of Medicine from Primitive Times, a *mural he painted in 1937 at Bellevue Hospital in New York*

establishing themselves as Social Realists. Quirt had an expansive role at the John Reed Club and appealed to the art section's affiliates across the country, creating newsletters calling for an increase in political and social themes in artwork. In February 1933, he and one hundred other artists contributed to the John Reed Club's first art exhibition titled *The Social Viewpoint in Art*. This is also the first time Quirt received national exposure.

Although Quirt made some money as a muralist and political cartoonist, his lack of a stable income made his daily life a struggle. In 1935 he was accepted into the Muralist division of the Federal Art Project and began a seven year stint with the WPA. During that time Quirt refined his approach to painting both technically and philosophically, creating canvases that incorporated contemporary influences ranging from José Orozco and Diego Rivera to Salvador Dali and Joan Miró. In addition, these influences are evident in the remarkable mural *The Growth of Medicine from Primitive Times*, painted for Bellevue Hospital in 1937 in conjunction with the WPA. While in New York painting the mural, Quirt ended his first marriage. Thereafter he entered into a relationship with painter Eleanor Falk, who would become his second wife and life-long companion.

As his influences broadened, Quirt's ideology began to evolve, and his work progressed beyond the confines of Social Realism. More specifically, he felt the Social Realists were encouraged to effectually "dumb down" the imagery of their paintings so the subject matter would be readily understood by the masses for whom the work was created. Quirt believed that this oversimplification of the subject was an insult to the intelligence of the viewer and prevented any hope of a genuine emotional response to the work. He aimed to connect the viewers and his art in a way that was emotionally and intellectually honest. These profound new insights would lead to the next great revolution in his work.

Quirt was one of the first major American artists to integrate Surrealism into their work, followed by Louis Guglielmi, James Guy and David Smith. Collectively these artists comprised a group now referred to as "Social Surrealists." Their innovative use of Surrealist-inspired automatism would also prove to be an important precursor to the New York School. These paintings drew the eye of legendary art

The Damned 1944 Oil on canvas 33 x 34 inches

dealer Julien Levy, who gave Quirt a one-man show in 1936. Quirt's first solo exhibition was composed of sixteen works reflecting the cultural and economic tone of both the American Artists' Congress and the current New York art scene. In defending the decision to exhibit a contemporary American artist, Levy affirmed that the work of the gallery's "first radical painter" was not only fresh and innovative but also of tremendous social and political importance.

The success of this show paved the way for Quirt's future artistic endeavors. In January 1937, he participated in a panel discussion with Salvador Dalí at the New York Museum of Modern Art on "Surrealism and Its Political Significance." Here Quirt voiced his candid socialist views and verbally accosted Dalí's political doctrines. Although the mainstream critics were offended, Quirt stood true to his beliefs and once again affirmed his revolutionary tendencies. This would prove to be one of many stands he took against influential members of the art world in the name of ideological purity. He did not suffer fools, and while this aggressive stance most surely impeded the growth of his commercial career, it concurrently endeared him to other like-minded artists. He became a close friend and respected colleague of such seminal American artists as Stuart Davis, William Steig and Romare Bearden.

As Quirt's notoriety grew, his work became exceedingly personal. Several years of undergoing Freudian psychoanalysis led to expression of a refined picture of the human condition in his art. The work focused on base emotions and the anguish of a world populace that had recently found itself at war. His color pallet intensified while he demonstrated a remarkable ability to take complicated compositions and compress the imagery without losing the intensity inherent in larger mural-sized work. By the time the United States entered WWII in December of 1941, his work had achieved a new level of recognition nationally. A contemporary of Jackson Pollock, William Baziotes and Arshile Gorky, Quirt was included alongside the most influential American artists of the 1940s.

Quirt's work quickly matured to a style of highly composed ribbons of color creating lively compositions populated with numerous figures, such as *Natures' Children* (page 16), of 1942. Although a playful element of humor runs through the painting there is a certain tense urgency as well. The remarkable balance of color is made more compelling by a mysterious narrative suggested by the piece.

In December of 1941 Rose Fried's Pinacotheca Gallery began to publish a series of essays by Quirt, the first of which was "Wake Over Surrealism: With Due Respect to the Corpse." Quirt rejected Surrealism while giving proper credit to its accomplishments, particularly the concept of automatism that Surrealism's founder André Breton had championed as early as 1924 in the first Surrealist

manifesto. Uniquely, Quirt had been one of the first American artists to embrace Surrealism, and by this subsequent declaration, he became one of the first to reject it.

Quirt's term with the WPA ended in 1943, and he was without a steady income for the first time in nearly a decade. In 1944 he was given his second one-man show at the Durlacher Brothers Gallery, which was met with excellent reviews and cemented his place in American art. Critic Robert Coates, who coined the phrase "Abstract Expressionism," singled out several paintings including the paramount canvas, *Compulsion to Anger* (1944) (page 20). In his review of the show for *The New Yorker*, Coates declared, "Walter Quirt is one of the most impassioned artists alive today."

The year 1944 continued with momentous changes for Quirt and his wife. They left New York City for Milwaukee in mid-1944 and welcomed their first son Andrew. Quirt's family priorities led him to take a teaching role at the Layton School of Art where he had been a student so many years before. The decision to leave New York just as the burgeoning American school was poised to enter the international stage is one that has met with much discussion over the decades. The departure by Quirt and numerous other artists from New York represented a quiet exodus of monumental talent that deserves further and expansive recognition. As writer Francis V. O'Connor aptly stated, "[We] must pause to reflect on the influence such men, exiled and therefore independent from the 'mainstream' of American art, have had on its recent and future development."

The following year Quirt was invited to teach at Michigan State University in East Lansing, where he would stay until 1947. In the work of this period he embraced a geometric format that was almost fully abstract; these important pieces would be the last examples before his more gestural approach to painting. The rich color palettes had become polished and highly refined. Pieces such as *Untitled* (1948) (page 25), in many ways represent a masterful culmination of Quirt's aesthetic progressions throughout the 1940s. These smaller formats with their slight suggestions of form and figure keep the viewer's attention almost hypnotically locked onto the composition.

Walter Quirt teaching at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1958

Eleanor and Walter's second son, Peter, was born in 1948 and their third son Jonathan in 1952. The growth of his family coincided with a major change in the way Quirt approached painting. Initially this involved a different color palette and pursuit of cubist concepts. Pieces like *Head* (1948) (page 26), and *Woman with Bare Feet* (1953) (page 27), show a loosening of his compositions and the earliest examples of the fast sweeping brush strokes that he would utilize for the rest of his career. In 1947 Quirt began teaching at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, a job he continued until the end of his life.

Walter Quirt in his studio, c. 1950s

As the gestural side of Quirt's work continued to develop, he introduced a new facet of himself as a painter. Through a masterful use of quick and spontaneous lines over soft vaporous colors he created introspective portraits like *Head* (1955) (page 28), and *Dilemma* (1953) (page 29). With the subtraction of a couple key lines these compositions would fall into complete abstraction. Although Quirt was far removed from New York, the critic Robert Coates noted his relationship to the art of the New York School, stating, "All his emphasis on the quick, the impromptu, the unpremeditated, suggests an at least tangential relationship with the Abstract Expressionists School. Quirt's paintings have grown larger in size too, in keeping with the common trend; and his color has become freer. Certainly there are suggestions of Willem de Kooning's tribal figures in his work, though from the date of the first, 1957, what would seem to be indicated is something in the way of parallel development rather than an influence."

As Quirt progressed, his use of curvilinear lines to evoke gregarious feelings increased, and he adopted specific recurring themes in his paintings, most notably the horse and bull. The horse period would include the largest paintings Quirt ever executed. He used color sparingly while focusing on the rich tonality of black and white, explaining, "I find myself getting too deep into color, and then the only way out is to forget about it entirely and let color come in again when it wants to." Compositions like *Horse* (1959) (page 33), and *Bull* (1961) (page 32), illustrate his uncanny ability to depict the grace and power symbolically associated with these animals. In addition to numerous gallery shows, Quirt was given a one-man exhibition of his drawings at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 1952, followed by a 28-piece painting show in 1955.

As he entered into his fifth and final decade as a working artist, Quirt was given a retrospective show sponsored by the Ford Foundation and circulated by the American Federation of Arts in 1960-62. This remarkable show was well received, placing Quirt on the vanguard of American art while also clearly defining his considerable role in American history. This show, coupled with his recent appointment to full professor at the University of Minnesota, provided him with the kind of professional edification that few artist-teachers ever know.

The early 1960s marked a return to the brilliant colors Quirt had favored in his past work, and he began *The Lake Harriet Series* of paintings. His walks to nearby Lake Harriet allowed him to observe the simple acts of joy engaging those around him, including biking, sailing and camaraderie among friends. In the studio he would use his prodigious understanding of humanity to distill these joyous emotions and depict them in his work. In the large canvas *Sporting Life* (1964) (pages 42–43), a figure presides over an ideal scene, while smaller figures interact in the distance. Quirt has broken the composition into two distinct visual planes while preserving the overall continuity. The calm waters of the lake and the gently rolling clouds suggest a peaceful recognition of the world around him and stand in sharp contrast to the radical and inflammatory paintings of his youth. His incredible production in painting and writing during these final years was mirrored by numerous exhibitions of his work in museums and galleries alike. In 1967, Quirt returned from a research trip to Mexico terribly ill. He was diagnosed with lung cancer shortly thereafter and died March 19, 1968, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Walter Quirt's life and career as a painter closely mirrored the tumultuous changes that the United States endured during the first six decades of the 20th century. He stood on the front lines of social and political revolution during the darkest days of the Depression and consistently defended those that had no voice. The attention his work garnered from critics and artists alike in New York during the 1940s speaks directly to his integrity and the sustained quality of his work. His long tenure as a professor must also be noted here—as a teacher to thousands of students over 40 years, we will never know the true scope and reach of his influence. A self-described "Proletarian Artist," he never wavered in his devotion to deliver a better world for those around him, nor did he compromise his beliefs to satiate the aesthetic and commercial needs of the art world. As the 20th century fades further into history, it is important that we search for those artists of great substance that have escaped our gaze, for such acknowledgement is necessary to best understand our current place in time.

Social Surrealist Drawing 1939 Pen and ink 14½ x 18 inches

SELECTED PAINTINGS

The great artist is one who faithfully follows his impulses, who vigorously and courageously peels off layer after layer of restrictions, prohibitions, and inhibitions.
This takes courage, for it automatically means suffering.

—Walter Quirt

Separate Worlds 1942 Oil on canvas 40 x 48 inches

Natures' Children 1942 Oil on canvas 40 x 48 inches

Shipwrecked 1943 Oil on canvas 40 x 48 inches

One peculiarity of art is that once it is contained within a painting it lives eternally, so that we today can respond without diminished vigor to masterpieces of the past as well as to contemporary painting.

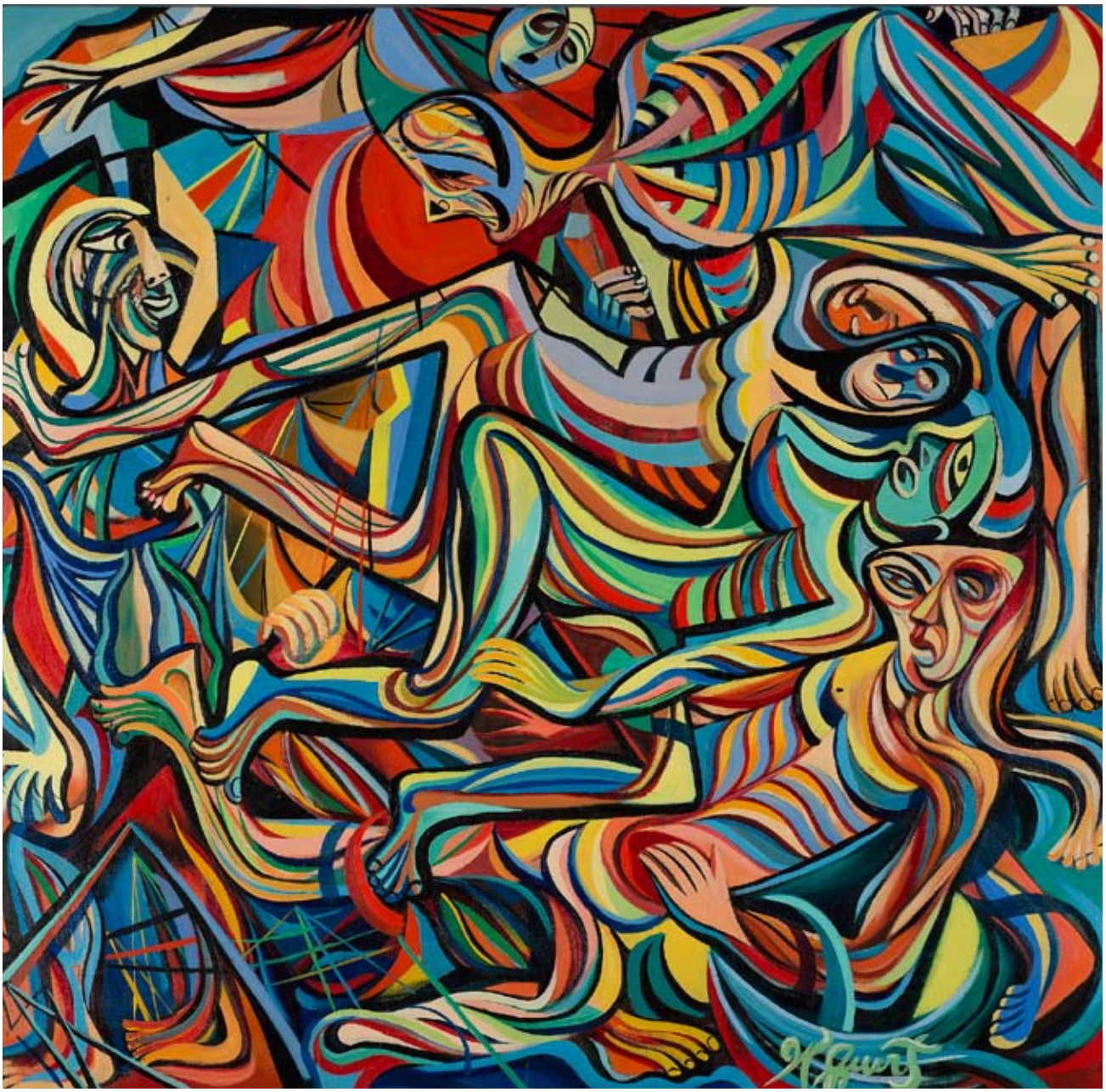
—Walter Quirt, 1937
Art of the Millions

A WORK PRODUCED IN 1943, *THE CRUCIFIED*, DESERVES SPECIAL ATTENTION. When Robert Coates, the art critic of *The New Yorker*, who had first applied the term "Abstract Expressionist" to the painters of the New York School, saw this painting at Quirt's solo show at the Durlacher Brothers Gallery in 1944 he wrote: "The composition seems almost to fly apart because of the vehemence behind it . . . Walter Quirt is one of the most impassioned artists alive today." Picasso-derived faces and suggestions of human bodies prevail in this painting, and it is done in darker tones than the other paintings from this period. We can detect the Crucified in the center, but, we may ask "why is there a smile on his face?" In this painting, evoking downright disaster, there is also the suggestion of the Deposition on the left side of this astounding picture. In 1944 writer Sidney Janis placed this painting facing Jackson Pollock's *She-Wolf* (1943), in his pivotal publication *Abstract and Surrealist Painting in America*.

—Peter Selz

The Crucified 1943 Oil on canvas 30 x 50 inches

Compulsion to Anger 1944 Oil on canvas 30 x 50 inches



The Damned 1944 Oil on canvas 33 x 34 inches

How The Rabbit Lost Its Life 1944 Oil on canvas 40 x 48 inches

Untitled c.1947 Oil on canvas 8 x 10 inches

Art is primarily a language of emotion and not of the mind. This does not mean a separation of form and content—it means a closer fusion of the two.

—Walter Quirt

Untitled c. 1948 Oil on canvas on board 19½ x 15½ inches

Head 1948 Oil on canvas 26 x 22 inches

Woman with Bare Feet 1953 Oil on canvas 38 x 26 inches

Head 1955 Oil on canvas 42 x 30 inches

Dilemma 1953 Oil on canvas 40 x 30 inches

As human beings we all have essentially the same fantasy life. Our biological needs and impulses, our unconscious worlds with their conflicts and desires, our dreams and symbols are common to all even though individually we may hold opposing political or social views.

—Walter Quirt

One Figure 1958–60 Oil on canvas 41 x 66 inches

Bull 1961 Oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches

Horse 1959 Oil on canvas 42 x 50 inches

The Model 1961 Oil on canvas 42 x 50 inches

Creation/Horse c. 1961 Oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches

The artist must learn to learn emotional honesty
before he can discover the source for intellectual honesty.

—Walter Quirt, 1944
(from a letter to Stuart Davis)

Man and Horse 1959–62 Oil on canvas 50 x 56 inches

Poise 1961 Oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches

Yellow Light c. 1958 Oil on canvas 24 x 18 inches

A Redheaded Woman 1963 Oil on canvas 15½ x 9½ inches

Lake Harriet Series, Four Figures 1964 Oil on canvas 50 x 62 inches

My curve is taken from nature, in particular from the separate branches of a pine tree to which I have devoted much study. It is a dissonant and erratic curve that I find in nature, and it conveys a feeling of natural warmth.

—Walter Quirt

Pages 42–43
Lake Harriet Series, Sporting Life
1964 Oil on canvas 50 x 76 inches

CHRONOLOGY

1902	Born on November 24 in Iron River, Michigan
1921–23	Studies at the Layton School of Art, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1924–28	Becomes full instructor at the Layton School of Art
1926–28	Exhibits watercolors at the Art Institute of Chicago and the New York Watercolor Club
1928–29	Studies as guest at the McDowell Colony, Peterborough, New Hampshire
1929	Moves to New York City in the fall and begins attending John Reed Club Arts Section meetings
1930–32	Draws illustrations and writes articles for the *New Masses*
1931	Marries Martha Pearse
1932	Becomes secretary for the John Reed Club Arts Section
1935	Joins rolls of WPA/FAP with position of Artist; also starts psychoanalysis under Dr. Margaret Fries, continuing through 1938
1936	Has first one-man exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery, February 18-March 11
1937	Sits on panel at symposium, "Surrealism and its Political Significance" with Salvador Dali; enrolls in the WPA/FAP mural project; paints mural *The Growth of Medicine from Primitive Times* for Bellevue Hospital
1939	Divorces Martha Pearse; marries Eleanor Falk
1944 the	Leaves New York in the summer; son Andrew Quirt is born; teaches as instructor at Layton School of Art, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1944–45
1945	Becomes assistant professor at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan; wins Cranbook Prize at the *Michigan Artists Exhibition*
1947	Begins teaching at the University of Minnesota as assistant professor
1948	Son, Peter Quirt born
1952	Son, Jonathan Quirt born
1956	Becomes associate professor at the University of Minnesota's Art Department
1959	Appointed as full professor at the University of Minnesota's Art Department
1960–62	*Walter Quirt Retrospective* begins in conjunction with the American Federation of Arts
1963	Spends quarter on leave from the University of Minnesota, in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico
1964	Spends winter quarter as an artist-in-residence at the Wichita Art Museum, Kansas
1965	Spends winter quarter on leave from the University of Minnesota, in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico
1966	Takes part in exhibition, *The Landscape as Interpreted by 22 Artists,* at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts
1967	Spends winter quarter on leave in Mexico; becomes ill with lung cancer
1968	Dies of lung cancer March 19 in Minneapolis, Minnesota

COLLECTIONS

Addison Gallery of American Art, MA
Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, MN
George Walter Vincent Smith Museum, MA
Georgia Museum of Art, GA
Henry Art Gallery, WA
Kresge Art Museum, MI
Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, MO
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN
Minnesota Museum of Art, MN
Museum of Art at Brigham Young University, UT
Neuberger Museum of Art, NY
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA
Smith College Museum of Art, MA
Smithsonian American Art Museum, DC
The Columbus Museum-Georgia, GA
The Museum of Modern Art, NY
The Nelson-Atkins Museum, MO
The Newark Museum, NJ
The University of Michigan Museum of Art, MI
The University of Minnesota Gallery, MN
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, CT
Walker Arts Center, MN
Whitney Museum of American Art, NY

EXHIBITIONS

One Man Exhibitions

1936 *Paintings of Walter Quirt,* Julien Levy Gallery, New York, February 18–March 11.

1939 *Drawings of Walter Quirt*, Julien Levy Gallery, New York, November.

1942 *Recent Paintings by Walter Quirt*, Pinacotheca Gallery, New York, February 23–March 14.

1943 *Walter Quirt*, Associated American Artists Gallery, New York, March 29–April 17.

1944 *Paintings of Walter Quirt*, Durlacher Brothers Gallery, New York, April 3–29.

1945 *Paintings of Walter Quirt*, Durlacher Brothers Gallery, New York, October.

1947 *The Artist, Nature, and Society*, St. Paul Gallery, St. Paul, Minnesota, May.

1949 *Quirt, Three Periods, 1943–1949*, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, April 4–22.

1951 *Walter Quirt*, New Gallery, New York, November.

1955 *People in Motion*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, November 6–December 25.

1957 *Walter Quirt*, Duveen-Graham Gallery, New York, January 22–February 9.

1959 *Quirt–58*, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, January 6–26.

1960 *Walter Quirt Retrospective*, touring exhibition sponsored by the American Federation of Arts, 1960–62.

1961 *Watercolors and Drawings by Walter Quirt*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, February 19–March 19.

1962 *Recent Paintings by Walter Quirt* The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, June 6–July 15.

1963 *Walter Quirt*, Greer Gallery, New York, October 1–19.

1964 *Walter Quirt*, Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, Kansas, February.

1966 *Walter Quirt*, Kramer Gallery, St. Paul, Minnesota, April.

Walter Quirt, Drawings, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, May 10–30.

1967 *Walter Quirt*, Galerie Dresdnere, Toronto, Ontario, October.

1968 *Walter Quirt Memorial Exhibition*, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, April 10–28.

1976 *Use of White*, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

1980 *Walter Quirt, A Retrospective,* University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

2015 *Walter Quirt: revolutions unseen*, Wilson Art Service, Sandra Lee Gallery, San Francisco, California.

Walter Quirt: revolutions unseen, Wilson Art Service, Fredrick Holmes and Company, Seattle, Washington.

Selected Group Exhibitions

1926 *Sixth International Watercolor Exhibition*, The Art Institute of Chicago, May 3–30.

1928 *1928 Annual Exhibition*, New York Watercolor Club and the American Watercolor Society, New York.

1929 *Ninth International Watercolor Exhibition*, The Art Institute of Chicago, May 2–June 2.

1933 *The Social Viewpoint in Art*, John Reed Club Gallery, New York, March.

An Expression in Art of the World Crisis, John Reed Club Gallery, New York, October 13–November 11.

Fall Exhibition Against Fascism, John Reed Club Gallery, New York, December.

1936 *American Artists' School Exhibition*, American Artists' Gallery, New York, December.

1938 *1938 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 2–December 11.

1940 *1940–1941 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 27, 1940–January 8, 1941.

1942 *Trends in American Painting of Today,* The City Art Museum of St. Louis, Missouri, March 6–11.

1944 *1944 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 14–December 12.

1945 *Contemporary American Paintings*, Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts, February 22–March 18.

1945 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 27, 1945–January 10, 1946.

1946 *Annual Exhibition for Michigan Artists*, The Detroit Institute of Arts, November 12–December 15.

Abstract and Surrealist Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, November 6, 1946–January 30, 1947.

1947 *Seeing the Unseeable*, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, January 10–March.

1950 *1950 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 10–December 31.

American Painting Today, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, December.

1951 *Forty American Painters, 1940–1950*, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, June 4–August 30.

Third Biennial Exhibition of Paintings and Prints from the Upper Midwest, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, October 28–December 30.

1952 *Contemporary American Painting*, College of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Illinois, Urbana, March 2–April 13.

1955 *1955 Annual Exhibition of American Art*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, January 12–February 20.

1958 *1958 Annual Exhibition of American Art*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 1958–January 4, 1959.

1959 *Twentieth Century Art of the Western Hemisphere*, Downtown Community School, New York, April 16–19.

Seventeenth Annual Artists West of the Mississippi, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, March 15–May 3.

Faculty Exhibition, Tweed Gallery, University of Minnesota, Duluth, April 26–May 24.

1961 *Drawings U.S.A.*, St. Paul Gallery and School of Art, St. Paul, Minnesota, November.

1962 *Faculty Exhibition*, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Spring.

1966 *The Landscape as Interpreted by 22 Artists*, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, April 2–May 4.

Faculty Show and Sale, University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, April.

1966 Biennial of Painting and Sculpture, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, September 27–October 30.

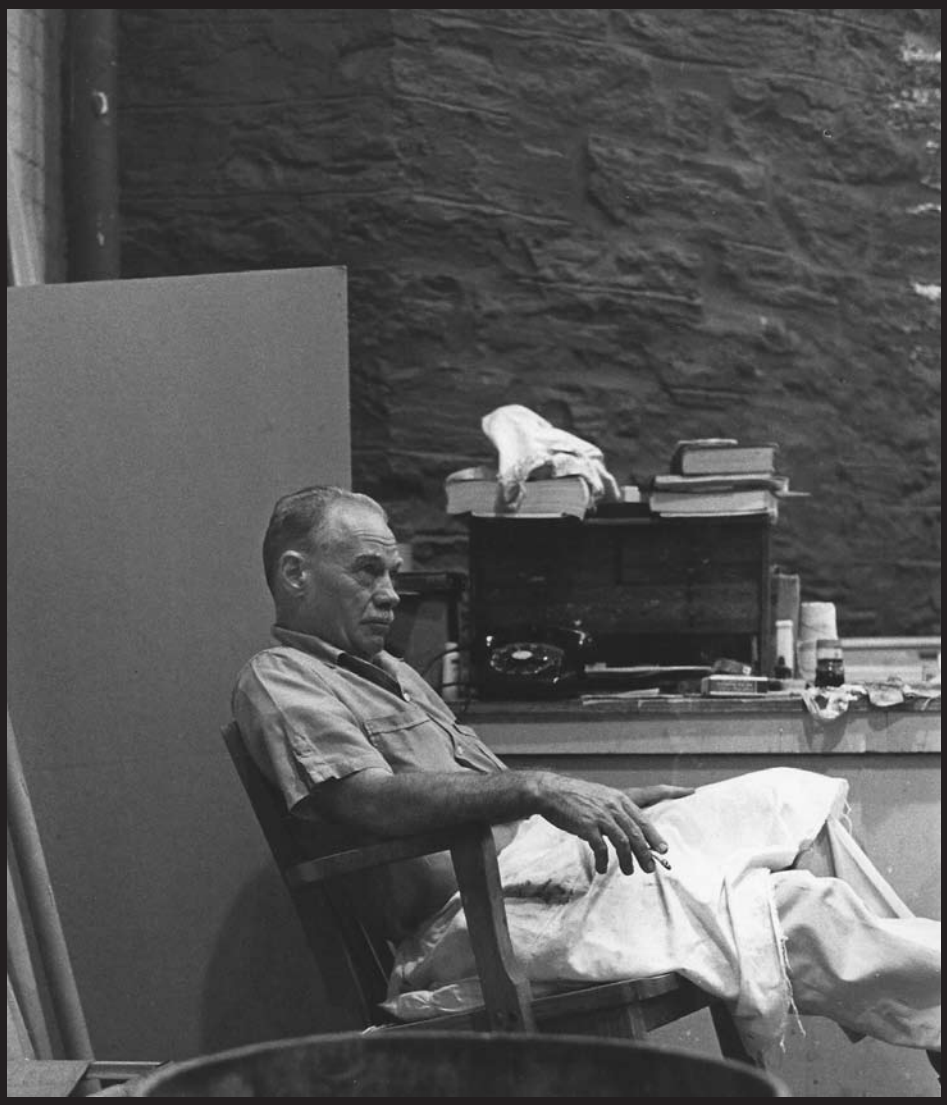
AFTERWORD

Travis Wilson

I AM EXCEEDINGLY GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH THE ESTATE OF Walter Quirt. This show represents the third exhibition in a continuing series that hopes to shed light on influential artists that have been overlooked by the art world at large. When referencing 20th century American art, there is a tendency to discuss the same 30 artists almost exclusively. This narrow view obscures our ability to fully understand the formative base of contemporary art and society. It is the mission of Wilson Art Service (WAS) to fill in these gaps, and by doing so, to open a comprehensive dialogue about our shared history.

Several years ago I was flipping through the volume *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America* written in 1944 by Sidney Janis. In its pages I came across an image of a painting entitled *The Crucified* (1943) (page 19) by Walter Quirt and was taken aback. I remember emphatically saying to myself, "Who is that? Who is Walter Quirt?" At that time I could not have known the journey that awaited me as I have tried to answer that question.

After fully engaging myself into the life and work of Walter Quirt I have begun to better understand the revolutionary sensibilities by which he lived. At first glance I saw the very different painting styles throughout his work, which I have come to recognize as a hallmark of any long career. As I further immersed myself in his paintings I became aware of the innovative thread that connects all the different phases of his life. His goal never changed, only the way in which he attempted to deliver it to us. He had a need, a desire to make the world a better place for people, and he was willing to fulfill this by any means necessary. It was fueled by an admirable empathy and sensitivity for those around him, and Quirt never faltered from this desire. Early in his career he took action as a flag-waving radical, trying to insight a revolution that would tear down a system he saw as brutal and unjust. In the middle of his career he aimed to compel viewers of his art to look inward and to inspire a personal revolution based on emotional revelation. And finally, after leading a full life, he gave those of us fortunate enough to have experienced his artwork the simplest and most important ingredient to live in a better world: "JOY." The underlying theme of Quirt's work is revolution, whether on a mass social and political scale or in the quiet places far from the spotlights. For the fact is, the most poignant and substantial revolutions are so intimate they go unseen by anyone other than ourselves.



Walter Quirt in his studio, c. 1960

(WAS)
WILSON ART SERVICE