

WALTER QUIRT: A TRAVELING RETROSPECTIVE, 1960-62

In 1960 a retrospective of the career of Walter Quirt was sponsored by The American Federation of Arts (AFA) with a grant from The Ford Foundation Program in the Humanities and Arts. “*A nonprofit organization founded in 1909, the AFA is dedicated to enriching the public’s experience and understanding of the visual arts through organizing and touring art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishing exhibition catalogues featuring scholarly research, and developing educational programs.*” — AFA mission statement.

Between 1959 and 1960 the AFA produced a series of touring retrospectives honoring many of the most important American Modernists of the time, including Milton Avery, Carl Morris, William Pachner, Abe Rattner, and others.

The retrospective *WALTER QUIRT*, exhibited forty-two oil paintings completed between 1939 and 1959, each catalogued and many of which are offered by Frederick Holmes And Company Gallery. Each painting was assigned an original AFA catalogue number, listed here with the painting’s title, and most still bear the original museum stamp from the exhibition. In addition, an undetermined number of various framed works on paper, predominantly acrylic on paper, were also shown.

Between March 1960 and March 1962, the retrospective traveled through seventeen cities and public or academic venues including the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota; the Kresge Art Center, (Now the Eli & Edith Broad Museum) Michigan State University, Michigan; Evansville Museum of Arts and Sciences, Indiana; Albany Institute of History and Art, New York; Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Michigan; and the Milwaukee Art Center, Wisconsin. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts Director, Alfred P. Maurice, stated in 1960, “*An outstanding exhibition because it affords the opportunity to assess change and growth in an artist’s work.*”

An exhibition catalogue accompanied the retrospective, written largely by prominent arts writer and critic for the New Yorker, Robert Coates; the same critic who in 1944, had described Quirt as “. . . *one of the most impassioned artists alive today!*”

Coates was no less enthusiastic in the catalogue. In closing his essay, Coates’ critique of the now mature and seasoned painter, Quirt had through experience and experimentation “. . . *achieved something close to true monumentality.*”

Essay from *WALTER QUIRT: A SCIENCE OF LIFE* Exhibition Catalogue; Published by Frederick Holmes And Company - Gallery of Modern & Contemporary Art, 2017