Wayman Adams

Wayman Adams is known for portraits of prominent persons including authors, painters, political leaders, etc. His portrait of Booth Tarkington brought him early recognition, and he was known as a "lightning" artist because his portraits were completed in one sitting. Ethnic types constitute one of the most intriguing aspects of his work.

After receiving instruction at the Herron Art Institute of Indianapolis, he went on to study with William M. Chase in Florence. From there he traveled, in 1912, to Spain with Robert Henri, and besides studying Velazquez, made many sketches of the life of the Spanish people.

The sitter is the main focus in Adams' portraits, although he did utilize accessories. Examples of such accessories would be a cigarette in his portrait of Professor Alexander Ernestinoff, shown after the War in the Luxembourg; a desk with papers and a Chinese figurine in the portrait of the dramatic critic Oliver Saylor; or a walking stick in his well-known portrait of Booth Tarkington. Several portraits of the late Joseph Pennell, a significant figure in American art, and two portraits of the painter John McClure Hamilton, rank among Adams' best works. His portrait of President Harrison hangs in the Los Angeles Museum of Art, and one of Charles Dennis is at the Herron Art Institute. Wayman Adams also painted Col. E. M. House, Leopold Auer, Agnes Repplier, and Mrs. Nicholas Longworth. Like the portraitist Gilbert Stuart, Adams was known to do a portrait two or three times to make sure he had achieved the result at which he aimed.

Adams also completed some notable group portraits, including that of Irvin S. Cobb and His Daughter; and The Conspiracy, which shows Pennell, Hamilton and Charles Burns in intimate discussion on the steps of a Philadelphia building; as well as The Art Jury, depicting a group of four Adams' first teachers in Indiana. He completed several regional series, one recording the people of Chinatown in San Francisco, and another series depicting the life of New Orleans.

Among his awards are the Logan medal, with $1500, Art Institute of Chicago, 1912, for the portrait Joseph Pennell; Greenough memorial prize, Newport, 1925; medal of the Sesquicentennial Exposition, 1926; first Altman prize of the National Academy, 1926.

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