

W. Mall

AMERICAN SPORTING ARTIST SERIES



Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Shelby Bonnie

*Albert Poe, Huntsman
Piedmont Fox Hounds, 1971*

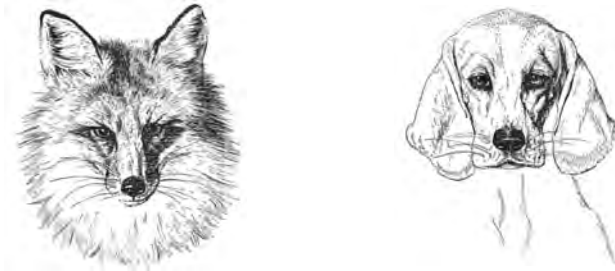
MAY 23 - JUNE 28, 2015

MUSEUM OF HOUNDS & HUNTING NA, INC.
MORVEN PARK
LEESBURG, VIRGINIA



The Museum of Hounds & Hunting NA, Inc. is pleased to present exhibits featuring the art and artifacts of the centuries-old sport of hunting to hounds. Founded in 1985, it is the Museum's mission to preserve both the tangible representations of this time-honored pursuit as well as the spirit of the sporting life it embodies. With the help of our many patrons, members and friends, we are able to assemble and display the work of the outstanding artists who have contributed to this field. We look forward to presenting many more of these entertaining, enlightening, and educational exhibitions in the future.

*Nancy G. Bedford, Chairman
Museum of Hounds & Hunting NA, Inc.*



Illustrations: *A Horse for Christmas Morning and Other Stories* Gordon Grand, Sr., Winchester Press, New York, 1970



Mimi Abel Smith and Newton Thomas

Collection of Mimi Abel Smith

Wallace Nall – From Imagination and From Life includes paintings from 1971 to 2003, the artist's Middleburg years. More than 50 paintings are included in this exhibition, all lent from local private collections. Many are commissioned portraits, some of which have never been publicly displayed. Also on view are a few of Nall's sketches, his preparatory photos and boyhood memorabilia. A favorite sporting artist of the local horse community, Nall chronicled horses, hounds and people, using his artistic talents to create enduring visual narratives.

WALLACE NALL – FROM IMAGINATION AND FROM LIFE



Wally Nall tells stories in his paintings. Working in the studio, he controls light and color and form. The end result is a narrative on canvas, capturing an individual, and often a horse or hound. Like any great portrait, Nall's pictures preserve memories.

As a California child of the Great Depression, Wallace Wilson Nall III, born in 1922, pursued early talent in drawing, and entered a big city world of fashion illustration, working in studios in San Francisco, and later New York. By the time of his death, in Middleburg in 2003, Wally Nall was a highly sought after portrait painter. His is an American artistic success story by all counts.

Nall's childhood photo albums and scrapbooks are filled with photographs of his ponies and horses. Often he's in the saddle jumping at ever increasing heights. Several snapshots show his horses doing tricks, standing on little pedestals and other circus-

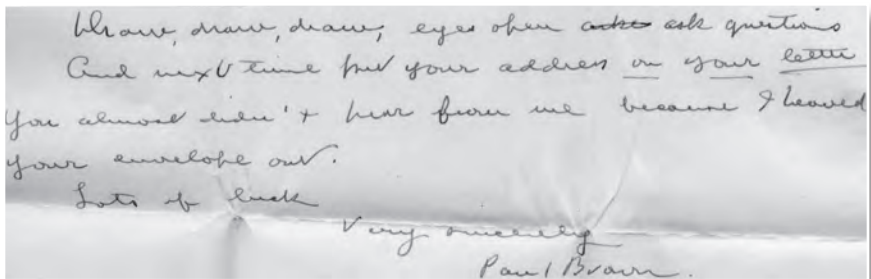
like things.

Proof of Wally's rise in the horse-show world is contained in the clippings he saved in his scrapbooks, including the double page cover photo from the San Francisco Examiner, Sunday, May 12, 1940. Wally Nall and two teammates are pictured in a neat row as they execute a large show ring fence at the Oakland National Horse Show. "Wallace Nall, of Oakland, a boy with a lot of 'Vim'..." captions a second photo clipping of Nall on his horse Desparado, as the horse snaps his knees to clear a formidable post and rail.

These photo albums and scrapbooks are ample proof that the young artist was also a talented horseman. Not surprisingly, Wally admired the illustrations of Paul Brown. Like many young artistic talents, the world seemed to be his for the asking, and in the early summer of 1941, the nineteen year old wrote Paul Brown to ask for advice. Brown replied from Garden City, New York.

The 48-year-old Brown opens his first letter warmly with, "Thanks loads for liking my stuff. It's a lot of fun to do so long as I don't have to draw saddle horses or women. Of course a good cavalry mount is another matter but 3 or 5 gaiters – nuts!" We'll never know exactly how Wally Nall felt as he read his hero's reply which described his philosophy about drawing and artistic life, in Brown's very down to earth manner.

At just shy of twenty, Nall was keen to set out directly toward his goal of becoming



a portrait artist. In response to the boy's questions of how to achieve this, Brown writes, "don't take this as advice," and follows with "a lot of drawing and finally painting is, I feel, the best start....keep this up until you can come pretty close to drawing a horse doing anything not from pictures but from your own imagination." He also encouraged the young man to "enlist with a horse outfit" for "a chance to study animals and men and get [his] tour of duty out of the way at the same time," and recommends he take a course at art school to learn "conformation, color, human anatomy and movement."

As we look at it today, it seems that Nall made many of his life choices following Brown's advice: he joined the 1st Cavalry [G-2 Intelligence Staff], went to California College of Arts and Crafts, and became an illustrator. School polished a talent Wally had shown to his family and the local horse world at young age. Years later he recalled his path to becoming a portrait painter, saying, "My sister, Virginia, bet me I could get work as a fashion artist... and I did at Stewart's." Wally also used his drawings of horses for horse show prizes, as an undated clipping in his scrapbooks notes, "The winners [of the Fallow Field Hunt Paper Chase] were awarded pastel sketches of horses made by the artist Wallace Nall III, who is as clever an artist as he is a horseman."

By the early 1960s Nall illustrated New York fashions for Saks Fifth Avenue, Gimbels and Altman's, among other clients. Foxhunting with the Kingwood Hunt, later re-formed as Amwell Valley Hounds, and horse show competitions provided the artist with time in the saddle, when he was not at the drawing board.

Wally Nall brought his firsthand knowledge of horsemanship to many of his commissioned portrait work, which is in some of the finest collections in Virginia. Red Fox Fine Art's Turner Reuter, Jr. says of Nall, "He was always at the races, the shows, and around the stables," adding, "He's a very good painter...I watched him paint, in his early work, Munnings was an influence." Unknowingly, Turner's thoughts echoed many of the prerequisites to success that Paul Brown had outlined to the boy in 1941. In his "pathways to success" list, Brown advised artistic practice, saying, "All this plus sketching, sketching and more sketching, from imagination and life – no copying – that is fatal."

From imagination – and from life might sum up the artistic theory behind Wally Nall's painting. Wally Nall made many thousands of photographs. Through the efforts of Jimmy Hatcher and other friends of the artist, the National Sporting Library is safely storing his collection of 35-mm color slides, color prints large and small, and early black & white prints. One of the most significant folders in the archive is titled, "Pictures for Paintings" written in the artist's hand. It contains multiple shots and close-up photos which Nall snapped to capture the from life aspect of his work. Nall's camera recorded the instant flick of a horse's tail, light falling on the sitter's clothing, the horse's muscles, and countless details for which the medium is prized. In his Middleburg studio, selected photos served as references, as he painted the from imagination part of every portrait. "He worked at it, I've seen him make 15 or 20 painted sketches for a portrait, when he wasn't satisfied," Jimmy Hatcher recalls, "but when it was easy, like all of us, it just came easy."



Clerk of the Scales

Collection of Cricket Bedford

Douglas Lees, the award-winning photographer, has a fine example of Nall's use of artistic license in a painting Nall made of his father, *Harcourt Lees Hunting with the Piedmont Fox Hounds*. The elder Lees, then MFH of the Warrenton Hunt, always correct in his turnout, was as a guest dressed in a black frock coat. Perhaps thinking it would make a more classic statement, Wally thought the painting called for a scarlet coat. "A Little Artistic License" Wally inscribed on back of the picture, and on the front, Harcourt is in scarlet. The painting was a gift according to Douglas.

To create the 1988 portrait *Mimi Abel Smith and Newton Thomas*, the 1983 picture *Rose Marie Bogley Riding Vital Victory*, or, in 1971, *Emily North King Hutchison Riding War Grail*, to take a few examples of countless double portraits of owners and horses, Nall used acrylic paints, which he favored. Acrylic pigments for artists were widely available by the late '50s and became the medium of choice for many artists. The water-soluble pigment dried quickly with an even luster, allowing the painter to work rapidly. Acrylic paint could be applied in solid uniform blocks of color, or built up and textured to resemble oil paint, which is how Nall worked with it.

Paint is simply a means to an end, a method of communication like a pianist's

keyboard or potter's clay. Wally Nall thought acrylic paints a perfect medium. They allowed his nimble illustrator's hand to capture what his eye observed and his mind desired. The sketch *The Meet at Oakley* shows the fluidity of the medium and Nall's range of color and pattern.

Among Wally Nall's exemplary portraits of men and their horses are the foxhunting portrait *Charles T. Matheson Riding Duck Soup*, the 1976 racing portrait *Turner Reuter, Jr., Riding Tauton II*, and the 1977 picture, *Erskine Bedford*,



WaystoRoses

Collection of William Backer

M.F.H. with the Piedmont Fox Hounds. As in the portraits mentioned above, each of these paintings is a study of the horse's conformation, the sitter's characteristics and demeanor, and the surrounding landscape.



Wallace W. Nall, III

Photo courtesy of Mary Phillips



F. Turner Reuter, Jr. Riding Tauton II Collection of Mr. and Mrs. F. Turner Reuter, Jr.

Another key portrait theme for Nall is the huntsman and his pack. Like all his equestrian paintings, these works are based on firsthand knowledge. As a young man in California in 1953, Wally Nall co-founded and served as Master of Foxhounds of The Los Altos Hounds. Nall, whose term ran from 1953 to 1956, is described as “a well known sporting artist” in the Hunt’s history, “Celebrating Fifty Years.” According to the booklet, Wally Nall “designed the buttons” and is

remembered as “a stickler for proper dress.”

Among the Virginia huntsman Nall portrayed using his horseman’s eye are Melvin Poe, Orange County Hounds; Albert Poe, Piedmont Fox Hounds; Charles Kirk, Piedmont Fox Hounds; Fred Duncan, Middleburg Hunt; and Charlie George, Middleburg Hunt. Each of these paintings is overflowing with energy. In the static pose, a moment in time is temporarily suspended, as Wally Nall creates a visual story.

As a former illustrator Wally knew what made a picture easy to read. Nall’s hallmarks—deft strokes, correct color and light, all within an organized composition—owe a debt to Paul Brown. They make certain key elements always line up correctly, as Brown wrote in 1941: “I see things happen in polo or ’chasing and then re-create from memory. When you can do moving horses freely and not by copying you’ll find you can put much more life in a portrait.”

Life into a portrait, Wally Nall made it happen.

– John Head



The Meet at Oakley

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. F. Turner Reuter, Jr.

The Museum of Hounds & Hunting NA, Inc. would like to thank the following individuals who generously lent work from their collections to this exhibition. By their willingness to share treasured objects with others, our show is possible. Thank you all.

Mimi Abel Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Atherton
William Backer
Cricket Bedford
Rose Marie Bogley
Mr. and Mrs. Shelby Bonnie
Mairead Carr
Pam Dickson
Jacqueline Eldridge
Margaret Gardner
Andrea Gilman
Mr. & Mrs. Richard H. Laimbeer
Raymond Le Blanc

Douglas Lees
Mrs. Trowbridge Littleton
Jacqueline B. Mars
Charles T. Matheson
Julie Martin Matheson
Kimbrough K. Nash
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Julie T. Vehr
Mr. and Mrs. James C. Wofford
Catherine Stettinius Zimmerman

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