

Walter “Walt” Pegram Wright

Primary Media: Acrylic on Canvas

BIOGRAPHY by Robert Onya

Walt was born on August 20th of 1956 as Walter Caywood Pegram in a low income Irish-Dutch/Jew family with three sisters and 2 brothers. Tragedy struck the home in his early years and the six children were separated. Walt was placed in a foster home along with his older brother near Kernersville, NC. Their foster parents Pauline and Henry Gordon noticed that Walter had an uncanny ability to draw and encouraged his efforts. For his birthdays and at Christmas Walter was often surprised with art supplies.

At the age of fourteen he sold his first acrylic painting to a Winston-Salem business man named Al Spillman. It was a cartoon style painting of the character known as “Tramp” from the Disney animated feature film “Lady and the Tramp”. At this time Walt loved all things Disney. Al purchased the painting for his home office and began calling the young budding artist “Walt”, after “Walt Disney”. The shortened name stuck and today few call him Walter, with an exception of family and close friends.

Although he would never be reunited with his biological parents, he was later adopted by Walter David Wright. Walt became *Walter Pegram Wright*. His adoptive father David Wright was a Real Estate appraiser with an eye for art. He and his sister Reba Hollingsworth continued to encourage Walt’s artistic education. Over the years Walt would encounter artist and teachers like, Robert Fox, Bob Timberlake, Joseph Wallace King, Helen Thorne and many others. However, it was Helen Thorne that boosted his natural ability at an accelerated rate following his high school years. Helen was the art instructor at Forsyth Technical School, which would later become a college. For two years Walt studied under Ms. Thorne through the evening adult education program as well as private lessons. During these years he worked in Real Estate with his adopted father as a means to support himself. One day near the end of their second year, Ms. Thorne sat and talked extensively with him. It was then he discovered that she had been a student of Bob Timberlake (Lexington, NC) and Leon Stacks (Hilton Head, SC). This was before Timberlake became the renowned designer that he is today and Stacks would become an internationally known art museum restoration expert. Helen confided in Walt that she had noticed within just a few classes that he had the skills and talents of both Timberlake and Stacks but done with a distinctive style all his own. She wanted to challenge him more but had little left to offer him as a student. However, there was one thing she could offer him, Ms. Thorne asked Walt to become her teaching assistant. Together they taught over 100 aspiring artist of all ages and skill levels over the span of another two and a half years. Due to a lack of class room space they divided into two classes each week, one for basic level students and the other for advanced level students. Classes included anything and everything their students needed to make a serious contribution in the world of art, basic color chart knowledge, mixed media, application techniques and textures. Near the end of Helen’s final year of teaching she asked Walter to assist her in completing a large commission painting of a 16th century ship on a stormy sea. It was being done for a private collector. After working diligently throughout the summer they completed the painting and both signed the work. Helen often treated Walt to a cold root beer float as they worked. Some days it ended up being more talk than painting but they both shared a strong love for art. After delivering the commissioned work Ms. Thorne ended her teaching due to age and declining health related problems, primarily her sight. Soon there after she was diagnosed with cancer and moved back to Ohio to be near her remaining relatives. Since those days Walt has completed several commissioned works of his own and received many awards across the Southeastern United States, including several Best In Show.

Later Walt would become a member of the Associated Artist of Winston-Salem. It was during this period that he was entitled “American Surrealist”. His work would become total sell outs at Art Festivals and other outdoor art events across the southeastern United States. Other showings have included the Saw Tooth Art Gallery in Winston-Salem, Art in The Park at Myrtle Beach, SC., Forsyth and Yadkin County Public Libraries, These are just a few of many other locations including juried shows and restaurant displays.

With over 100 completed works hanging in homes, businesses, galleries, and some even among private collectors, few people know of his church baptistery murals. Walt now resides in Hamptonville, NC which also happens to be where both his baptistery murals are located. One is at the Maranatha Baptist Church and the other in the Berean Baptist Church which is located at the edge of the Amish Community.

Artist Statement:

During my junior high years I had the opportunity to visit the Reynolds Art Museum with my class. It was a field trip that opened my eyes to art. On exhibit were works by the great Salvador Dali, Spanish-Catalan surrealist painter. The impression it had on me was overwhelming and my entire perspective of art was changed that day. Many years later I would have the privilege of meeting North Carolina artist Bob Timberlake. It was then that I realized the need for a balance of detail in buildings and structures within my landscapes. My years with Helen Thorne helped me to create the illusion of great depth within my scenes; this quickly became the trademark of my work. The years of being influenced by the artists I've mentioned has eventually lead me to my own unique surrealist style and technique with unique color blends, uncanny scenes and a sense of depth rarely pursued by modern artist.

I trust you soon learn to recognize my work but if you aren't sure, check the signature... it's unmistakable.



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