

William D. White: Response to Nature

by Nancy Carol Willis

Untitled (Brandywine Valley Landscape) c1935

Artist, Illustrator, and muralist, William D. White (1896-1971), enjoyed roaming the parks and woodlands of his native Delaware with a pencil and sketchbook. This painting of Brandywine Valley's rolling hills represents the best of the Regionalist style painting, begun in the Midwest in the late 1920s by Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Wood and others.



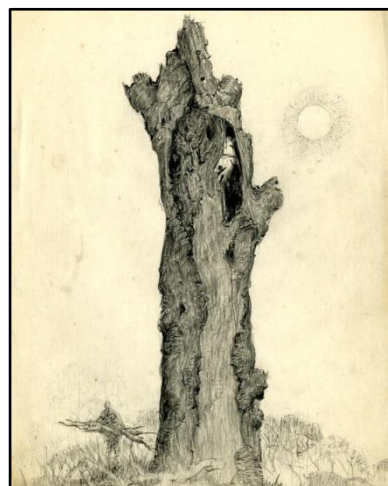
What interested these

artists were the places, people and events of their homelands. They depicted subject matter that was easily understood by ordinary people, in contrast to the Modernist paintings of Picasso, Matisse and others introduced at the 1913 Armory Show.

William D. White never married and lived the last 30 years of his life as a recluse in a primitive house without electricity. Many of his artworks depicted a centrally-placed dead tree, as though it were a metaphor for his own solitary life. In some landscapes, White included a tiny figure dominated by mammoth formations (painting, opposite



Untitled, Lisa C. Klein collection



Untitled, Delaware Historical Society Collection

page), perhaps to communicate the insignificance of the individual compared with the grandness of nature.