

January 29, 2021

Dear Friends of David Byrd!

Happy New Year! The sense of renewal that comes with a new year is especially needed in 2021. We truly hope you and your loved ones are managing. As we leave 2020 behind, we wanted to take a moment to share a few highlights from the year with you. As always, the David Byrd Estate appreciates your belief in David as we continue our efforts to preserve his legacy.

In spring 2020, the David Byrd Estate & Anton Kern Gallery announced the publication of Byrd's book, *Montrose VA 1958–1988*, published by Hatje Cantz, Germany. Through stunning word and image, the book expresses Byrd's perspective as a veteran and his empathy towards those living with psychological trauma. It includes profound passages about mental illness and the patients, doctors and nurses. Byrd considered *Montrose VA 1958-1988* his magnum opus. We were thrilled in May when the NY TIMES listed the book as one of the *Five Art Books to Read This Summer!*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/21/arts/design/art-books-to-read-this-summer-virus.html>

In the fall of 2020, the estate and Anton Kern Gallery donated a Byrd drawing to Yaddo's first-ever virtual auction. Yaddo is a retreat for artists located on a 400-acre estate in Saratoga Springs, NY. Its mission is to nurture the creative process by providing an opportunity for artists to work without interruption in a supportive environment. The donated drawing found a good home in Olympia, Washington. (see drawing below)

As we welcome 2021, we look forward to several upcoming exhibitions...!

On February 25th (coincidentally David's birthday), ***David Byrd, Montrose VA, 1958 – 1988***, will open at Anton Kern Gallery. The exhibition centers around Byrd's original manuscript, of the same title, chronicling his observations during his thirty-year employment in the psychiatric ward at the VA hospital in Montrose, NY. This handmade book was a labor of love, created by Byrd during the reflective period of his later years. It serves as a crucial codex for understanding his personal history, as well as his psychologically stirring oeuvre of paintings and works on paper. Select pages—with handwritten texts, sketches, and colored pencil drawings—will be displayed throughout the gallery in vitrines, accompanied by paintings, sketchbooks and other archival materials relating to this major body of work. Whether you visit the exhibition in person or online, this collection is not to be missed! (Exhibition dates: 2/25/21 – 4/3/21) <https://www.antonkerngallery.com/>

A drawing exhibition at Fleisher Ollman in Philadelphia is being planned for 2021-22. Byrd's meticulous renderings, filled with pathos and humor, reveal much about his life. He quietly recorded his family, Brooklyn street scenes, his years in the merchant marines, patients at the VA, bucolic landscapes, characters from country auctions, and the everyday scenes of people and places in and around Delaware County, NY.

After six years, the David Byrd Catalogue Raisonné is nearing completion. Currently, the letter section is underway. David saved first (and sometimes 2nd & 3rd) drafts of all his letters. One stack even dates back to his childhood in the 1930s. What an amazing historical treasure trove! The New York Times has described a catalogue raisonné as a definitive, scholarly compendia of an artist's work, the "supreme arbiter of the genuine and fake." It is a continually evolving archive that tracks the provenance of each individual artwork. In order to keep Byrd's raisonné current, we would appreciate a quick email if an artwork changes ownership.

In closing, we wanted to share this passage about the book from a letter David Byrd wrote to his sister, Mary, in 2003.

Dear Mary,

I have a little project that has occupied me. Working at the VA all those years always kept me looking and drawing. Going over my stuff and wondering about it. The idea came that it might make a book. So, I dropped other things and worked on it. Might be another fantasy but it's been fun and free.

Sending best wishes for abundant good health, happiness and hope in 2021! To repeat David's sentiment--may life be fun and free again soon!

Jody Isaacson & Jessica Farrell
David Byrd Estate



Byrd drawing, Springfield, Ill. newspaper 1938



Yaddo donation, Carnival Scene, 11" x 13 1/2"



Man with Mirror, oil on canvas, 19" x 24"