

## **JOHN F. WALTÉ**

### Wisconsin Poetic Realism

My involvement in art has always led me to question what we humans perceive as reality. During my career as a commercial photographer, I learned to bend reality with visual effects. I became acutely aware that our perception of who we are is shrouded in personal experience and altered under the massive influence of “media” and culture. Armed with this knowledge of how easily we can be fooled by others and ourselves, I began painting human interactions and relationships.

This work has culminated in a series of portraits and vignettes I call “Wisconsin Poetic Realism.” Influenced by mid- twentieth century artists such as Paul Cadmus, George Tooker, Robert Williams, and the film maker Jean Renoir, I compose in the style of the German Expressionist film movement. My subjects are composed in close- up, often looking directly at the viewer.

I “paint” these pieces using computers and 3D modeling and rendering applications in a virtual three- dimensional environment, where all aspects of the natural world’s dynamics are mimicked. I sculpt, model, paint surfaces, create props, land, sky and lighting, and then I capture to two dimensions, as if using a camera. Creating human beings this way puts me in a very intimate relationship with my subjects.

Who are these people? These Feral Dumb Men, these Angry Little Men (and others)? Men and women who are disenfranchised, unable to speak, outside the mainstream, in personal crisis, in denial, fighting the same monsters over and over, distant but familiar in their actions and choices. Surely, some will see people they know, or perhaps themselves.

All of my subjects have been stripped of the viewer’s self-imposed tyranny of what is beautiful. One must look at them, in the eye, and see them for who they are.