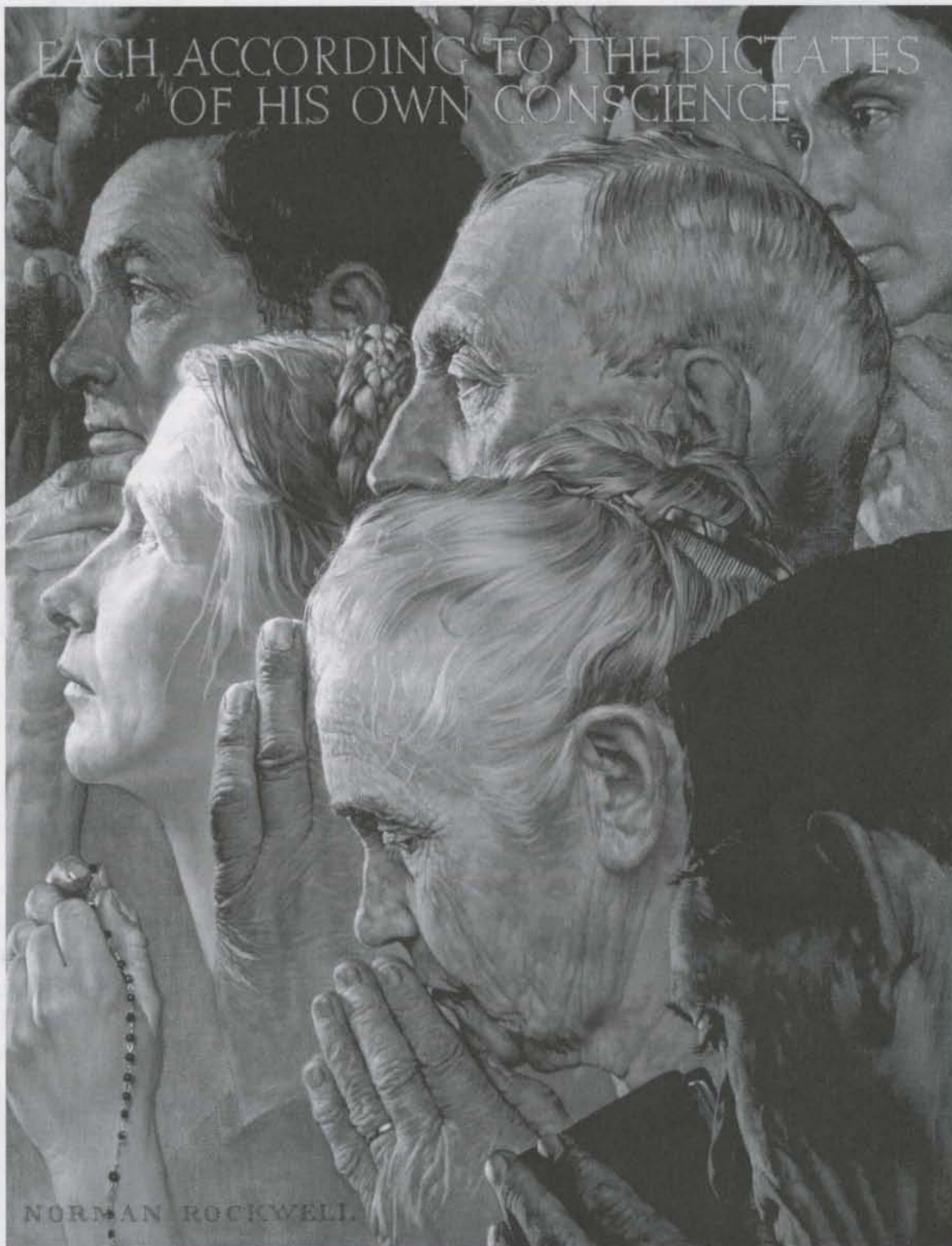


# *The Portfolio*

Volume 19  
Issue 1 2002

[www.normanrockwellmuseum.org](http://www.normanrockwellmuseum.org)

The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge





The  
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*The Portfolio*

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## From the Director

I hope that many of you had the opportunity to share in the warmth of the fall season at the Norman Rockwell Museum. While the national tour *Pictures for the American People* was in Stockbridge, over 132,000 came to see it. During its national tour, more than one million people visited the exhibition. *Pictures for the American People* opened in New York at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on November 3, where it remains until March 3, 2002, ending its two-year tour.

When the national exhibition left Stockbridge, *Speak Softly and Carry a Beagle: The Art of Charles Schulz* took over the Museum galleries and the hearts of all who have seen it. It is a celebration of the cartoonist's extraordinary life and creative process. Organized by the Minnesota Museum of American Art in St. Paul, Minnesota, in partnership with the Charles M. Schulz Museum in Santa Rosa, California, *Speak Softly and Carry a Beagle* features original cartoon strips, studies, archival photographs and art materials. I invite you to come see Charlie Brown and his friends cavort across the comic strip. Come smile with us.

The Museum is sponsoring a most innovative juried sculpture show. Snoopy has requested a new and better doghouse, and we aim to find one for him. We have invited artists working in all media to enter the Norman Rockwell Museum's first sculpture competition—*New Digs for the Dog*. The dog domiciles will be on display here and we look forward to sharing this architectural adventure with you.

To enthrall our young friends, the Museum's education department has created Art Adventures—a program for children age seven and up. Join us during school vacation for a special week of creative activities,

from February 18 through 22, designed to give students an exciting look at the world of art. From February 27 through April 10, we are offering Art After School, a program for children age nine and up. This seven-week class explores the fundamental concepts necessary for creating all styles of animation.

The Museum has assembled four touring exhibitions of Rockwell's work, which augment our national visibility and reputation. These exhibitions—*Norman Rockwell's Family Life Series*, *Norman Rockwell's Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn*, *Rockwell in the Forties: The War Years* and *Norman Rockwell's 322 Saturday Evening Post Covers*—contain original magazine tear sheets and high-quality prints. These amazing exhibitions are in constant demand at hospitals, museums, retirement communities and historic locations around the country. They are easily installed and viewed by a wide audience who admire Rockwell's art and might not otherwise have access to it. If you would like further information on bringing the art of Norman Rockwell to your community, please contact Traveling Exhibitions at 413.298.4100, ext. 245.

In this new year, we shall continue to carry out our mission—to preserve, study and communicate with a worldwide audience the life, art and spirit of Norman Rockwell—by bringing you the best possible exhibitions of Rockwell's art and that of his colleagues in the field of illustration. I look forward to seeing you in Stockbridge.

Laurie Norton Moffatt

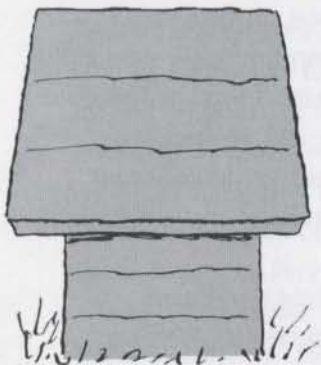




# Upcoming Exhibitions

Nature came through with the beauty that we so much needed in the midst of the September tragedy, and provided us with one of the most spectacular fall seasons in memory. The Museum galleries were filled to overflowing with visitors who came to enjoy our permanent exhibitions, compelling programs and the spectacular Charles Schulz show. We are holding four terrific new exhibitions in the next few months. Good grief!

**Speak Softly and Carry a Beagle: The Art of Charles Schulz** is currently on exhibition. Through May 5, you will have the rare opportunity to celebrate the extraordinary life and art of the beloved creator of *Peanuts*. Experience for yourself the cartoonist's original drawings, along with selected *Peanuts* memorabilia.



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## **New Digs for the Dog**

As a special and original treat, from April 6 to May 5, you are invited to enter Snoopy's private world! Come and see the creative results of many artists' three-dimensional depictions of the World-Famous Beagle's domicile as they build *New Digs for the Dog*. This juried sculpture exhibition can be seen both in the

galleries and on the Museum grounds. Don't bring your dog; he or she will want to take one home!

**Sixteenth Annual Berkshire County High School Art Show** begins on March 23. The Museum is pleased to host this annual exhibition of diverse and original artworks by many talented local students. The *High School Art Show* continues through April 21.

### **A FAMILY DAY OF FUN**

**April 6**

*New Digs for the Dog: Build a Better Doghouse for Snoopy*

### **MEMBERS' OPENING**

**May 18**

*John Held Jr. and the Jazz Age*  
*Norman Rockwell and the Artists of New Rochelle*

### **MEMBERS' DANCE PARTY**

**June 8**

## **John Held Jr. and the Jazz Age**

Step back in time to the golden years of the 1920's with this retrospective. The exhibition highlights the works of one of the roaring twenties' premier illustrators. Through his visuals, Held proved himself a keen observer and a shaper of what F. Scott Fitzgerald tagged "the Jazz Age." Held's portrayals of flappers, collegiate capers and jazz bands were a departure from the elegant, upper-class figures that dominated American illustration at the time. His works poke gentle fun at the social standards of that era. View his original drawings, paintings, sculptures, artifacts and archival photographs, and witness Held's artistic evolution during a period of cultural change in America. *John Held Jr. and the Jazz Age* is on view from May 6 through September 8.



Photo courtesy of Illustration House, New York City

## **Norman Rockwell and the Artists of New Rochelle**

The art of Norman Rockwell evolved when he immersed himself in the vibrant New Rochelle artistic community, which offered both significant cultural connections and a sense of country life. Explore Rockwell's life and art during his New Rochelle years by placing his work within the context



Norman Rockwell in his New Rochelle studio. Photographer unknown

of such colleagues as J.C. and Frank Leyendecker, Coles Phillips, Walter Beach Humphrey, Claire Briggs, Clyde Forsythe, Frederick Remington, Worth Brehm, Edward Penfield and others. *Norman Rockwell and the Artists of New Rochelle* is on view from May 18 through October 27.



# Charles Schulz—Master

**Jan Eliot, Popular Cartoonist and Originator of the Nationally Syndicated Cartoon Strip *Stone Soup***

I first decided to contact Charles Schulz, whom I would later know as “Sparky,” in 1982. I had spent three years developing and publishing my first cartoon strip, *Patience and Sarah*, which featured a divorced single mom (Patience) and her precocious daughter (Sarah). I was writing from my own life situation. While this early strip appeared in about 10 small newspapers and magazines, and had piqued the interest of three syndicates, I had not been able to leverage these successes into a syndicate contract and a viable career as a cartoonist.

So, I decided to write to Charles Schulz and ask him to review my work. My first letter was returned to me with a note from a staff member saying, “Mr. Schulz does not do this sort of thing.” I re-sent my letter, pleading that, as a struggling new cartoonist, my career would surely benefit from a few words of wisdom from the master. Soon after, a little yellow envelope sporting a picture of Snoopy at the typewriter arrived in my mailbox. I tore it open in great anticipation. My heart sank into the cellar. “He thinks I’m a terrible artist! He thinks my ideas are obvious.” I was devastated. And, he was right. I had a lot to learn about being a cartoonist.

I took Mr. Schulz’s advice as best I could, but when the year brought more disappointments and rejection of my work, I began to lose faith in my ability to make my dream come true. I abandoned my comic strip

dreams, and for the next five years developed my skills in graphic design and copy writing. I had the occasional opportunity to draw a cartoon for some brochure or computer manual or employee handbook.

In 1988, my life changed substantially when I married my husband, Ted. He offered emotional support and a genuine interest in my creative pursuits. I decided to try launching a comic strip once again, and I convinced my local paper to give it a weekly spot in a feature edition. After six months, I sent 24 strips to Lee Salem at Universal Press Syndicate. He returned them to me with a kind, lengthy letter, saying, “no thanks.” Now, you have to realize that in the world of publishing, getting a kind, lengthy rejection letter is a very good thing. It means that there is at least a little interest in your work. Otherwise, you’d get the dreaded typed, unsigned memo declaring that your work simply “does not fit our needs at this time.”

Lee and I repeated this exchange for four years. I’d send him a bundle every six months; he’d send me a nice rejection in return. At the beginning of 1994, I decided to take a more assertive tact. I wrote Lee that I planned on becoming a working cartoonist that year, with or without him, and signed the letter, “This is my year.” I began writing him every two weeks, signing each letter, “Remember, this is my year.” After

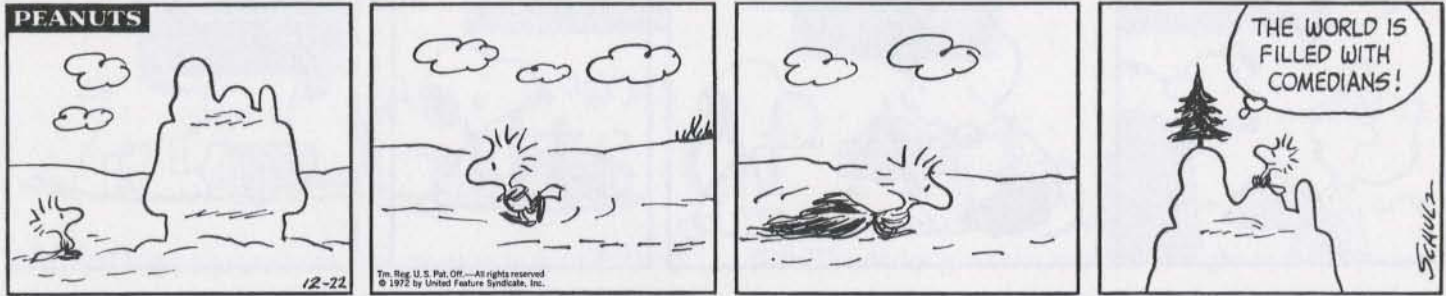
three months, I suppose he faced the choice of either issuing a restraining order, or sending me a contract. Fortunately, he opted for the latter. In the fall of 1995, 16 years after the debut of my first comic strip and 13 years after my first letter from Sparky, *Stone Soup* opened in 25 papers. A modest number, but I could finally call myself a cartoonist.

I remembered Sparky’s early words to me, admonishing me to learn to draw better and avoid obvious ideas. I quit my job to devote myself fully to drawing the best cartoon strip I could, with the most original ideas I could come up with. I wanted *Stone Soup* to be funny and professional, and I hoped to impress already successful cartoonists like Charles Schulz.

Soon after I became syndicated, Lynn Johnston, creator of *For Better or For Worse*, encouraged me to join the National Cartoonists Society. The next spring, I attended my first Reuben Awards weekend, sort of the Oscars of cartooning. On Saturday morning at breakfast, Lynn found me and said, “Come here, I’ll introduce you to Sparky.” We intercepted him on his way to a table. I was so nervous that I couldn’t think of anything to say. After a few brief words, I went back to my table and he found his. Somewhat distraught over this brief and fairly unsatisfying meeting, I decided to send him some copies of my work and a letter reminding him that we had met. As soon as I mailed



# of Simplicity



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it, I worried that it was the wrong thing to do. But the following Monday, I picked up my phone to hear, “Good morning, Jan. This is Charles Schulz”.

My first thought was, “Who is this *really*?”

But fortunately, I realized it must be true, and we began to talk. We talked for half an hour. He was genuinely interested in who I was and what cartoonists I admired. I had just purchased a collection of an old cartoon called *Skippy*, by Percy Crosby. It turned out to be one of Sparky’s favorites, and I felt his approval through the phone. He invited me to Santa Rosa the following December, when he hosted a yearly party for cartoonists at the ice show. Sparky introduced me to many wonderful cartoonists and I felt very included in a wonderful new club. After our Sunday breakfast, Sparky found me outside and asked if I’d like to see his studio. *Would I??* He said, “Just follow me.” As I drove through the streets of Santa Rosa, I screamed inside the car, “I’m following Charles Schulz to his studio!” He showed me his office, the modest little table he’d been working at his entire career and the pens he drew with. He got out a piece of

paper and began to draw. It was a magical moment that I’ll never forget. I know that he has probably created that same moment for many other cartoonists, but this one was *mine*.

The next summer, my first book collection was released and I sent him a copy. Shortly after, I received a letter saying, “You are going in exactly the right direction.” The following December, I went to my second ice show. Sparky came and sat at our table. So insecure was I still that I had actually doubted that he remembered me. Yet here he was, asking me how I was doing. I was a little disappointed because, while my circulation had grown quickly, it seemed to have reached a plateau.

Sympathetically, Sparky told me how *Peanuts* had also gotten stuck during its initial five years. He said, “It all changed when I made Snoopy stand up!” He explained that in the beginning Snoopy was simply a dog—the family pet, walking on all fours in the background. But one day, for some reason, Sparky decided to have Snoopy stand up on his hind legs and have a thought. This innovation created a turning point for *Peanuts*, and circulation grew, then soared.

Sparky turned to me and said, “You need to find the thing in your strip that is like having Snoopy stand up!”

I was doubtful because I doubted my ability to come up with something equally effective. He saw the doubt on my face and said, “You can do it, Jan. I have faith in you.” Once again, he left me dumbstruck. He barely knew me. How could he have faith in me? But this was part of his magic. He so loved cartooning and cartoonists that he really connected. He didn’t scan the room when he was talking to me to see if there was someone more important that he should move on to. He didn’t care about status. He cared about drawing and ideas.

Sparky once described a cartoon that he was working on. He asked if I thought it was funny. I was astounded to realize that he wanted to know what *I* thought. But Sparky always seemed concerned with what the next good idea would be, and with the ongoing mystery of where good ideas come from. I’ve heard from other cartoonists that he would often call and ask, “Have any good ideas today?” Even though he was successful enough to have dozens of assistants figuring out what his next





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strip would be, he wasn't that kind of cartoonist. To him, it was the greatest job in the world, and why wouldn't he want to do it all himself? He never quit perfecting his craft, searching for inspiration and innovation and dreaming up what might happen next with his characters.

As a comic strip, *Peanuts* was a departure from the popular adventure strips of its day. It was deeper and more poignant than simple gag cartoons. Sparky never used gag writers, as was common with his peers. *Peanuts* was as original and unique as its creator—completely simple, completely complex. By setting this tremendously high standard for himself and his strip, he also raised the bar for all cartoonists. Most of us only hope to live up to his standards.

All of us who read *Peanuts* can see ourselves in the cast of characters, and this may be one of the keys to its success. That, and the fact that the central theme of *Peanuts* is loss. Why is this funny? This central theme is repeated with great predictability.

Losing the baseball game, losing another chance to speak to the little red-haired girl, to see the Great Pumpkin. Charlie Brown always loses, again and again. *Why* is this funny? Perhaps because loss is a fact of life, and we find comfort watching Charlie Brown patiently, quietly cope with this fact, getting up again and again, as we all must do.

Simply put, Charles Schulz was a very nice man and a master cartoonist—master of simplicity, repetition and loss. He used wonderful devices like the kite-eating tree, Linus' blanket, Schroeder's music and the psychiatry booth. These ideas were so completely original and effective that each one has become an institution within the institution of *Peanuts*.

I know that Sparky experienced rejection and disappointment at different times. He never liked the name given to his strip. The same people who labeled it *Peanuts* made him draw his strip in a smaller, more square format, so that the strip could appear as four across or two and two. They did not think that the strip would sell


well. They thought this might help convince editors to take it.

How ironic that the strip with the most diminutive name would become the greatest of all. Art historians, social historians and experts on pop culture will debate the significance of *Peanuts* and how Charles Schulz changed the landscape of the comics page.

I must admit that I am still looking for the thing in my strip that is like "making Snoopy stand up." Since Sparky thought I could do it, I don't think I'll be able to rest until I find it. And if I do, I hope he has some way of hearing about it, and knowing that I am grateful.

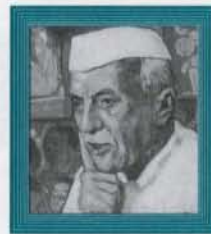


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 National Tour Sponsor of *Speak Softly and Carry a Beagle: The Art of Charles Schulz*.

Organized by the Minnesota Museum of American Art, Saint Paul, MN, and the Charles M. Schulz Museum, Santa Rosa, CA. This exhibition is supported by The Community Foundation for the Capital Region's Pamela Deely Van De Loo Advised Fund in memory of James and Patricia Deely.





# Gifts of Art

*The most important mission of a museum is to collect and present major artworks. With a strong core collection, a museum can initiate education programs for adults and children; attract loans for exhibitions of Rockwell art in private hands, as well as work by other famous illustrators; and serve the public in the most informative, interesting and creative ways possible.*

—Laurie Norton Moffatt, Director

The Norman Rockwell Museum is always grateful for gifts of original Norman Rockwell paintings. Donors may give in a variety of ways:

**Left to right:** *Phil the Fiddler*, 1940, gift of an anonymous donor, 1996; *Girl Reading the Post*, 1941, gift of the Walt Disney Family, 1999; *Portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 1963, gift of the Estates of George W. and Alice Gould Edman, by their sons, Talmage, Silas and Ross, 2000; *Portrait of Spencer Tracy*, 1944, gift of Theodore P. and Barbara A. Judd, 1998.

**Gift:** The donor gives the artwork outright to the Museum.

**Bequest:** A donation of artwork may be stipulated in the donor's will.

**Partial Gift:** The donor may give the Museum a part interest in a painting.

**Donative Sale:** The donor receives some remuneration plus a charitable deduction.

There are many ways to donate works of art that benefit the Museum and provide the donor with a tax deduction. To learn more, please contact Maureen Hart Hennessey at 413.298.4100, ext. 206.



# Special Events

For your very special event, consider the Norman Rockwell Museum and its picturesque grounds as the perfect location to entertain your clients and guests. Located on a scenic 36-acre site in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, the Norman Rockwell Museum overlooks the Housatonic River Valley and provides the perfect backdrop for all your special occasions.

From dinner parties, retirement parties, fundraisers and weddings to corporate receptions, meetings and conferences, the 27,000-square-foot Museum provides just the

right atmosphere to make your event long remembered. Add something *extra* to your event by incorporating the exhibitions by Norman Rockwell and other notable illustrators. Norman Rockwell's studio and the sculptures by Rockwell's son, Peter, which dot the landscape, will be of interest to your guests and add an extra dimension to your event.

Call Dana Audia, Manager of External Relations and Special Events, at 413.298.4100, ext. 237 to discuss ways to make your next event unforgettable.



# Merrie Christmas

Linda Pero, Curator of Norman Rockwell Collection

The museum has been fortunate to receive a gift of an original 1929 *Saturday Evening Post* cover painting from the family of John W. Hanes of Virginia and New York. The 44 x 33-inch oil on canvas is an important example of the sub-genre of Dickensian motifs that Rockwell repeatedly explored and revisited over the course of his long illustration career.

As the *Post* cover illustration of December 7, 1929, *Merrie Christmas* was the first of three consecutive Christmas covers that year. The two that followed featured E.M. Jackson's picture of a colonial servant carrying two elaborately decorated candelabra and a J.C. Leyendecker image of Elizabethan carolers. It was not unusual for the *Post* to publish two or three covers in the month of December related to the holiday season.

When Rockwell began working for the *Post* in 1916, the "Christmas Number" was published on or shortly before the 25<sup>th</sup> of each December and was most often the work of veteran illustrator J.C. Leyendecker. In fact, Leyendecker had been granted the "Christmas Number" since 1905, a decade before Rockwell began his *Post* career. Once on the rotation however, Rockwell comfortably fell into a routine of sharing this envied spot with Leyendecker. This elevated standing emboldened his work and he moved from unassuming anecdotal themes, such as a store clerk



*Merrie Christmas*, illustrated by Norman Rockwell, oil on canvas, *The Saturday Evening Post*, December 8, 1928. © 1928 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN. All rights reserved.

modeling a Santa hat and beard, to more solidly traditional themes as Santa consulting his list of "good" children or Santa at his globe charting his Christmas Eve itinerary. There is a sense in these early years that Rockwell purposely avoided any appearance of upstaging Leyendecker, his illustration idol.

In time, a rhythm emerged in Rockwell's Christmas covers of alternating images among a traditional Santa, a Colonial American subject and a character or vignette gleaned from the stories of Charles Dickens. No doubt, many of the portrayals derive from long-standing memories deeply etched in Rockwell's aesthetic psyche from many readings of Dickens's stories and classic tales by Washington Irving. Rockwell amassed a



*Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham, *A Christmas Carol*, 1915.

collection of vintage clothing and props with which to accessorize his period narratives.

From the abundance of Dickensian subjects, it is clear that these were among Rockwell's favorites. He seems to have paralleled (or perhaps never separated) in his imagination Dickens's characterizations with his own notions of the genre.

In 1928, Rockwell produced a *Post* cover of a jolly couple dancing under mistletoe, a direct descendent of Victorian illustrations of Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig from Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. From Rockwell's avowal of admiration of his employer, the *Post*'s then managing editor George Horace Lorimer, we may gather that Rockwell is celebrating



the goodness and benevolence of Lorimer in his portrayal of Fezziwig, a character who symbolized those attributes to Dickens.

In the following year, 1929, Rockwell interprets the character of Tony Weller from Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* for the December 7<sup>th</sup> cover. Tony Weller is father of Sam Weller, *Pickwick's* manservant. Witty, cunning and loyal, Sam is known, as is his father, for peppering his speech with familiar sayings followed by facetious ascriptions. Examples of this proverb genre, which came to be known as a Wellerism, include, "It's over, and can't be helped, and that's one consolation, as they always say in Turkey, ven they cuts the wrong man's head off," and "Avay with melencholly, as the little boy said ven his school-missis died." Tony Weller is a portly and robust coachman described as "uncommon fat." He wears top boots, a broad-brimmed hat and a tile-green shawl. "On the stagebox he is a king, elsewhere he is a mere greenhorn."



To Father Christmas, illustrated by Norman Rockwell, oil on canvas, *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1931.

In books read to him by his father, Rockwell grew up seeing the illustrations of H.K. Browne, known by his moniker "Phiz." *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, originally published as a monthly serial in the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper (1836 to 1837), was conceived as a vehicle for the drawings of the popular artist Robert Seymour. After Seymour committed suicide, just before the second chapter of the *Papers* was published, H. K. Browne assumed Seymour's commission and went on to do the illustrations for most of Dickens's later works.

In 1946, Rockwell based his *Post* cover of a boy in a dining car on Browne's drawing of *The Friendly Waiter and I* from *David Copperfield*. Browne's linear engravings perfectly construed the personality and humor of each situation, whereas Rockwell's full-color renderings, though issuing from Browne's concepts, bear little resemblance to his artwork. Unlike many of Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* covers, in which people are slightly cari-



Sam Weller Writes a Valentine, illustrated by H. K. Browne, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, 1836.

captured, the flesh and blood realism of *Merrie Christmas* is so convincing that one feels he views Dickens's world as fact rather than fiction.

Rockwell must have yearned to have a commission to illustrate Dickens's books, knowing his empathy and predilection for the characters and the embedded messages. However, it is within Rockwell's character to feel that he could never compete with the classic illustrations of H. K. Browne, George Cruikshank, C. E. Brock and F. O. C. Darley.

Two years after the *Post's Merrie Christmas*, an excerpt from *Pickwick Papers*, with Rockwell's interpretation of the text, was published in *Ladies' Home Journal*. The scene is of two gentlemen toasting the season in a stagecoach station tavern.

*Christmas was close at hand in all his bluff and hearty honesty; it was the season of hospitality, merriment, and open-heartedness; the old year was preparing, like an ancient philosopher, to call his friends around him, and amidst the sound of feasting and revelry to pass gently and calmly away ... how many old recollections, and how many dormant sympathies does Christmas time awaken!*

*Merrie Christmas*, an embodiment of Norman Rockwell's imaginative journey with Victorian literature, will serve to awaken the sentiments of the Christmas season of visitors to the Norman Rockwell Museum for generations to come. The collection is greatly enhanced by its addition and we are truly grateful to the family of John W. Hanes.



# Reintroducing Norman Rockwell

**Robert Rosenblum, Professor of Fine Arts, New York University, and Curator of Twentieth-Century Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York**

Norman Rockwell keeps pricking my art-historical conscience. First, there was the Wadsworth Atheneum, in 1985, where, to my disbelief, I saw hanging, right in the midst of Picasso, Mondrian, and Miró, a picture of a spunky little girl, smiling proudly over her newly acquired black eye as she waits outside the principal's office for her comeuppance. An adventurous new curator, Gregory Hedberg, had elevated this Rockwell canvas from the storeroom to the twentieth-century pantheon upstairs, and there it stuck out like a sore but mesmerizing thumb. I had been taught to look down my nose at Rockwell, but then, I had to ask myself why. If it had already become respectable to scrutinize and admire the infinite detail, dramatic staging, narrative intrigues, and disguised symbols of Victorian genre paintings, why couldn't the same standards apply here?

I shelved the question until 1996, when, almost by accident, I passed by Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and thought I'd like to see Robert A.M. Stern's 1993 shrine to Rockwell and, while there, the art as well. ... Inside, without the distractions of modern art, I became an instant convert to the enemy camp, wondering how anybody but the most bigoted modernist could resist not only the mimetic magic of these paintings, but the no-less-magical way they trans-



*Murder in Mississippi*, oil on canvas, *Look* magazine, unpublished version for April 20, 1965, story illustration. © 1965 by The Norman Rockwell Family Trust. All rights reserved.

formed a mind-boggling abundance of tiny observations—a choice of tie, an upholstery pattern, a hairdo, a plate of celery—into essential props for the story told. ...

We are learning that there are many fresh approaches to Rockwell, even psychobiographical ones. ... But the most fruitful context for Rockwell is probably the big saga of twentieth-century American history, in both the headlines and the small print. In literature, Rockwell takes us from Horatio Alger to Sinclair Lewis; in architecture and design, from the colonial revival ... to George Nelson's Brave New World interiors and the Eames chair; in social history, from the advice of *Saturday Evening Post* editor George Horace Lorimer “never to show colored people [on the *Post*'s cover] except as servants” to the consciousness-raising images Rockwell made for *Look* in the 1960s documenting

the traumatic realities of desegregation in the South. Beginning with quaint myths of American innocence, when the most shocking crime was a bunch of Booth Tarkington kids who dare to ignore a “No Swimming” sign, we end up in a world so ugly that ... in Rockwell's *The Problem We All Live With*, an immaculately dressed little black girl named Ruby Bridges has to be accompanied to her New Orleans school daily under the protection of four U.S. marshals, while white crowds threaten and jeer. Rockwell may have agonized about being more of an illustrator than a “fine” artist, but his best work, such as this outing of a hideous American secret, makes such hierarchies as irrelevant as the old-fashioned prejudice that photography must be a lower art than painting. Who can forget the shrill contrast of this tidy, regimented march to school against a city wall bearing the partly effaced graffiti scrawl “nigger” (which parallels the artist's signature below, rendered in mock-schoolboy, lowercase penmanship) and the remnants of a tomato that's just been hurled, a visceral burst of skin and pulp that looks like the bloody aftermath of a firing squad? Or perhaps the wall looks like a painting by Cy Twombly, one of those occasional shocks of familiarity that helps place Rockwell within expectations of twentieth-century art. ... And for a new kind of spine-chilling social realism, his *Murder in Mississippi*, an eerily lit document of the murder of three civil-rights activists in Mississippi, previews both Mark Tansey's

*This article is excerpted from the exhibition catalogue Pictures for the American People with permission from the author.*



painted sepia photographs and Leon Golub's close-up accounts of contemporary brutality.

Such connections may be fortuitous, but there is no doubt that Rockwell ... demonstrated again and again that he was knowledgeable about museum-worthy traditions and even the latest mode in modern art, which lured him to Paris in 1923. His *Triple Self-Portrait* tells all: a bitter sweet joke of the lightweight Yankee facing not only his own bemused mirror image and a big white canvas, but also a tacked-on anthology of small reproductions offering noble precedents for self-portraiture—Dürer, Rembrandt, van Gogh, and, most surprising, a particularly difficult Picasso that mixes an id-like female monster attacking from within. ... And if Rockwell nodded humbly in Picasso's direction, there's no doubt that Mondrian played a role, too, in a work like *Shuffleton's Barbershop*, which offers an almost humorous marriage of the modern Dutch master's severely rectilinear and asymmetrical geometries, translated into the perpendicular mullions of a barbershop window, to the American version of Dutch seventeenth-century realism, with a view through the darkened barbershop to bright, distant room where, after hours, the locals relax with amateur music-making. ...

But I, for one, am happy now to love Rockwell for his own sake, and not because he learned some tricks from Mondrian and other artists represented in museums. ... And if we are

far enough away from World War II to relish nostalgically some cheerleading from the home front, Rockwell offers *Rosie the Riveter*, in which Michelangelo's Isaiah becomes a muscular, lipsticked redhead equipped with a lunch box, a phallic rivet gun, a white-bread ham sandwich, and a copy of *Mein Kampf* kept underfoot. These days, gallons of academic ink could be spilled over the feminist issues foreshadowed in this campy icon of macho womanhood at war.

It's a tribute to Rockwell's diverse powers that his art now seems to look in so many directions, including transatlantic ones. ... Back on this side of the Atlantic, his art gains new dimensions when seen in the context of not only his commercial contemporaries, such as the illustrator J.C. Leyendecker, but also later populist artists such as Ben Shahn, whose social evangelism Rockwell would eventually share. But the larger point is that, just in time for the new millennium, we may have a new Rockwell. Now that the battle for modern art has ended in a triumph that took place in another century, the twentieth, Rockwell's work may become an indispensable part of art history. The sneering, puritanical condescension with which he was once viewed by serious art lovers can swiftly be turned into pleasure. To enjoy his unique genius, all you have to do is relax.

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The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, is the final venue for the exhibition *Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People*.

**Tour Itinerary for Norman Rockwell:  
Pictures for the American People  
[www.rockwelltour.org](http://www.rockwelltour.org)**

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High Museum of Art  
1280 Peachtree Street, N.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30309  
404-733-4400 general information  
[www.high.org](http://www.high.org)

**February 26–May 21, 2000**  
Chicago Historical Society  
Clark Street at North Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60614-6099  
312-642-4600 general information  
[www.chicagohs.org](http://www.chicagohs.org)

**June 17–September 24, 2000**  
The Corcoran Gallery of Art  
500 17th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006-4804  
202-639-1700 general information  
[www.corcoran.org](http://www.corcoran.org)

**October 28–December 31, 2000**  
San Diego Museum of Art  
1450 El Prado, Balboa Park  
San Diego, CA 92112-2107  
619-232-7931 general information  
[www.sdmart.org](http://www.sdmart.org)

**January 27–May 6, 2001**  
Phoenix Art Museum  
1625 N. Central Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85004-1685  
602-257-1880 general information  
[www.phxart.org](http://www.phxart.org)

**June 9–October 21, 2001**  
The Norman Rockwell Museum  
9 Glendale Road, Rt. 183  
Stockbridge, MA 01262  
413-298-4100 general information  
[www.nrm.org](http://www.nrm.org)

**November 3, 2001–March 3, 2002**  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum  
1071 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10128  
212-423-3500 & 3600 general information  
[www.guggenheim.org](http://www.guggenheim.org)

Background: *Lincoln for the Defense*, oil on canvas, *Saturday Evening Post*, February 10, 1962, story illustration. Norman Rockwell Museum Art Collection Trust.



# Art and PATRIOTISM

Deborah Solomon, author and art critic

Patriotic art has never exactly ranked high on the list of aesthetic wonders, but who can doubt its appeal? It is hard to think of a painting in an American museum that can compete for visual immediacy with that famous image of Uncle Sam pointing his finger and sternly admonishing, "I Want You." The World War I recruiting poster is an inadvertent classic of American art, evoking the intense and tragic years when a generation of young men put on uniforms, boarded trains and promised their moms they'd be back soon, while knowing they might never be back at all.

Not long after the twin towers fell and the tears started flowing, *New York* magazine ran a humorous cover illustration of Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani decked out as Uncle Sam. You can glance nearly anywhere these days and see that patriotism has its own look, its own iconography, its own repertory of time-honored images. It is odd to think that my generation, the first for whom avant-garde art was not a moral offense but a subject to be diligently studied in college, now finds itself mesmerized by the landscape of patriotism. We who wrote term papers on Andy Warhol's soup cans and barely bothered to look at any flag that did not bear the signature of Jasper Johns are turning for solace to pictorial representations of honor, country and heroism that were born before we were.

For years, of course, such themes were disdained as artistically incorrect. The "American Century," whose advent was loudly proclaimed after 1945, took its cultural cue not from Peoria, but from Paris. It treated modernism as an assault on bourgeois values, and defined the archetypal American artist as a Jackson Pollock sort, a moody genius splashing out abstract pictures. Patriotic art, in the meantime, was presumed to refer to bronze statues of soldiers on horses, as stiff as mannequins and equally oblivious to the temper of the times. To proclaim an unironic interest in such art was to invite sneers from sophisticates and to be written off as a visual illiterate.

Yet the events of September 11 and the weeks since have brought a sudden relevance and even respect to long-discredited images. The most striking example is the picture by Thomas E. Franklin, a 35-year-old staff photographer for *The Bergen Record* that recently appeared on front pages around the world and made the cover of *Newsweek*. By now, you have seen it: Three firefighters, their clothes and black helmets shiny with ash, gaze into a squinty-bright sky as they hoist a flag above the rubble of the World Trade Center.

The image became an overnight icon, and not only because it attests to the self-sacrificing courage of firemen. It also sends us back in time, evoking classic scenes of soldiers in battle. One thinks, in particular, of the photograph of Iwo Jima taken on February 23, 1945—the four marines huddled together as they raise a flag above the island, their bodies and outstretched arms forming a pyramid that itself harks back to the balanced forms of Renaissance sculpture.

Not surprisingly, the photograph of Iwo Jima was later revealed to have been staged; it was taken a short time after the actual event occurred. Some people felt that made it fraudulent and also discredited the statue that was based on it, a mammoth bronze memorial that stands west of Arlington National Cemetery and remains the best-known monument of World War II. But such thinking is foolish. If art is a lie that tells the truth, as Picasso once said, the Iwo Jima memorial certainly qualifies.

What, exactly, is patriotic art? In contrast to the School of Paris (think Picasso) or the School of New York (think Pollock), patriotic art might be regarded as the school of Washington, confining itself to eye-catching images that promote American institutions. It is commonly maligned as propaganda. It reached an apogee during World War I, when the federal government, seeking to mold opinion in a country where radio and television were not yet available,

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*This article is reprinted from The New York Times, with permission from the author.*





enlisted visual artists to advertise its cause. What they were selling was not soap or light bulbs, but the war effort and the government itself.

The Division of Pictorial Publicity, which was part of America's version of a propaganda ministry, wallpapered buildings and streets across the country with tens of thousands of posters, the most popular of which depicted Uncle Sam and his pointing finger.

That poster, by the way, was created in 1917 by James Montgomery Flagg, a prodigiously gifted illustrator who, in some ways, was an unlikely patriot. Flagg was a vivid character, a New York bohemian with striking features and a predilection for blond show girls. Unknown to the American public, he used himself as the model for his Uncle Sam. His recruiting poster takes an amorous come-on ("I Want You") and turns it into a patriotic come-on.

Henry James once observed that Americans have "the reputation of always boasting and blowing and waving the American flag." Yet patriotic imagery need not be festooned with stars and stripes. Norman Rockwell, who did more to visualize the aspirations of Americans than any other artist of the 20th century, seldom painted the flag (as is evident in the current show of his work at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York). Instead, he painted a country whose spirit remained abundantly intact despite two world wars and the Great Depression. In a time when anthrax attacks only intensify our yearning to return to normalcy, Rockwell's pictures of kids,



*Freedom from Fear*, oil on canvas, *Saturday Evening Post*, 1943, cover. © 1943 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN. All rights reserved.



dogs and uncranky grandmothers might be viewed as normalcy incarnate.

That's certainly the subject of his *Freedom From Fear* (1943), one in a quartet of wartime paintings based on President Roosevelt's rousing words. It shows two children snug in bed, their mother stooping to pull up their blanket, their father looking on, holding a newspaper whose partially visible headline announces news of "bombing" and "horror" abroad. To see the painting today is to see six decades

slip away. We know now what it means to crave freedom from fear, the freedom to walk kids to school and toss a baseball in a park without feeling a shadow of trepidation darken the face of American democracy.

It would be absurd to pretend that patriotic art can give form to the full range and depth of human emotion. It cannot. It captures mainly one emotion—an appreciation for the values and rituals of American life. A few months ago that may have sounded corny, but it no longer does. As we continue to try to lend shape to feelings of national concern and affection, it would be a mistake to dismiss patriotic art as kitsch. It serves a purpose in the immediate present and—to judge from the example of Uncle Sam, Iwo Jima and two kids tucked into bed—at times can prove as enduring as any museum masterpiece.

*Deborah Solomon, a 2001 Guggenheim fellow, is writing a biography of Norman Rockwell.*





Peter and Cynthia Rockwell



Geoffrey, Cynthia and Mary Rockwell

Visitors in the galleries



Trustee Ellen Kahn and son Michael Piderit

# News Across the Nation



Caroline and Jack Batty, Museum Director Laurie Norton Moffatt and Lila and Peter Berle

## Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

On November 17, 2001, the Norman Rockwell Museum had a great reason to celebrate. The national exhibition opened in New York City at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Over 250 celebrants gathered at the museum, designed by the great American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, to see the Rockwell paintings on exhibition on the second and fourth-floor wings. Decorative votive candles set a scene that was further enhanced by sumptuous desserts, wines and a great jazz band. Below are scenes from this memorable evening.



Co-curator Maureen Hart Hennessey, Norman Rockwell Museum, with Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum curators Robert Rosenblum, Curator of Twentieth Century Art, and Assistant Curator Vivien Greene



Enjoying the exhibition



John and Pamela Deely Van De Loo



Jane and Jack Fitzpatrick



Trustee Lee Williams, Museum Director Laurie Norton Moffatt, and John Konwiser

Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta and the Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge.

### Ford Motor Company

The exhibition and its national tour are made possible by Ford Motor Company.

The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue are also made possible by The Henry Luce Foundation. Additional support is provided by The Curtis Publishing Company and The Norman Rockwell Estate Licensing Company.



Education programs for the national tour are made possible by Fidelity Investments through the Fidelity Foundation.



Trustee Jay Ireland, Debra and Richard de Bart and Ann Fitzpatrick Brown



Co-curator Maureen Hart Hennessey, Peter Rockwell, Richard and Mary Kelly



**Scenes from the November 3 opening of *Speak Softly and Carry a Beagle: The Art of Charles Schulz* at the Norman Rockwell Museum**



Director Laurie Norton Moffatt and Jan Elliot, creator of the comic strip *Stone Soup*

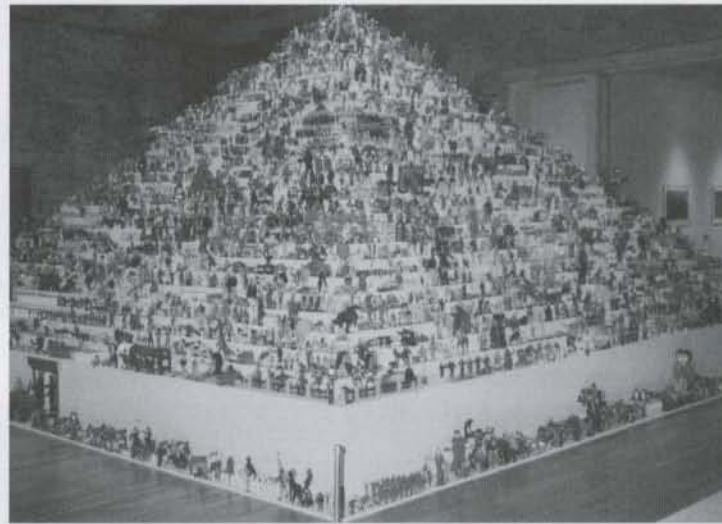


Visitors of all ages enjoy the Schulz exhibition.



*Maya* at MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Massachusetts, has commissioned a work from Jarvis Rockwell for its exhibition *Game Show*. Comparisons between Jarvis and his father, Norman Rockwell, are inevitable if somewhat impossible—illusion vs. illustration. One presents a complicated magical world filled with illusion and contradiction, the other a narrative realistic view of the American scene.



Jarvis recently traveled to India where he visited the great temples of Chennai and Delhi. Seeing the vast number of Hindu gods and goddesses along the tiered steps of the temples reminded him of his own large collection of action figures, which he has been amassing since 1979. The connection was clear. Jarvis created his own temple, with toy figures replacing the spiritual gods, and has these figures ascend a great pyramid.

The result is a large multi-tiered wooden pyramid, with each tier containing hundreds of bright plastic figures. These figures hold a fascination for the artist. By placing them in a dramatic staging, Jarvis creates a bizarre world. It is up to the viewer to find meaning in a phalanx of police officers meeting *The Wizard of Oz's* multiple

Dorothys. The artist claims that, "When you look at all these toys, you realize that we, as a society, don't always know what we are doing. There are a lot of different desires and dreams out here."

The word "Maya" is of Sanskrit origin. It refers to the powerful force of a god or demon that transforms

a spiritual concept into a form of the sensible world. This force creates the illusion that the world we know through our senses and experiences—rather than through logic or intuition—is the real world.

The work *Maya* is proof of the unlimited scope of the infinite imagination of Jarvis Rockwell. The artist himself becomes the powerful force that transforms the spiritual "god concept" into a recognizable world of familiar toy figures. However, just when the viewer approaches an understanding of the work, something jarring will leap forth and rearrange any thought grounded in reality.

Also on exhibition by the artist are twelve dioramas of action figures that depict rather disturbing views of domestic life, portraits of some of Rockwell's favorite action figures and photographs of his work. *Maya* is on view at MASS MoCA through April.



# Read All About Rockwell

There are two new Norman Rockwell biographies—one just published and one due next year. One might well ask the questions *Why Rockwell?* and *Why now?* Research for the biographies coincided with the excitement generated by the national exhibition *Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People*.

The American public and art critics are in the process of rediscovering the work of Norman Rockwell, and with that comes the inevitable interest in the artist himself. Perhaps it is because of Rockwell's critical neglect that, before now, biographers have not chosen him as the subject of an in-depth serious work.

In *Norman Rockwell—A Life*, Laura Claridge presents new perspective into Rockwell's life and his art. Claridge, a former professor of English literature at the U.S. Naval Academy, researched the family

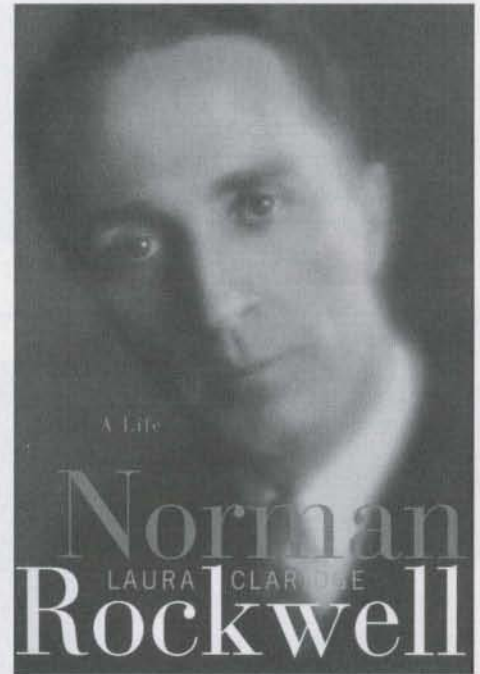
archives, the artist's private journals and conducted hundreds of interviews, including gathering the personal remembrances of the three Rockwell sons.

The reader will discover the disparity between the artist's private life and the way he was perceived by the public. Rockwell is presented as a man who attempted to hold in check his lifelong depression and who struggled through three complicated marriages, a distant relationship with his children and his complete dependence upon the work he so loved.

Norman Rockwell emerges from these pages as an intelligent, highly talented and often tormented artist. This well-drawn portrait is a far cry from the widely held image of a sentimental, folksy, country illustrator. Laura Claridge makes clear the fact that Rockwell's art was masterly, complex and sophisticated—just like the

Jo Ann Losinger,  
Director of Earned Revenue

man himself. *Norman Rockwell—A Life* retails for \$35 through the Norman Rockwell Museum store.



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