

SUMMER 2003

# portfolio

NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM



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## portfolio

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Cover: *Breaking Home Ties*, Norman Rockwell.  
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KIDS FREE EVERY DAY!  
 KIDS FREE Everyday! A Gift to Families from  
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This season's new exhibition, *Freedom: Norman Rockwell's Vermont Years*, is the second in a series that explores significant phases in Norman Rockwell's life and career. Last summer we took an in-depth look at the artist's work when he lived in New Rochelle, New York, and presented it in the context of the illustrations of his contemporaries. Next summer we will shine a spotlight on Rockwell's accomplishments and global connections during the last 25 years of his life, when he made his home in Stockbridge.

*Freedom: Norman Rockwell's Vermont Years* examines Rockwell's life and career in the Arlington, Vermont, region from 1939 to 1953. It's a fascinating look at the relationships, styles and influences of Rockwell and other noted illustrators who were living and working in the area at the same time, including Mead Schaeffer, John Atherton and George Hughes. The exhibition also considers Arlington's unique position as an artistic colony for *Saturday Evening Post* cover artists, and highlights their illustrations published during the World War II years.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the generosity of the many lenders who have kindly shared their works of art with us. I would like to express sincere thanks to them for affording so many Museum visitors an extraordinary opportunity to experience the rich diversity of Rockwell's art in its original form.

In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Rockwell's beloved *Four Freedoms* paintings, we are presenting a lecture series inspired by them. On Thursday

evenings in July and August, the *Freedom Forum* lecture series will offer compelling perspectives on the meaning of freedom in our world. Noted guests include Alan Chartock, Ph.D., chair and executive director of WAMC; Ewert Cousins, Ph.D., noted philosopher, theologian and author; Randy Cohen, author of the *New York Times Magazine* column, *The Ethicist*, and James MacGregor Burns, Pulitzer Prize-winning presidential biographer. The lecture series has been sponsored by the Norman Rockwell Museum's board of trustees. Please check our website, [www.nrm.org](http://www.nrm.org), for many other exciting programs for children and families.

On a personal note, I want to thank all of you who made our gala celebration of my 25 years with the Museum and our 10 years in our new home so very special. I am grateful for the support of each and every one of you who help make this Museum such an extraordinary place.

Have a wonderful summer. I hope to see you at the Museum!



## UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

# spotlight



### Red Rose Girls: An Uncommon Story of Art and Love

NOVEMBER 8, 2003 THROUGH MAY 31, 2004

At a time when women were prohibited from taking life-drawing classes at most art schools, Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green and Violet Oakley were encouraged in their pursuits and celebrated for their talents. Determined to make their mark, they attended the venerable Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and met as students of legendary illustrator Howard Pyle at the Drexel Institute. Nicknamed "The Red Rose Girls" by Pyle, who became their mentor, they took up residence in the Red Rose Inn, a picturesque estate on Philadelphia's venerable Main Line, and captivated the city with their brilliant careers and unconventional lifestyles.

*The Red Rose Girls: An Uncommon Story of Art and Love* tells the true tale of three outstanding early 20th-century women artists who enjoyed public recognition, success, and an intense emotional bond that enriched each of their lives. Jessie Willcox Smith and Elizabeth Shippen Green were prolific illustrators, collaborating on children's books and garnering lucrative assignments for periodicals such as *Scribner's*, *Collier's*, and *Harper's*. Violet Oakley was an illustrator, painter and muralist of national reputation. Their unforgettable story unfolds against a backdrop of late Victorian mores and the emerging women's rights movement, punctuated by more than 80 vibrant, original works from public and private collections, and a rich array of archival photographs and publications.

*Mother and Child*, Jessie Willcox Smith, 1908. Collection of Jane Sperry Eisenstat.



### The Picture of Health: Rockwell Paintings from the Pfizer Collection

NOVEMBER 8, 2003 THROUGH MAY 31, 2004

A poignant series of original works created by Norman Rockwell for the Upjohn Company are at the center of this exhibition focusing on the artist's portrayals of the medical profession at work. Rockwell's images helped to shape the public's perception of the doctor as a kind, caring and knowledgeable professional in advertisements and posters created between the late 1930s and the early 1960s for the pharmaceutical company.

### 18th Annual Berkshire County High School Art Show

JANUARY 24, 2004 THROUGH FEBRUARY 22, 2004

A lively and diverse exhibition of original works by Berkshire County high school art students.

### Contemporary Voices: Women in Illustration

MARCH 6, 2004 THROUGH MAY 31, 2004

Explore the world of women artists who are working in the field of illustration today in this outstanding exhibition of original art for magazines, newspapers, children's books and advertisements, and personal commentary documenting each artist's professional journey.

*Doctor and Boy Looking at Thermometer*, Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL.

NORMAN ROCKWELL

# year by year

1942

By Linda Pero



In the fall of 1941, Rockwell shipped the third in his series of Willie Gillis paintings off to Philadelphia. Then, having had his assistant Gene Pelham construct a full-size news kiosk within his studio<sup>1</sup> and modelmaker Ned Burns construct a scale model with lighting, based on an actual newsstand in New York City<sup>2</sup>, Rockwell produced an enchanting wartime Christmas cover of a news seller. The December night sky, dotted with chunky snowflakes, was painted in deep ultramarine blue to offset the warm orange glow of a stove that surrounds the news seller who, like a Charles Dickens' character, knits with fingerless gloves. With the completion

Vermont living, aside from an occasional Grange Hall square dance or town meeting, provided few distractions for a work-centered artist such as Norman Rockwell. Few social or professional expectations, aside from the pleasurable evening cocktail hour with his *Saturday Evening Post* colleagues, Mead Schaeffer and Jack Atherton, dissuaded him from time at his easel. The relative solitude along with winter's cold and shortened daylight hours eventually urged Rockwell and his family to find diversions.

of this beautiful Christmas present to *Post* readers, Rockwell could take a much-needed break. 1941 had been an exhausting year for Rockwell. "I was absolutely worn out with the severe schedule," he told Leo Burnett, who was handling the Niblets corn account and pleading for another advertisement from Rockwell. According to doctor's orders, he was to have a *real* rest.<sup>3</sup> The Rockwell family made preparations to travel to southern California where they could stay with Mary Rockwell's family. Alhambra was not only home to Mary's family, the Barstows, but claimed several notable artists including Frank Tenney Johnson, Sam Hyde Harris and Eli Harvey, making it

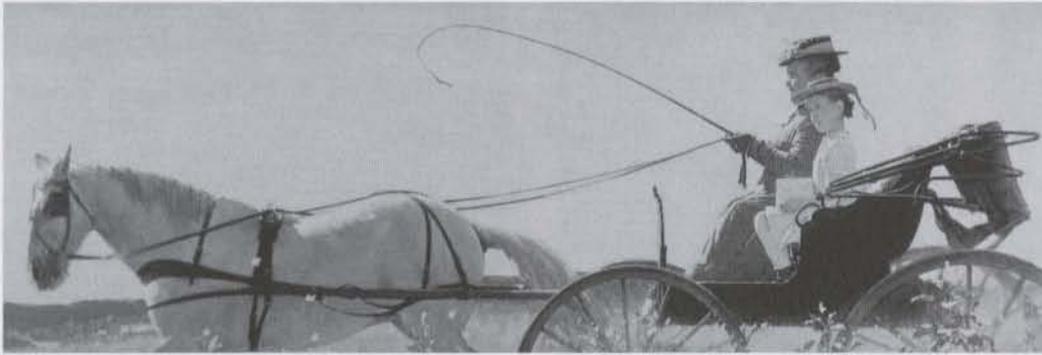


an enticing winter destination for Rockwell. In November of 1941, the family traveled by rail to California for Rockwell's enforced rest but it wasn't long before Rockwell felt the tug of his backlog of commissions—two story illustrations for *American Magazine* and one for *McCall's*. He rented a studio, purchased artists' supplies, hired a local photographer and made purchases from Cinema Props and the Western Costume Company.<sup>4</sup>

Taking advantage of his proximity to Hollywood, Rockwell posed nine-year-old screen star Joan Carroll (of *Meet Me in St. Louis* fame) for his illustration for a *Ladies' Home Journal* story called *Aunt Ella Takes a Trip*. For RKO's *The Magnificent Ambersons* movie poster, Rockwell painted portraits of Agnes Morehead, Anne Baxter, Joseph Cotton, Delores Costello, Tim Holt, and Richard Bennett. He then occupied himself with *McCall's* commission to paint Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address. In a stroke of political precociousness, *McCall's* editor Henry Dreyfuss suggested that he might include a woman in the picture behind Lincoln for historical accuracy. Hearing that Lincoln's party may have included women, he and Rockwell apparently discussed whether or not a woman should be included; Dreyfuss found evidence that women had indeed been present.<sup>5</sup> Rockwell's so-called vacation was quickly becoming consumed with work as he began the fourth painting in a series he'd been doing for Upjohn Pharmaceuticals on the merits of vitamin supplements. For this new version of a doctor examining a little girl's doll—he had done one for the *Literary Digest*

in 1923 and one for the *Post* in 1929—Rockwell engaged the renowned animal sculptor Eli Harvey to pose as the doctor. Since his first visit to southern California in 1930, when he met his future wife Mary Barstow, California had shown its charms to Rockwell. He found inspiration in its pool of screen star models like Gary Cooper and Raymond Massey, in its source of Hollywood themes for his *Post* covers and in Alhambra's community of artists. California would lure him back many more times in the years to come. When March arrived, all of the new equipment and supplies were shipped home to Arlington and the Rockwells boarded the train for the journey home.

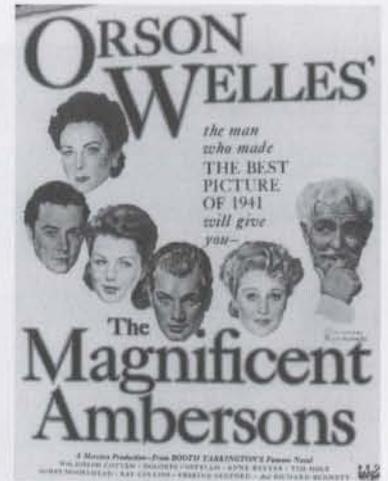
Upon his return to Vermont, Rockwell produced two more *Post* covers in his Willie Gilles series: Willie reading a newspaper from home and Willie in a blackout. Rockwell's interpretation of the way war was affecting its soldiers and Americans at home was decidedly distracting from the real agonies of war. In mid-April the *Post* published a Rockwell sketch of Willie Gillis encouraging the purchase of war bonds for the Defense Savings Campaign. Days later, Rockwell received a letter from the Guild Artists Bureau in New York entreating him to undertake a poster assignment for the Ordnance Department of the Army—due May 14.<sup>6</sup> Rockwell set to work immediately on his painting of an anti-aircraft machine gunner, the only battle scene he would do for the War Department. The poster assignment letter neglected to request a vertical format, standard for posters intended to hang in weapons factories where they would inspire workers



to increase production, and Rockwell unwittingly embarked on a large 42- by 52-inch horizontal painting.

Despite its horizontal format, the poster was a great success and, in August, the *New York Times Magazine* published *Biography of a Poster*<sup>7</sup> devoted to the machine gunner painting. Explaining that the poster would be distributed to ordnance plants throughout the country, it gave a step-by-step account of how Rockwell had created the image, from having an actual gun crew with the latest equipment sent to his studio, to the changes in design and concept. Rockwell's original caption read "Are you backing me up?" and showed a gunner smiling in the picture. He replaced it with the slogan, "Let's Give him Enough and On Time" and a more realistic depiction of a gunner whose face is hidden in shadow. It was an effective means of allowing the viewer to identify with the subject.

Rockwell was summoned to fight a battle of his own that spring when he saw that his signature, along with those of other illustrators, had been removed from one of the illustrations for *American Magazine* he had created while in California. Rockwell adamantly rebuked the policy in a letter to the editor. "The custom of an artist's signing his work goes back to the very beginning of art, and whether a magazine has a legal right or not to remove the signature, I feel they have no moral right to do so. I feel it is unpardonable that a man's original creative work should be altered without so much as asking him or notifying him of it."<sup>8</sup> Rockwell's fiery emphasis was fueled by his loyalty to his illustrator colleagues whose interests he felt he was defending. The next Rockwell illustration *American Magazine* published, in the December 1942 issue, carried his signature.



The spring of 1942 also saw the wrap-up of the first national tour of Norman Rockwell paintings. Organized by Ferargil, Inc., 30 paintings, including 15 oils for *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, debuted at their East 57th Street gallery in New York in January 1941. Over the next 16 months the exhibition traveled to cities in 10 states across the country.

On May 21, Rockwell and Mead Schaeffer visited the Ordnance Department in Washington, D.C., with a progress report on the machine gunner painting. At home in Vermont, they had discussed how they could make a significant contribution to the war effort. With their official business completed, they pitched their proposals. Rockwell would interpret Roosevelt's Four Freedoms ideals and Schaeffer would paint a series of portraits of U.S. servicemen. According to published accounts, the War Department didn't have the time to publish their posters nor could they pay Rockwell or Schaeffer the fees they were accustomed to. Rockwell received only \$300 for the machine gunner painting. The four paintings were expected to take at least three exclusive months of his time.<sup>9</sup> On their way home, Schaeffer and Rockwell stopped at Curtis Publishing in Philadelphia and showed their sketches to Ben Hibbs, who had recently succeeded Wesley Stout as editor. Hibbs eagerly embraced their ideas and made plans to include them in the *Post*. Rockwell was given special dispensation to halt all other *Post* work in order to concentrate on the *Freedoms* but when he returned to Vermont he resumed work on two ideas already in development—*Willie Gillis in Church* and *Willie Gillis: Girls with Letters*.

Work began in earnest in July when Rockwell posed eight models for *Freedom of Speech*. He revised his picture concept



and canvas four times until it evolved into the painting we know. In addition to the problems with *Freedom of Speech*, Rockwell spent two months on *Freedom to Worship*, changing the subject from a barbershop scene to the less narrative treatment of a composite of profiles.

Numerous requests for illustration work streamed in while Rockwell was at work on the *Four Freedoms*. Most of these were refused. Because he had agreed to do a series of paintings for Whitman's Chocolates in March, he was forced to have the American Artists agency extract him from his promise by telling them that only subjects that carried a war message could be considered by Rockwell.<sup>10</sup> He was able to fit in an advertisement for AMOCO that carried the motivational slogan, *Hop in Neighbor*, intended to encourage Americans to car-pool, but because of his schedule, turned down a request to do a cover for *Sea Power Magazine* to publicize recruitment of Merchant Marines.<sup>11</sup>

During the spring and summer Rockwell also managed to paint illustrations for *Good Housekeeping* (*The Meeting*), the *Saturday Evening Post* (*Do You Know a Better Man?*) and at least four advertisements for Schenley Cream of Kentucky whiskey. Before the year ended, covers were painted for the November and December issues of the *Post* as well: *Woes of an Army Cook* and *Merry Christmas*, a picture of Santa Claus bursting through a newspaper covered in war headlines.

By the end of 1942 Rockwell completed all four of his *Freedoms* paintings. They had taken six months instead of the three months he had expected but they were appreciatively received. In his autobiography, Rockwell quoted editor Ben Hibbs' generous praise of his work. "The result astonished



us all. Those four pictures quickly became the best known and most appreciated paintings of that era. They appeared right at a time when the war was going against us on the battle fronts, and the American people needed the inspirational message which they conveyed so forcefully and so beautifully."<sup>12</sup>

LINDA PERO is curator of Norman Rockwell Collections at the Norman Rockwell Museum.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

In the last issue, we promised the year 1913 would be covered next. However, we jumped to 1942 to coincide with the era explored in *Freedom: Norman Rockwell's Vermont Years*.

PAGE 4: *Abraham Lincoln Delivering the Gettysburg Address*, Norman Rockwell, July 1942, McCall's. Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL.

PAGE 5: *News Kiosk*, Norman Rockwell. © 1942 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IL.

Rockwell in his Arlington Studio, 1942. Photographer unknown. Norman Rockwell Rights of Publicity Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL.

*Doctor & Doll*, 1942. Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL.

PAGE 6: *Aunt Ella Takes a Trip*. *Ladies' Home Journal* story illustration, April 1942. Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL. Movie poster for *The Magnificent Ambersons*, 1942.

PAGE 7: Pencil study and final version, oil on canvas, *Let's Give Him Enough and on Time*, poster for U.S. Army, 1942. Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL.

<sup>1</sup> Conversation with Anne Pelham.

<sup>2</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*, "Keeping Posted," December 20, 1941.

<sup>3</sup> Draft of letter from Norman Rockwell to Leo Burnett, Leo Burnett Co. NRACT Studio Collection, Box 10.

<sup>4</sup> Norman Rockwell ledger 1941-1944. NRACT, Studio Collection.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Henry Dreyfuss to Norman Rockwell, November 13, 1941. NRACT Studio Collection, Box 10.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from James D. Herbert to Norman Rockwell, April 22, 1942. NRACT Studio Collection, Box 10.

<sup>7</sup> *New York Times Magazine*, August 16, 1942, no author.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Norman Rockwell to Sumner Blossom, ed. *American Magazine*, June, 9, 1942. NRACT Studio Collection, Box 10.

<sup>9</sup> Invoice from Guild Artists Bureau to Williams & Saylor, July 10, 1942. NRACT Studio Collection, Box 10.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Walter Stocklin, Ward Wheelock Co. Inc. Advertising from Sidney Mendelsohn, *American Artists*, June 5, 1942. NRACT Studio Collection, Box 10.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Hendry L. Bart to Norman Rockwell, May 1, 1942. NRACT Studio Collection, Box 10.

<sup>12</sup> Norman Rockwell as told to Thomas Rockwell, *Norman Rockwell: My Adventures as an Illustrator* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1988), p. 317.

# Freedom: Norman Rockwell's Vermont Years

By Linda Pero

*"If we lose what it is that Rockwell's art stood for, then we have lost something very basic to what it means to be an American."*

Robert A.M. Stern, Architect



The artwork and artifacts featured in this summer's special exhibition, *Freedom: Norman Rockwell's Vermont Years*, trace the life and work of Rockwell from 1938, when he first traveled to Vermont in search of a summer home, to 1953, when he moved to Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Many of the exhibition's 54 paintings were borrowed from other museums, corporations, and private art collections, and include paintings and drawings by Mead Schaeffer, John Atherton, Grandmas Moses,

George Hughes and Gene Pelham that demonstrate the artistic environment in which Rockwell socialized and worked. Photographs of family, studio, home, and friends offer more insight into Rockwell's world, and artifacts, such as Rockwell's 1939 bicycle, put us in touch with his personal life.

After an extended summer in the 80-year-old farmhouse the Rockwell family purchased as a vacation retreat, they decided to make Arlington, Vermont, their permanent home. The Rockwells arranged for renovations and for a studio to be built and, by 1939, had settled into country life. Rockwell said the honesty and integrity of his new neighbors, taking long walks through the mountains, climbing through old apple orchards and picking blueberries, all made him feel as if he'd "fallen into utopia."

Not long after his move, Rockwell's illustrator colleagues, Mead Schaeffer and John Atherton, and their families relocated to Arlington. A few years later, illustrator George Hughes joined them. Leaving the distractions of his former New Rochelle social clique, Rockwell was now free to focus even more intensely on his work. The interesting, character-

# Brushstrokes

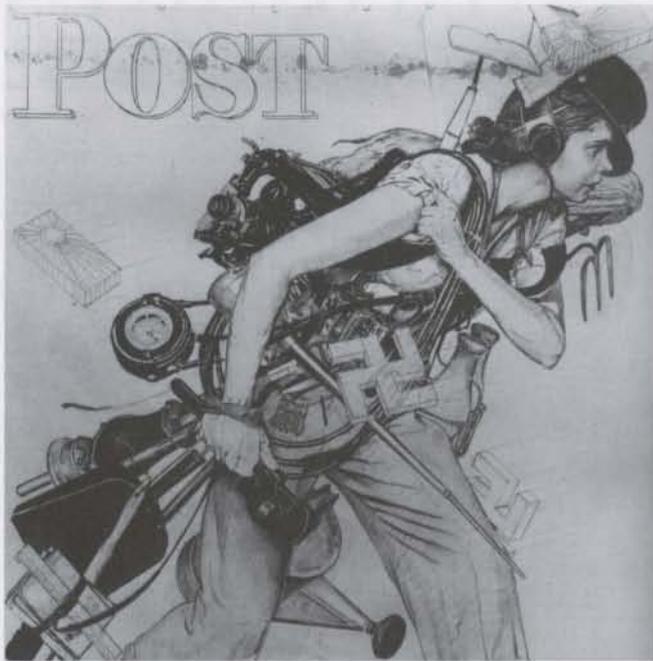


etched faces of his Vermont neighbors brought new life and an honest reality to the people pictured in Rockwell's genre scenes. (In this balanced blend of peaceful surroundings, close friends, good neighbors and the stimulation of his illustrator colleagues, an environment developed that fostered an artistic period in which Rockwell created paintings that were instantly regarded as his best work.

By the time Rockwell moved to Vermont in 1939, war raged in Europe and, with America's entry into the military arena in 1941, Rockwell and Schaeffer, each in his forties, began thinking about how they might contribute to the war effort. With markedly different perspectives, they each recorded their interpretation of the effects of the war on servicemen and Americans at home. For Rockwell, an unassuming private named Willie Gillis told the story of one man's army in a series of fourteen *Post* covers depicting everything from KP duty to eagerly reading a newspaper from home.

In 1942, Rockwell and Schaeffer went to Washington, D.C., to offer to create posters for the government. After meeting with the Undersecretary of War and a representative from the

Office of War Information, they found that the government could not publish their work because of time constraints. On their way home, Rockwell and Schaeffer stopped in Philadelphia to see the editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* on other business. Learning of their poster ideas, editor Ben Hibbs immediately engaged them to proceed with their picture ideas for use in the *Post*. The first of Mead Schaeffer's fourteen heroic paintings of U.S. servicemen, now considered to be the most authentically painted pictures of men in service, was published as the October 24, 1942 cover of the *Post*. Rockwell's *Freedom of Speech*, the first in his series of four paintings about fundamental freedoms, was published inside the *Post* on February 20, 1943. Soon after, Rockwell's *Four Freedoms* images would be used as posters to promote the sale of war bonds. The compelling images of brave and determined American servicemen, along with images of citizens at home enjoying the benefits of their sacrifices, instilled in Americans pride, honor and a greater understanding of the reasons for a war in distant lands. The artists' individual desires to contribute to the war effort rallied many others to purchase war bonds and enlist in military service.



Rapid changes after World War II, including the effects of a baby boom, the new role and self-image of women forged by their recently acquired skills and, most importantly, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, forced Americans to see the world—and themselves—in a different light. Despite an overt sense of prosperity, there was a new unease; Americans had exchanged their parents' war and struggles in the Great Depression with the pervasive fear and threat of nuclear war. As a perennial idealist, Rockwell didn't include the worries of the new generation in his work, but he did look more seriously at the subject of youth, and depicted adolescents as more complex, multi-dimensional people. Rockwell's youth are depicted less at play and more in situations about growing up. Paintings like *Breaking Home Ties*, *Facts of Life* and *Walking to Church* reminded us that we would ultimately have to face the problems of a modern world and deal with issues that had before been, in Rockwell's words, "swept under the rug."

*Freedom: Norman Rockwell's Vermont Years* will be on view until October 19, 2003. Public programs for *Freedom* are supported by U.S. Bank

LINDA PERO is curator of the exhibition.



Page 8: Sons Peter and Tom play on the lawn in front of Norman Rockwell's Arlington, Vermont, studio. Photo by Gene Pelham, c. 1940. Page 9: Norman Rockwell painting *Saying Grace*, 1951. Photographer unknown. Norman Rockwell Rights of Publicity Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL. *Saying Grace*, © 1951 SEPS. Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN. Page 10: *Liberty Girl*, study for September 4, 1943 *Saturday Evening Post* cover. © 1943 SEPS. Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN. Family and neighbors in Rockwell's studio, 1944. Photo by Robert McAfee. *The Gossips*, © 1948 SEPS. Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN.

# brush strokes

Norman Says...

"I do ordinary people in everyday situations, and that's about all I can do. I didn't use to think so, but now I know my limitations. Whatever I want to express I have to express in those terms. And I find that I can fit most anything into that frame, even fairly big ideas. *Freedom of Worship* is a pretty big idea. So's *Freedom of Speech*."

—Norman Rockwell, from *My Adventures as an Illustrator*.



John Fitzpatrick and Laurie Norton Moffatt

## A Gala Weekend

On the evening of June 13, the Museum's Anniversary Gala was attended by more than 200 celebrants (many sporting dashing hats) who toasted the 10th anniversary of the Museum building and Director Laurie Norton Moffatt's 25th anniversary with the Museum.

The next morning, the Museum held a dedication ceremony for the Henry H. Williams, Jr. bench, that was created by area artist Toby Walton. Williams, who is a trustee emeritus, attended the tribute in his honor, surrounded by family and friends. This was followed by a fun-filled family festival day that included a performance by Robin O'Herrin saluting American musical traditions and a *Four Freedoms* panel discussion with veterans Ray Smith and Raymond Blair, writer Richard Nunley, minister Beverlee Kalagher, and food pantry coordinator Thatcher Kent. That evening, more than 300 members and guests attended the opening festivities for *Freedom: Norman Rockwell's Vermont Years*.



Henry H. Williams, center, with Jorja Marsden and Harry Stuart, 1986.

## A Tribute to Henry H. Williams, Jr.

Henry, we pay tribute to you and your family today in recognition of your years of dedication to the Norman Rockwell Museum, your friendship with Norman Rockwell and your devotion to your family and community.

In 1973 you joined the board of the Old Corner House, just four years after its founding. You served as trustee for Berkshire Bank to Norman Rockwell's Estate, and helped to forge the Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust, the nucleus of our Museum collection. For many years, your lovely wife Joan maintained the Museum's books as our bookkeeper and accountant, and you served as treasurer of the board.

In 1977 you advised a young college student, Laurie Norton, to apply for a summer job at the Old Corner House, not realizing you were guiding the Museum's future curator and director.

During the 1980s you were the Berkshire County Chairman of our Capital Campaign to raise funds for our new Museum building. After retirement as President from Berkshire Bank, you joined the Museum staff as our first financial officer, managing the complexities of the Museum's capital campaign, growing budget and new Museum construction.

After the new Museum opened in 1993, you rejoined the board of trustees, awarded the lifetime honor of trustee emeritus.

Henry, you have been a loyal friend and leader to the Norman Rockwell Museum, a donor to our archive, a mentor and friend to me. Today we salute you, and your family, for your 30 years of devotion and friendship, with this bench made by artist Toby Walton, and donated to the Museum in your honor.

—Laurie Norton Moffatt, Director



*Scenes from the Anniversary Gala celebration. Clockwise from top left: Mike and Wendy Coakley, Brian Quinn and William Perlow, Natalie Katz, Jacqueline and Albert Togut, Deborah McMenamy, Lila Berle and Laurie Norton Moffat.*

## Director Laurie Norton Moffatt's 25th Anniversary Gala Remarks

June 13, 2003

Tonight's tribute to me is deeply moving—and I am grateful to all of you who made this celebration happen—but the reality is that it is we together who have grown this Museum. Without each of you here tonight, our tribute to Norman Rockwell, this magnificent Museum, would not be what it is today.

Just yesterday, Lee Williams observed to me that there is a lot of serendipity connected to this Museum. Opportunities present themselves if we remain open to them. That is how my work with the Museum has been, one serendipitous opportunity after another.

One summer, back in 1977, while I was an art history student at Williams College, Henry Williams told my mother about the Old Corner House, and I applied for a part-time job. (Until then, I had wanted to be an architect and had this image of

museums as dusty, fusty old places!) What I discovered was extraordinary. The Norman Rockwell art on the walls was art that my art history teachers did not teach, or disdained if they did. People lined up around the block to see his paintings, and the Museum was so vibrant and inspiring that I was galvanized to redress what seemed so wrong to me: art historians' and critics' disdain of Rockwell. From a place deep within myself, I set out to legitimize Norman Rockwell's place in the art canon.

Like Rockwell, the Museum has had its share of rebuffs and skeptics, but along the journey I have had the privilege of partnering with people such as Lila Berle, David Klausmeyer, Bobbie Crosby, the amazing Deely family, and exceptional staff like Maud Ayson, Maureen Hart Hennessey and Heather Wells Heim. My early mentors,

Margaret Batty and David Wood, were passionate about the Old Corner House and I was introduced to the Museum's founders: Norma Ogden, Pat Deely, Ros Sherwood, Molly Rockwell and our beloved Jane Fitzpatrick. I also want to warmly thank our amazing staff, who rise to every occasion.

How does 25 years go by? A book, a building, a baby, a blockbuster. Always a new challenge. Never the same Museum, and never the same job, always changing and challenging, always stimulating and gratifying.

I close this wonderful evening with a simple thank you to my family, Craig, Leigh, and my parents, who have stood by me, supported me and watched me grow; to our staff, past and present, who have given tirelessly of their enthusiasm and talent; to all those who can not be present tonight, none more so than my

dear assistant and friend Ann Sterlin; to our incredible board and Board President Lee Williams, a group so passionate about the Museum that I am the envy of my professional colleagues; and to our members and supporters, who all believe in the importance of Norman Rockwell, this Museum, and in me.

We are not without our challenges and growing pains, but I am always reminded that Norman Rockwell never had it easy! Why should we? We will always have the gift of serendipity and public affection if we remain open to it and set our sights on the horizon with the same positive outlook with which Norman Rockwell approached life.

Thank you all for this incredibly special night—and here's to seeing Rockwell into the next century! Cheers to you all!

# Drawing Inspiration: Top Illustrators Describe Favorite Rockwell Paintings

By Jeremy Clowe

The first meeting of the Norman Rockwell Museum's Illustrators Advisory, a talented group composed of the nation's leading artists in the illustration field, was held in January. The illustrators plan to meet annually at the Museum to discuss a variety of subjects relating to the art and business of illustration, the Museum and its programs.

We asked each illustrator on the council to tell us "what is your favorite Norman Rockwell painting and why?"



STEVE BRODNER

"It's impossible to pick just one... there's just too much brilliance. There's the amazing image of the girl walking to school in Arkansas amidst the racists, the travelling grandmother and child sitting in a coffee shop, *The Four Freedoms*... there's

always, in his work, a showcasing of his great care for humanity. He observes the affairs of people as well as the nature of people. We love him because his pictures show us, at least in part, what we know to be true about ourselves."

JOHN BURGOYNE

"Well, it changes all the time, but the one I currently love is *Aunt Ella Takes a Trip*. What I like about it is that it is slightly different from Rockwell's other paintings. He gets a little more painterly and abstract with the fields in the foreground, the image of the town, and the face of the horse. He probably did this intentionally to draw attention to the faces of Aunt Ella and the young girl—their faces become much more powerful. The whole thing really strikes me as a beautiful design: the whip, the wheels, and the harness on the horse create this great linear design that really works!"



KINUKO CRAFT

"I've loved and respected Norman Rockwell's work all of my life. It's very difficult to choose one favorite painting among the huge body of his work, however there is one that I have always loved. The painting is *Breaking Home Ties*, painted in 1954. It beautifully displays the three different, and intense, feelings of a father, his son and their dog, as the son is about to leave for college. There is wonderful, youthful optimism and expectation on the son's face. The father's complex emotions and sad resignation to his son's departure is beautifully rendered. The dog clearly knows his best friend and companion is about to leave. Rockwell captured the subjects perfectly. Rendering emotions was one of the things he did best and is perhaps why he is so beloved by so many."



TERESA FASOLINO

"My first favorite painting is *The Problem We All Live With*. If there was a list of the 'ten best' illustrations that have had an impact on their times, I would include this painting. Once seen, never forgotten, it has an emotional impact—especially for anyone who is old enough to have lived through the '60s. This image is the first magazine illustration I can remember, giving it a special place in my particular memory. My other favorite is *Girl at Mirror*. With the simplicity of its composition, its dark background and use of reflection, the painting is steeped in the 'Old Master' tradition that I love. The figure of the young girl in her white petticoat is beautifully rendered."

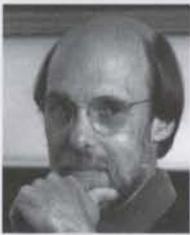
FRANCES JETTER

"*Saying Grace* is my favorite Rockwell. This painting beautifully captures discomfort and tolerance. It's interesting that no





one is idealized here—neither the locals, the man with the cigar in the foreground, nor the old lady, whose pointed umbrella makes her seem less than gentle. The composition is wonderful; the way the child's neck is bent is so tender and evocative. This picture is truly full of grace.”



**WENDELL MINOR**

“*Breaking Home Ties* appeared on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* in September of 1954 when I was 10 years old. I remember loving the painting, and little did I realize that I would be breaking my own “home ties” in a few years. The

rancher and his son became the metaphor for my father, the factory worker, saying goodbye to his son (bound for art school) at a terminal gate of O’Hare Airport.”

**BARBARA NESSIM**

“Basically I have two favorites: *Rosie the Riveter* and *Girl at Mirror*. For me, these paintings clearly show the difference in how women’s roles are perceived by our society.

*Rosie the Riveter* could be one of the first pioneering women in the new industrial society, taking over jobs traditionally held by men in the factories. Her body and body language are very masculine. I think you could put a man’s head on her and think she was a man if you didn’t see her breasts, and items such as the hanky sticking out of her pocket, and her expression, which is very feminine.”

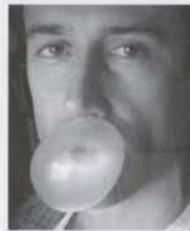


On the other hand, the younger subject in *Girl at Mirror* yearns to be nothing but glamorous. The painting was done in the ‘50s, which was relatively more peaceful than the World War II era when *Rosie the Riveter* was painted, and illustrates how femininity came back to society to shape a whole new, glamorous era.”

There is such a dichotomy here: one is a feminist, the other is feminine. I like viewing these two paintings together. When we are able to look at the whole body of culture, art-work and events from a past period of time, we can clearly make these kinds of comparisons.”

**TIM O’BRIEN**

“Of the many Rockwells I have stood in front of, none is as quintessentially Rockwell as *The Art Critic*. It has technical virtuosity combined with the Rockwell pose and a visual trick, an element I have always been fond of. Other favorites are *Murder in Mississippi* and *The Problem We All Live With*, but *The Art Critic* is just fantastic. Picking a favorite Rockwell is like picking a favorite Beatles song. It depends on the mood, day of the week or state of the world...the truth is, it can be SO many.”

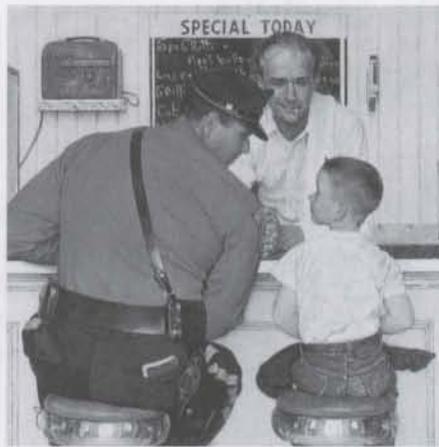


**C.F. PAYNE**

“Trying to pick a favorite Rockwell is nearly an impossible task. Each day a different piece tugs at me for differing reasons: *Tom Sawyer Whitewashing the Fence* pulls at my sentimental side, just as *The Problem We All Live With* reminds me of the social conscience we need to keep in our hearts. Then, of course, *Freedom From Fear* and *The Art Critic* simply overwhelm me with Rockwell’s monumental craftsmanship as a painter, designer and narrative artist.



As I go through these images, plus countless more, I keep coming back to a lone soldier painted in 1942, when the world was in real peril. *Let’s Give Him Enough and On Time* did not glorify war nor did it beat its chest with patriotism. Instead, it expressed the national sacrifice required to win that horrible war, World War II, right down to giving enough



support to an isolated soldier to survive an isolated battle. The figure is faceless, tattered and torn, yet fights on. World War II is arguably the most defining event of the 20th century. Never before was the idea of individual sacrifice in the battle of good vs. evil put to such a worldwide test. This painting speaks to that sacrifice and all the good behind it.”



**MARC ROSENTHAL**

One of my favorites is *The Runaway*. I particularly like seeing it displayed with an earlier sketch of the same image. It highlights, for me, Rockwell’s particular genius: the perfect sense of how to tell a story. There were, and are, many techni-

cally accomplished draftsmen, but Rockwell knew what to put in and leave out of his compositions to achieve the precise and complex feelings he was after. In *The Runaway*, a runaway kid is seated on a diner stool next to a uniformed cop. In the sketch, the soda jerk behind the counter is a fresh-faced young man. In the finished painting, Rockwell has changed him into a more world-weary, older man. The sympathetic attitude with which the two older men (the cop and the older, more cynical, soda jerk) regard the kid becomes all the more poignant and sweet.”

**RUTH SANDERSON**

One of my favorite Rockwell paintings is *Girl at Mirror*. It is a simple theme, that of a young girl realizing that she is growing into a woman, but the design and execution are flawless. I had admired this picture in print before I saw the original, and when I finally visited the Museum and saw it up-close and personal, it was a jaw-dropper. The dense texture and layering of colors he created to paint the white dress and the girl’s flesh tones are so beautiful, so interesting, they



cannot be adequately duplicated in print, just as a print of a Rembrandt does not do justice to his work. To see original Norman Rockwell paintings has to be an inspiration for any artist working today, for it certainly has always been an inspiration to me.”

**ELWOOD SMITH**

“It’s mighty hard to pick a single painting as a favorite from the many Norman Rockwell images lodged in my memory.



I was born in 1941, and my parents subscribed to *The Saturday Evening Post*, so from the very beginning of my life, I was absorbing his amazing take on America.

One of those images is his 1954 painting, *Breaking Home Ties*, and it strikes a particularly powerful chord in me. Seven years later, I was that ‘green’ kid waiting at the Greyhound bus station in Alpena, Michigan. I was excited and terrified—a rube about to begin his new life as an artist in Chicago.”

JEREMY CLOWE is a communications assistant at the Norman Rockwell Museum, and editorial assistant of the Portfolio.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:**

Look for more of the illustrator’s favorites throughout this issue.

Page 14: *Girl at Mirror*. The *Saturday Evening Post* cover illustration, March 6, 1954. © 1954 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN. *The Problem We All Live With*. Look story illustration, January 14, 1964. Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL. *Murder in Mississippi*. 1965 Look illustration. Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL. Page 15: *The Art Critic*. The *Saturday Evening Post* cover illustration, April 16, 1955. © 1955 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN. *The Runaway*. The *Saturday Evening Post* cover illustration, September 20, 1958. © 1958 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN. *Rosie the Riveter*. The *Saturday Evening Post* cover illustration, May 29, 1943. © 1943 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN.

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