

WINTER/SPRING 2006

portfolio

NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM



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portfolio

Volume 23, Issue 1, Winter 2006

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Cover: *Look*, August 20, 1968, *The Political Poster Dress*: A wrap-up of party clothes designed for the cross-country run by Gloria Plaut. Photo by Gene Laurents.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

It gives me enormous pleasure to announce the launch of a major new project at the Norman Rockwell Museum that will transform the accessibility of our Museum collections; advance research and understanding of Norman Rockwell's work; preserve a unique archive of an important American artist; and link the Museum to major research centers and scholars around the world. This project has been recognized as a national model in archival and collections management.

ProjectNORMAN (New Media Online Rockwell Management Art & Archive Network) is a comprehensive computerization, digitization, and programmatic publishing program to make Rockwell's personal and public papers, art and archives accessible to a worldwide audience.

Norman Rockwell gave the Museum his personal collection of papers, photographs, business correspondence, and original publications for furthering research and understanding about his art. Over the years many generous donors have contributed to the Rockwell Archive and today the Reference Center collections number more than 100,000 objects.

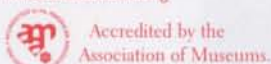
The Museum receives hundreds of research inquiries each year, many from Rockwell scholars, including respected biographers and doctoral students in American studies, art history, and related fields. The collections are a treasure trove of information on 20th-century-life in America and contain rich information about Rockwell's unique vision and artistic style. Until now, all research inquiries have been handled manually by a curator who must search through

boxes for the right piece of paper or photograph to accompany an article or a quote in a text. With the eventual computerization and digitization of collection materials, a researcher, curator, educator, or artist can, with the search of a key word or catalogue number, see at a glance the breadth of materials linked to a particular painting, subject, historic period, or year.

Initially, materials will be available solely in the Museum. Eventually, the searchable data base will link the Museum to the Internet.

I am thrilled to announce important funding we have received for this project. The Museum is a select recipient of a competitive Save America's Treasures grant in the amount of \$296,500. Additional funding has been received by an anonymous corporate foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Henry W. Luce Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Stockman Family Foundation, for a total of more than \$1 million dollars of support to date to advance the project goals.

Read more about this exciting new project in this issue.

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Norman Rockwell, Year by Year - 1966

By Linda Szekely Pero

“He sees life with both a cold and accurate and warm and understanding eye, and his hands have the skill to put the two contrasting qualities together in memorable fashion.”

Los Angeles reporter Ridgely Cummings

On January 4, 1966, Los Angelenos were treated to an exhibition of 96 paintings and drawings by Norman Rockwell. Inspired by a small promotional display of Rockwell artwork for the upcoming movie *Stagecoach*, city officials mounted the exhibition at The Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall Park. The exhibition, composed of works from Rockwell's private collection, was lauded as the best and most popular to come to Los Angeles in years. *Four Freedoms*, *The Problem We All Live With* and *Golden Rule* shared space with more recent work for *Look* and with portraits of Tibetan refugees and Russians painted during Rockwell's 1964 trip to Russia and India.

Los Angeles reporter Ridgely Cummings wrote of Rockwell: “He sees life with both a cold and accurate and warm and understanding eye, and his hands have the skill to put the two contrasting qualities together in memorable fashion.” Ironically, as Rockwell was finally expressing his own political views on racism through such images as *Problem We All Live With* and *Murder in Mississippi*, two 1966 news reports



confused his name with that of George Lincoln Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi party. The year before, a *New York Times* front page story on the assassination of Malcolm X made this same mistake. Rockwell hated these aspersions and had his attorney write to both newspapers' attorneys. His next commission was a series for *Look* to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Peace Corps. Rockwell wanted to express the theme of mutual understanding and help. The job, due March 25, was a big one that would include four

JFK's Bold Legacy. Oil on canvas, 1966. Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust.



pictures: President Kennedy surrounded by Peace Corps volunteers; an agricultural scene in Ethiopia; a schoolroom scene in India; and a Peace Corps volunteer engaged in community planning with villagers of Bogotá. Rockwell sketched his preliminary idea for the first painting and sent it off to art director Allen Hurlburt with the message, "I want to say that these young people, led by Mr. Kennedy, are unselfishly going on a crusade." While he waited for approval, he worked on four smaller commissions: the first in a series of catalogue cover illustrations for Top Value Stamps; a portrait of Pennsylvania's Lieutenant Governor Raymond P. Shafer; and a series of advertisements for Red Wing Shoes. *Scouting is Outing*, the 1968 Boy Scouts of America calendar illustration, filled out his ambitious winter schedule.

Rockwell struggled with the main Peace Corps picture of Kennedy with the volunteers. In the preliminary, he depicted it in the style of his 1942 *Freedom of Worship* painting, with portrait heads amassed together. But Art Director Hurlburt said it depicted "too many handsome Americans." Rockwell resumed work, moving the middle figure occupied by Marty Salvatore, a blond, Stockbridge man, to the top of the canvas and replacing him with Dr. Martin Geller as a "Jewish type." Deciding that Dr. Geller didn't work, Rockwell replaced him with Maurice Leavitt, a student

from Lenox School. An African American girl, W. Loretta Bowens, held the space to the right of Leavitt.

Many changes ensued until Rockwell felt the composition had improved. Still unsatisfied, Rockwell applied a yellow glaze to the whole canvas. This, he felt, made it better. Don Spaulding, an artist who studied with Rockwell in Vermont, said that his paintings "never came out as well as he would have liked." When he once asked him how he could be discouraged about a painting he just finished, "Rockwell said, 'You should have seen it the way I saw it in my mind when I started it.'"

On March 1, Rockwell and wife Molly left for a brief vacation at New York's Plaza Hotel. They toured the Frick Collection, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Modern Art during the days and saw "Philadelphia Here I Come" and "Luv" on Broadway in the evenings. When he returned home, Rockwell completed his Top Value cover image *Music Man*, re-glazed *JFK's Bold Legacy*, and shipped them off. Accompanying *JFK's Bold Legacy* was a note to Hurlburt saying "In this sordid world of power struggles, politics and national rivalries, the Peace Corps seems to stand alone." On March 15, the Rockwells flew to Bogotá. Rockwell needed photos and impressions for



his next Peace Corps picture. He was able to finish the Ethiopia and India pictures based on his research from earlier trips, but since he had never been to Bogotá, he felt he needed to “get the feel and the smell of the country.”

By the end of April, these three works were completed and Rockwell was free to travel to Bethlehem, PA, to begin work on 14 portraits for Sharon Steel Corporation. These were for ads and to illustrate “The Men and Machines of Modern Steelmaking,” a brochure detailing Sharon’s history and manufacturing process. Although Rockwell could paint a portrait in two days, his style of working on many jobs at once meant that the project continued throughout the year and wasn’t completed until August 1967. At the end of May, Rockwell began an illustration for “The Saturday People,” a short piece of fiction for *McCall’s* magazine. The story, written by Rita Madocs, relates the observations and fantasies of 13-year-old girl Leslie, who lives with her widowed mother in midtown Manhattan. Leslie misses her father and has ambivalence toward her mother’s suitor, a man whose presence each Saturday is announced by a Tyrolean hat left on a hall table. Rockwell portrays Leslie’s fears and fantasies, which include such celebrities as Sean Connery and Leonard Bernstein. The hat, which Leslie describes as “like some velvety underground animal, a

dark-green Tyrolean mole, perhaps, a blushing feather behind one of its concealed ears,” appears twice in Rockwell’s painting. The 24-inch x 41-inch painting was published as a two-page spread, large enough for readers to identify the 11 celebrities.

Rockwell’s next big commission, for *Look*, was a painting of a football player to illustrate Gerald Astor’s essay “The Hunt for Strong Backs and Strong Minds,” documenting college competition to recruit athletes amid the increasing popularity of professional football. The inducements—tuition, room and board, and up to \$15 a month for incidental expenses—pale when compared to today’s standards. Models for *The Recruit* were Williams College junior linebacker Dennis J. Kelly, flanked by his coach Frank Navarro, and trainer Joe Altott. To pose the three, Rockwell borrowed from Michelangelo’s statue of Giuliano de’ Medici, from the Medici Chapel at the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence, Italy. (Perhaps he was alluding to the power of Giuliano, whom Michelangelo had portrayed as a Roman emperor.) Casein, not Rockwell’s usual medium, was used, and his first version was painted without shadows, giving it a flat appearance. Rockwell then spent a day putting in the shadows, giving it realism. Rockwell’s notes record that he tried four techniques, “first like Michelangelo, second like Italian Christ painting, third tried hard edge modern, fourth painted my old way. All are in picture.” Tired and still uncertain, Rockwell sent the canvas off to New York.

The second one-man Rockwell exhibition of 1966 was held at the Bristol (Rhode Island) Art Museum where 26 works, including the *Four Freedoms*, were shown. Press reviews expressed contrasting opinions. One reporter praised the work, but another took Rockwell to task for depicting Ben Franklin in a “setting of prettified erotica” (*Ben Franklin’s Belles*), for “epitomizing integration by a darlin’ little Negro girl being escorted to readin’ writin’ and ‘rithmetic by U.S. Marshals” (*The Problem We All Live With*), and for relating *Freedom From Want* to “our national day of gluttony” and

LEFT: *The Saturday People*, Norman Rockwell. Oil on canvas, 1968. Illustration for *McCall’s*, April 16, 1968. Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust.
RIGHT: *The Recruit*. Oil on canvas, 1968. Illustration for *Look* magazine.



Freedom From Fear to “complacent parents tucking complacent children into bed.” He did compliment Rockwell’s two Russian portraits.

Look’s next assignment for Rockwell was an ambitious one. In the early 1960s, in an attempt to humanize the space program, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration established the NASA Artists’ Cooperation Program to “interpret the significance of America’s foray into space.” Collaborating with *Look* magazine, NASA enlisted Rockwell to paint *The Longest Step*, celebrating the first manned Gemini mission. In 1966, Rockwell was asked to do three paintings of what the moon landing, scheduled to take place sometime before December 31, 1969, might look like. In mid-August the Rockwells, *Look* Art Director Allen Hurlburt and photographer Brad Herzog went to Houston to visit the “rock pile,” a simulated moonscape at the Manned Spacecraft Center.

In Houston, Rockwell met with John Glenn, who posed for a Marine Corps recruitment poster. On the return home, Rockwell stopped in Washington, D.C., for further discussion with Marine Corps officials, but he ultimately abandoned the poster project due to his opposition to the Vietnam War.

Before leaving Washington, he met with S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, who had agreed to pose for Rockwell in his actual role as an ornithological authority at the Smithsonian. A month earlier Rockwell had dictated a script for *McCall*’s magazine about a thrush who was shunned because he was different, a parable inspired by the 1960s hippies, and was now beginning his research for the illustrations to accompany his text. Although Rockwell devoted August to his first two moon landing pictures, there was one unexpected interruption: On August 24, three years after he had parted company with the *Saturday Evening Post*, the magazine’s managing editor and art directors visited Rockwell in Stockbridge and asked him to return under any terms he wanted. Rockwell declined the offer one week later. Loyalty was important to Rockwell, and his allegiance was now with *Look* and art director Allen Hurlburt.

Rockwell began *Man on the Moon* after his return from Houston. A model of the spacecraft was sent to him from Grumman Aircraft in Long Island. Rockwell was warned it was the only one of its type and of very great value to Grumman and NASA. Extreme caution had to be exercised in packing it for its return as “erectable antenna can be easily crushed if not properly folded.” Although they insisted it was



to be returned by August 29, Rockwell asked for and received permission to keep it until early October.

In November, when the work was completed, Rockwell wrote to Hurlburt that “the understatement of the year for me is that this has been a tough one.” The challenges were technical, not artistic, and had to do with lighting, the position of the continents from the perspective of the moon, the direction in which the hatch would open, the position of the lunar module, the exterior color of the lunar module—finding it impossible to paint it silver, Rockwell painted it white—the position of the parabolic receivers, the color of the instruments, and the color of the light emanating from the windows. The one thing everyone agreed on was that the gray tones used for the moon were appropriate, though Rockwell wanted to use more color to add interest.

The commission included two more paintings: *Portrait of an Astronaut* and *Lift Off From the Moon*. On October 31, science illustrator Pierre Mion flew from Washington, D.C., to discuss the *Lift Off* painting with Rockwell. A week later, Mion returned to work with Rockwell but, according to Rockwell, the painting was almost entirely the work of Mion who, Rockwell said, was “a real expert space artist.” During

the painting, an argument ensued between experts who said there could be no flame color without atmosphere and Rockwell, who said the picture would be dull without color.

As soon as the final painting was shipped to *Look*, Rockwell began four individual portrait commissions: an American Legionnaire, Miss Silverman, *Stagecoach* producer Martin J. Rackin, and avid Rockwell art collector J. Willard Loos. Within the week all four were completed. Rockwell could now enjoy his family’s annual Thanksgiving tradition of climbing Monument Mountain, made more special this year as son Peter and his wife Cinny had come from Rome to share the holiday.

After the holiday, Rockwell met Allen Hurlburt in New York, and was given three new assignments: a trip to Moscow for a report on education, an illustration on integration in the suburbs of Chicago (*New Kids in the Neighborhood*), and a trip to Palestine to paint the Christmas Eve procession at the Basilica of the Nativity. Before embarking on these projects, Rockwell had to finish his series on Willie, the unusual thrush. He also took a badly-needed vacation in Nassau.

The third and final one-man Rockwell exhibition of 1966 opened December 1 at the Paine Art Center in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Included among the 50 paintings and drawings were the *Four Freedoms*, *Girl at the Mirror* and *Art Critic*. Speaking of Rockwell for the local newspaper, Paine Art Center director Richard Gregg said, “Like his work, his nature is unassuming, generous and kindly. His many imitators do not seem able to match his quality of heart and his skill of hand.” To this we could add, neither could they match his volume of work.

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

LEFT: *Man on the Moon* July 31, 1968. Photographer unknown. Norman Rockwell Museum Collection.
 CENTER *Lift Off From the Moon*, Norman Rockwell. Oil on canvas, 1966. Illustration for *Look* magazine.
 RIGHT: Norman Rockwell and Pierre Mion in Rockwell’s studio.



ProjectNORMAN

by Laurie Norton Moffatt

ProjectNORMAN is one of the most important initiatives the Museum has undertaken. As caretakers of Norman Rockwell's papers and archives, the Museum manages an extraordinary array of information about the artist, his life, art, models, and the publications for which he worked. Filled with fascinating information, the more than 100,000-item-collection reveals insights into 20th-century-America, as well as important documentation on Norman Rockwell's work.

Computerizing and digitizing this material will both preserve and make accessible this important American research collection. ProjectNORMAN will dramatically change the way that researchers access the information contained in the collection; will preserve the materials according to best conservation practices; and will provide rich content for education programs, exhibitions, and new research on Norman Rockwell and American culture. This project has been recognized as a national model in archival and collections management.

I am thrilled to announce several important grants the Norman Rockwell Museum has received. The Museum is a select recipient of a competitive Save America's Treasures grant in the amount of \$296,500. Additional funding for the project has been received by an anonymous corporate foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, The Henry Luce Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Stockman Family Foundation, for a total of \$1 million dollars of support to advance the project goals.

The Museum's reference center, archive and art collections are comprised of a broad array of materials that, when seen together, reveal a fascinating picture of the artist's working process. Items in the Museum's collections include paintings; drawings; photographs; negatives; business correspondence; original tear sheets; books; family letters; fan mail; costumes; prints; checks; accounting ledgers; slides; transparencies; manuscripts; audio; video; film; models' information; cataloguing information; and auction records.

One notable phase of the decade-long project made possible by the Save America's Treasures grant is the digitizing of a rare collection of photographic negatives that are at risk of deterioration. This collection of 18,000 negatives comprises the process photos of Norman Rockwell's working sessions with his models. They reveal the people, clothing, lifestyles, and moments, great and small, of everyday life in America. These negatives will be professionally scanned at high-resolution by Chicago Albumen Works, a leading national photographic preservation company, located in nearby Housatonic, MA, then placed in cold storage to increase the longevity of the original material.

The end result of this massive undertaking will be a fully searchable database that links scholars around the world with Norman Rockwell Museum's research collections. Key word searches will enable scholars to locate materials in the Museum collections that relate to Norman Rockwell and to historical themes represented in his work such as American family life; the civil rights movement; World War II; children's play; 20th-century transportation and communications; space travel; and many other topics of interest in American culture and visual studies.

ProjectNORMAN will integrate the Museum's archival collections and art collections, linking the original art, drawings, studies and all related reference materials, including letters, photographs, articles, and costumes into one integrated,

searchable, illustrated database. Initially, scholars and researchers will be able to access this material within the Museum and eventually it will be available for research on-line. Links with major national research centers such as the Library of Congress and the Archives of American Art will ensure broad integration and dissemination.

ProjectNORMAN Goals

Collection Goals

The collections management, cataloguing, computerization and digitization of the Museum's collection will provide the highest levels of professional stewardship to protect and preserve it. The basic materials of the collection are organic and many have inherent vice, requiring specialized preservation efforts to extend their lifespan and usefulness, and to halt disintegration.

The archival collections are particularly fragile. They are comprised of printed paper; paper with the artist's charcoal or pencil sketches; photographic prints and the accompanying negatives of an emulsion on an acetate base; audio, video, and

LEFT TO RIGHT: A sampling of preliminary reference and sketches by Norman Rockwell for the finished painting of *Girl at Mirror*. Three photos of different poses and models by Gene Pelham. Pencil on paper drawing, whereabouts unknown. The final *Girl at Mirror*, oil on canvas, Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust.

WALT DISNEY

May 21, 1943

Ans File

Dear Norman:

I am sending you our new magazine, DISPATCH FROM DISNEY'S. Although it was prepared for all of our boys in the services, I thought you might enjoy looking through it.

I can't begin to thank you for the original POST cover. My entire staff have been traipsing up to my office to look at it. I know you would be delighted if you could see how minutely they inspect it. To all of them, you are some sort of a god.

I thought your Four Freedoms were great. I especially loved the Freedom of Worship and the composition and symbolism expressed in it. It appealed to me very much.

Clyde Foraythe was telling me about your White House assignment and I am anxiously waiting to see what you get out of it.

As a little token of my appreciation for the Rockwell original, I am having sent to you some companion pieces for the figurines you have of Captain Hook and Sir Giles.

Again my sincere thanks and best wishes.
Sincerely,

Walt Disney

Mr. Norman Rockwell
22 Champion Place
Alhambra, Cal.

WED:KC

ProjectNORMAN will make priceless examples of historic correspondence such as this letter from Walt Disney to Norman Rockwell available to millions.

film interviews; oral histories with Rockwell which document his processes and projects; slides of his work and extensive travels; business correspondence; carbon copies; fan mail on a variety of paper stocks; costumes; ephemera; and Rockwell's personal art books and print library.

In addition to the preservation of the materials, the Museum needs improved access to the archives for exhibitions, internal and external research and for programming needs. High-quality, scanned reproductions will allow maintenance of originals in a preservation environment. The collections will be organized with an information management system that will provide for ease of use for staff, researchers, and visitors.

Education and Audience Goals

The Museum's varied audiences will benefit from increased access to the collections and their myriad information. The

creation of educational programs, interpretive materials, and products for broad distribution would be aided immeasurably, as ProjectNORMAN will allow for complex searches, cross-referencing, and compilation. The Museum plans to disseminate a National Education Curriculum, enhanced with access to collections, to educators around the world.

Access to the full range of the collections will promote scholarship on Norman Rockwell, the art of illustration, and 20th-century-American culture. Web access will provide Rockwell information to thousands of researchers who wish to include Rockwell in the canon of arts and culture scholarship.

Museum Administrative Goals

The ProjectNORMAN initiative will enable the Museum to build an electronic infrastructure to preserve, manage, and provide access to its collections. Improved computer capability will provide for the preservation of the digital archive. Museum staff are studying state-of-the-art digitization projects around the country, and will implement the best solution for this collection. The knowledge of the Museum's long-time professional staff, whose memories and knowledge are invaluable, will be preserved. The project will enhance the branding of the Museum as The Center for Norman Rockwell knowledge and research.

This collection effort will maximize access to the Museum's intellectual information to create programs to support the Museum's future through diversified resources. Project-NORMAN will build on the intellectual success of *Norman Rockwell: A Definitive Catalogue* and the national touring exhibition *Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the America People* to disseminate information on the artist's life and art. The *Definitive Catalogue* was researched from 1976 through 1986, when it was published in a double-volume format. Since then, the Museum has acquired considerably more information about Rockwell's artworks, and has discovered previously unknown paintings and their provenance. ProjectNORMAN will allow the Museum to continuously revise, update and reissue the comprehensive *Definitive Catalogue* on the Internet.

LAURIE NORTON MOFFATT is the director of the Norman Rockwell Museum and author of *Norman Rockwell: A Definitive Catalogue*.

ProjectNORMAN Case Study

by Linda Szekely Pero



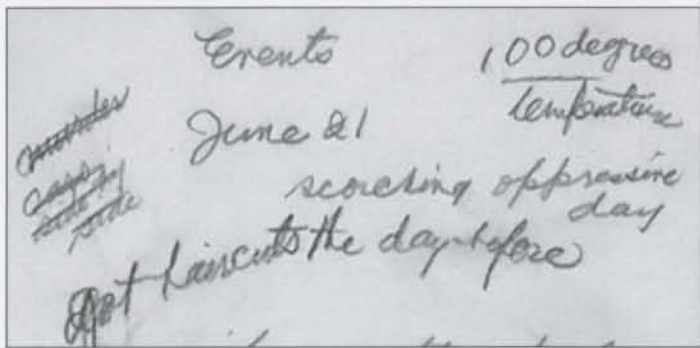
2001: A *Space Odyssey* had Hal. The Norman Rockwell Museum has Vernon, a software program selected to organize our art and archival collections.

One sample of an image whose artwork, ephemera, and references are accessible through Vernon, is *Murder in Mississippi*, chosen because of its variety of archival material. Through Vernon, the painting's evolution becomes apparent, from Rockwell's initial idea to readers' letters to the editor. Rockwell's own picture (for each painting he kept a folder stuffed with reference materials) contains 34 photographs of models, five contact sheets of models, three pages of handwritten notes, two pages of typewritten notes, two tear sheets from *Life* magazine, and three photos of *Murder in Mississippi* preliminary artwork. In addition to his picture file, Rockwell's archives contains 39 negatives relating to the commission; four pages of business correspondence; three letters to and three letters from *Look* editors; two news clips about the incident; a tear sheet from a book on contemporary Italian painting; check registers containing entries for payments to models and a local architect for a drawing; calendar notes referencing the artistic "borrowing" of a news photographer's published image; and tear sheets of the published artwork in *Look*. Added to this rich record of the artist's working process is material that curators gather to put a picture into context, such as published articles about Rockwell from the period, a page from a book showing the pose Rockwell used for his models, and a news clip picturing the men who are the subject of *Murder in Mississippi*.

Vernon contains 68 entries related to *Murder in Mississippi*. Each record describes the accessioned object and bears a digital image from the Museum's image database. For last year's exhibition titled *Anatomy of Murder in Mississippi*, research material was pulled from every possible source. Discoveries about Rockwell's process were made during the exhibition's development. In the future, when the database is loaded with all of Rockwell's references, such important connections will be made through Vernon.

In the case of *Murder in Mississippi*, it was while identifying and re-housing Rockwell's negative collection, an initial and necessary step toward preparing the archives for Vernon, that a single previously unknown image inspired the *Anatomy* exhibition. A negative image of a horizontal painting resting on an easel showed what we know as *Murder in Mississippi* as just part of the painting. Revealed for the first time was the inclusion of a menacing posse of men wielding sticks. I first thought the horizontal image was a discarded idea sketch. Upon careful examination, I realized that not only was it an oil but it almost exactly matched the published oil. By comparing minute details of the three civil rights workers in the negative and the published image, I could see that it was the same work. Rockwell made several revisions and, of

LEFT TO RIGHT: *Murder in Mississippi*, Oil on canvas (study); *Murder in Mississippi*, Oil on board, 15" x 12.75". Norman Rockwell Museum Collection. Story illustration for *Look*, June 29, 1965. Licensed by Norman Rockwell Licensing, Niles, IL. Fragments from notes by Norman Rockwell about the painting.



Fragment from notes made by Norman Rockwell about his painting *Murder in Mississippi*. Rockwell used as reference this 1963 Pulitzer Prize winning photo *Aid from the Padre* by Hector Rondon, La Republic (Caracas, Venezuela).

course, the final version was twice as large. Here was evidence that Rockwell had intended to show the whole brutal scene of the slayings—the three men with their murderers—and that it was to have been a two-page spread. In addition, in its horizontal orientation it was even more reminiscent of Goya's *The Third of May*, a depiction of the 1808 execution of Spanish peasants by French soldiers then in Spain. Many viewers had in the past pointed to *The Third of May* as the spiritual, if not compositional, ancestor of *Murder in Mississippi*. In Rockwell's correspondence with *Look's* art editor, no mention is made of deleting the right hand side of the horizontal image, so its deletion remains open to interpretation. Had Rockwell decided it was too overtly reminiscent of Goya? Had he been told he could have only one page, not two? Had he decided to take emphasis away from the murderers and keep it on the victims? Had he felt he had too little factual data on how the actual killings took place? In 1965, when he did the work, witnesses had not yet revealed the details of the killing.

A second motivation for the *Anatomy* exhibition was Rockwell's notes describing the victims, the atmosphere of the evening they died, and the known circumstances around their deaths. Written in Rockwell's own hand, the notes drove home the horror of that evening's chain of events. On another search through Rockwell's archives for material related to a different exhibition, I came upon a tear sheet from a 1964 *New York Times* with a story titled "A 2nd body is found in the Mississippi." At the end of the article was a paragraph stating that the mystery of the disappearance of Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James E. Chaney had still not been solved. It was then that I realized that this subject had been on Rockwell's mind for nearly a year before he began work on the painting. I realized that Rockwell had been deeply moved by this incident, that it had lingered in his mind waiting for



the right visual form. Rockwell rarely painted from imagination, and having no concrete visual image from which to work for this subject, he borrowed from a Pulitzer prize winning photo, perhaps from Goya's work, and from a menacing scene in an Italian expressionist painting, and went to work. Using photos of the three victims, and their physical descriptions, and as much narrative detail as he could find about the hot Philadelphia, Mississippi, night, he created one of his most memorable works—a tribute to three brave men who lost their lives in the pursuit of racial equality.

Other interesting examples of Rockwell's process were later added to our Vernon database to flesh out the story of the creation of *Murder in Mississippi*. The page from Rockwell's check register showing payment for an architectural drawing of a church told us that Rockwell had considered including a church in the painting. This was probably after having read that while the three men were being ambushed, the African-American church to which they had been driving was being torched by Ku Klux Klansmen. Had he included the church, this would have echoed the palace seen in the background of Goya's painting. As other relevant material is found, it will be added to the Vernon record of this work. The story of Rockwell's effort to make the world a better place during a time of turmoil and its impact on the minds and hearts of citizens, is captured from Rockwell's amazing archives. Though the pieces are separated by necessity into acid-free boxes in the museum's reference center, in Vernon's elegant relational database they are virtually combined.

Meet ProjectNORMAN's Vernon

by Martin Mahoney

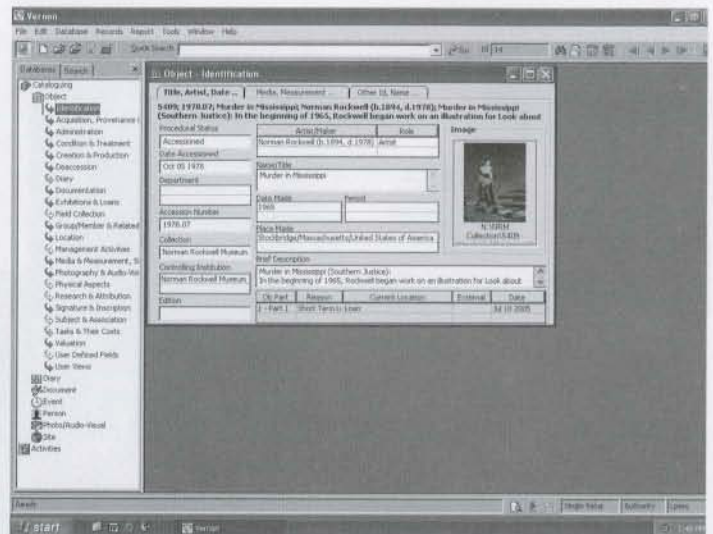
In the spring of 2005 the Norman Rockwell Museum invested in a unique and powerful tool that will enable us to gain physical and intellectual control of the archival, material culture and art collections housed here.

As part of the ProjectNORMAN initiative, the Museum purchased Vernon collections management software. This software will give the Museum and the curatorial staff the ability to compile all of the information throughout the Museum into one central and easily accessible location. Vernon will organize the information in the archives, in the object files, and in the institutional memory of curatorial members, management personnel and employees.

We are just embarking on the massive task of putting this information into the Vernon system. In addition to traditional text-based files, Vernon is also capable of holding digitized images, movies, audio tracks, and other types of information. Once completed, this system will be the definitive resource for scholars, artists, and casual fans of Norman Rockwell's work. But we are still in the infancy of inputting data into the system. It is, in short, a monumental job. Fortunately, the Museum has made a strong and concerted effort to dedicate resources, in the form of equipment, staff and financial resources. As stated in this issue of *Portfolio*, the Museum has begun scanning the collection of negatives that Rockwell utilized in the composition of his work. Concurrently existing data on the collection is being entered into the system. This information includes, but is not limited to, dimensions, condition reports, conservation treatments, loans, physical descriptions, and images of the works.

At the end of this extended project, this software will provide unprecedented access to the artwork of Norman Rockwell. While Vernon will be the tool that enables access on a totally new level, it is important to remember that it is only as good as the information entered into it. This is why we are proceeding with great care to ensure the proper entry of information.

As this database grows, object-by-object, the curatorial department will be able to link related objects and archival items to one another. This will help in research for exhibitions,



A screen shot of the type of information Vernon software provides to a researcher.

assist research requests, and allow the Museum to answer complex copyright and intellectual property issues. In time, a searchable database that operates much like the search function on any computer will be available, first, to the curatorial staff and then, via a computer located in the library, to the public. Eventually, the compiled data will be available, via a Web portal that the Vernon system is also capable of providing, to a worldwide audience.

MARTIN MAHONEY is the manager of Collections and Registration at the Norman Rockwell Museum.



A small portion of the Norman Rockwell Museum's vast archive.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

spotlight



National Geographic: The Art of Exploration

THROUGH MAY 31, 2006

For more than a century, *National Geographic's* illustrators have taken readers on journeys of the imagination to far-flung destinations as seen through the artist's eye. Renowned artists N.C. Wyeth, Andrew Wyeth, Tom Lovell, Robert McCall, Pierre Mion, Thornton Oakley, James Gurney and many others are represented in this exhibition of magnificent original artworks that have graced the pages of *The National Geographic* magazine for over 100 years.



Dinotopia: The Fantastical Art of James Gurney

FEBRUARY 18 THROUGH MAY 20, 2006

James Gurney, the author/illustrator of the award-winning *Dinotopia* books, is the subject of this stunning exhibition. His luminous paintings, beautifully crafted drawings, and scale models bring together the worlds of science and the imagination in an exhibition that will marvel both children and adults.

This exhibition is sponsored by



Greylock
Federal
Credit Union




Frederic Remington and the American Civil War: A Ghost Story

JUNE 10 THROUGH
OCTOBER 29, 2006

At the dawn of the American Century, Frederic Remington, an artist best known for his

illustrations in the periodicals of the day, defined national values through his romanticized depictions of cowboys on the American frontier. He created powerful images that conveyed a sense of strong individualism and identity that was embraced by President Theodore Roosevelt and millions of other admirers who encountered his art in the press. In this landmark exhibition, guest curator and art historian Alexander Nemerov, Ph.D., of Yale University, will examine the impact of Civil War photography on Remington's work.

This exhibition is sponsored by 

More Than Words: Illustrated Letters from the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art

JUNE 10 THROUGH OCTOBER 29, 2006

More Than Words: Illustrated Letters from the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, is an exhibition featuring intimate works of art by some of the 19th and 20th-centuries most admired artists, including Thomas Hart Benton, Alexander Calder, Dale Chihuly, Frederic Edwin Church, Frida Kahlo, and Andrew Wyeth. This exhibition will appeal to anyone curious for an inside glimpse into the professional, personal and creative lives of some of the art worlds' biggest names.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Inca Tableaux* by Ned and Rosalie Seidler. ©1973 National Geographic Society. *Study for The Bronco Buster*, Frederic Remington, 1895. *Will Arrives*, by James Gurney © James Gurney. All rights reserved.

brush *strokes*

“But behind these and all my other memories there are pictures: 305 Post covers; illustrations, ads, posters. The story of my life is, really, the story of my pictures and how I made them. Because, in one way or another, everything I have ever seen or done has gone into my pictures.” Norman Rockwell



National Geographic: The Art of Exploration opened on November 12th with a festive jungle-themed party and remarks by Howard Paine, exhibition curator, and Susan Norton, director of the National Geographic Museum at Explorers Hall.

SCENES FROM THE RECEPTION, TOP LEFT CLOCKWISE: National Geographic artists with Museum Director Laurie Norton Moffatt and Associate Director for Exhibitions and Programs Stephanie Plunkett, Mahlon and Kinuko Craft. The classroom transformed for children at the opening. Illustrators Pierre Mion and James Gurney with Jeanette Gurney. The lobby tropics. The crowds is captivated by the opening remarks.

Wanted!

Your presence on June 10 at the Rockwell/Remington Ranch Gala



Norman as "Busted Flush" Rockwell



Frederick Remington's Lt. Clark

Norman Rockwell, as Busted Flush. Photographer unknown.
Lieutenant Clark, 1888. Courtesy Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, NY

Howdy Buckaroos!

Dust off your Stetsons and mosey on down to the Norman Rockwell Museum on Saturday, June 10, for some boot scootin' and tasty vittles.

The low down on the hoe down will be mailed soon. In the meantime, Call 413.298.4100, x221 for more information. **Save the Date!**

Opening June 10, 2006:
Frederic Remington and the
American Civil War: A Ghost Story

NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM

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www.nrm.org

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