

november 2012 - february 2013

portfolio

NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM

In Praise of the Superhero

Norman Rockwell Museum shines a spotlight on Alex Ross, one of the great comic book artists of his generation, and the making of a superhero obsession.



by Julie Hannon, Managing Editor for [Carnegie Magazine](#) with contributions from Norman Rockwell Museum

Inside theaters around the world this past summer, costumed-crusaders and perfectly-chiseled muscle men dominated the big screen: *The Avengers*; *The Amazing Spider-Man*; and *Batman: The Dark Knight Rises* all proved to be big box-office, paving the way for more. This showcase of superhero stamina is the perfect primer for *Heroes & Villains: The Comic Book Art of Alex Ross*, opening November 10 at Norman Rockwell Museum. Long before Hollywood began regularly pumping super-sized budgets and over-the-top special effects into some of America's most beloved characters, comic book artist Alex Ross was making a name for himself by making the unreal real.

"It very much relates to the world we're in now, where just about every fantastic concept that's been applied to the worlds of fantasy characters over the past 75 years is being brought to life in vivid detail in movies, in video games, and with actors in complicated costumes," says Ross, the preeminent painter of comics.

"I was trying to hit that in print form before the reality would support it in other media," he adds, "because 20 years ago, it seemed the only films we'd ever get about superheroes would be Superman or Batman, and nothing else would ever make their way into cinema."

A super, lifelong obsession

Like a lot of kids, it was television shows that turned Ross on to the magical world of superheroes. Not long after he could grip a crayon, he started drawing three of his favorites—Superman, Captain Marvel, and Plastic





FROM THE DIRECTOR

One of the most rewarding moments of all my years with Norman Rockwell Museum occurred this September when we partnered with the Berkshire Immigrant Center to host a naturalization ceremony for 23 new citizens from Berkshire County.

The residents from 16 countries were sworn in in front of Rockwell's Four Freedoms paintings. Southern Berkshire District Court Judge Fred Rutberg led the oath of allegiance and was joined by Massachusetts State Governor Deval Patrick. "Becoming a citizen is a major step for immigrants and refugees towards full integration into American life and living the American Dream, central to what our country stands for," said Governor Patrick.

It was truly an international day reflective of the diversity of America. The new U.S. citizens originated from countries around the globe, including Benin, Canada, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Ghana, India, the Ivory Coast, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Thanks to one of our museum's generous patrons, each family has been given a membership to Norman Rockwell Museum that will also welcome them to the more than 500 North American Reciprocal Museums. We salute our friends at Berkshire Health Systems, Berkshire Bank, Berkshire Community College and Lee Bank and other community businesses for their support of this event.

This fall at our annual meeting we celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Museum's National



Council, the group of ambassadors from across the country who represent the Museum in their home communities. We hailed the Council's recent success in raising the necessary funds to make the Museum building and campus Wi-Fi accessible to all. This paves the way for more digital connectivity for our visitors and staff; stay tuned for more developments with Rockwell Apps, and interactive gallery experiences.

I want to thank our Board of Trustees who work enthusiastically to support all the needs of the Museum and note with appreciation the contributions of off-going trustees Lillian Bender, Bruce Cole, Steven Hirsch, and Cynthia Rockwell. Their contributions were many and significant. We welcomed new members Dolf Berle, Louise Holland, Jorja-Ann Pilling Marsden, and Daisy Rockwell.

I hope you had a chance over the summer to enjoy the striking work of Golden Age illustrator Howard Pyle. On the walls this fall is the dramatic work of contemporary giant of the comic world, superhero artist Alex Ross. Read about his landmark work in this Portfolio.

I will be out on the road to meet with members and represent the Museum at our offsite venues for *American Chronicles* at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento and *Behind the Camera* at Vero Beach Museum of Art. Annually, we reach more than 500,000 visitors across the country through our traveling exhibition program. View our Rockwell on Tour schedule and map online at nrm.org/exhibitions. Visit us at any of these fine museums, and of course, please join us here in Stockbridge for a super heroic season of art and activities!

Warm wishes,

Laurie Norton Moffatt
Director/CEO

board of trustees

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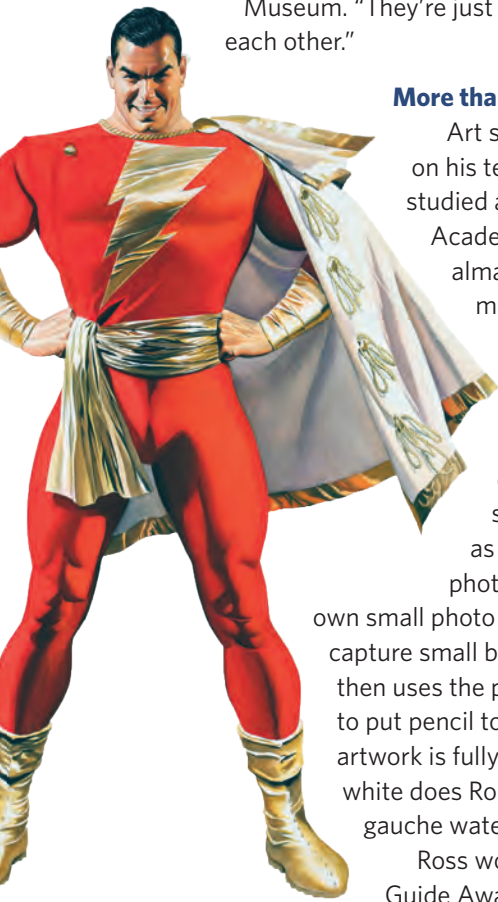
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New members in bold



Man—and over the next three decades he would revisit those same characters time and again.

“With Captain Marvel, for example, we have the crayon version he created at age 4, a colored pencil version he did at 15, and a spectacular painting he created not all that long ago, when he was 31,” says curator Jesse Kowalski, the Director of Exhibitions at The Andy Warhol Museum. “They’re just really fun to see next to each other.”



More than just pretty pictures

Art school had a huge impact on his technique, he says. Ross studied at Chicago’s American Academy of Art, his mother’s alma mater, where he mastered drawing the human figure.

Since then, he’s used his friends, family, even himself—often dressed in full superhero costume—as live models. He photographs them in his own small photo studio, making sure to capture small but crucial details. He then uses the photographs as reference to put pencil to paper. Only after an artwork is fully executed in black and white does Ross apply his signature gauche watercolor.

Ross won the Comic Buyer’s Guide Award for Favorite Painter so many times the award was retired.

“He has unmatched skill when it comes to what he does,” says comic art critic Douglas Wolk. “His work is no doubt impressive. It’s visually stunning and incredibly time-consuming. No one can match him on his narrowly-defined turf.”

A superhero in the making

Ross’ well-tuned process will be on display in its full glory in *Heroes & Villains*, which draws from Ross’ lifetime of work, including *Marvels*, *Kingdom Come*, *Uncle Sam*, and *Justice*. A few of his sculptures and just a tiny sliver of his giant stash of superhero collectibles, some of which he designed himself, will also be on view.

He’s been referred to as the Norman Rockwell of comic book painting so many times, he no longer shies away from the enormous compliment. So it’s no surprise that, on view in *Heroes & Villains*, are numerous examples of how Rockwell’s signature group



Norman Rockwell, *The Right to Know*, 1968



Alex Ross, *Justice*, 2006

portraits form the basis for Ross covers by influencing lighting and textural effects.

Ross is delighted to have his work on view at Norman Rockwell Museum. “Norman Rockwell has been one of the greatest influences on my art,” says the artist. “It is an enormous honor to be featured in the Museum dedicated to his work. I have always looked upon Rockwell’s style as the peak of what one could hope to achieve artistically. Rockwell’s realistic execution and eye for composition are things I aspire to, knowing that he performed a quality of work that isn’t easily achieved. I’ve had the pleasure of seeing Rockwell’s originals for many of his greatest paintings in person before, and I know that there is an endless wonder in studying their excellence. It is a major career achievement for me to have my work be in company with his.”

The exhibition inherently pays homage to the great comic book artists who came before him: Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, John Romita, Neal Adams, and George Perez, among others. As a stylist, however, Ross was also heavily influenced by preeminent American illustrator J.C. Leyendecker and lesser-known Andrew Loomis, whose work graced the pages of national magazines in the 1940s and who penned art instruction books, and whose work is also on display in the exhibition.

“What a show like this does is celebrate the medium that gave birth to all of these icons of colorful costumed characters and show that it’s still a vital, living thing,” says Ross. “It reminds consumers that we’re still trying to improve upon our medium, to chart new adventures to build a better comic book and to reach out to an audience that may never have tried comics. Or to people who left comics when they’re young and now have an opportunity to have a rewarding experience as an adult.”



In the Artist's Studio: **ALEX ROSS**

by Jeremy Clowe, Manager of Media Services, Norman Rockwell Museum



Jeremy: Please tell us about your process.

Alex: It was always my intent in doing any kind of comics at all that I would use **reference and models**... I would begin by assembling props... creating different pieces. If I needed to have something that was akin to a tight-fitting costume, I would just buy kids' shirts that were undersized for my model to wear. I would eventually get the resources together to be able to commission a full outfit made of a given character... it helps to have costume parties to actually validate having these things.

I was doing somewhere around 12 pages a month back when I started *Marvels*, and that's half the work that an average comic book artist is doing every month penciling... since 1990 I have always used gouache as my main media in comics. I was trained as an illustrator using oil paints, but I don't think I'll ever completely go back to that... certainly not for what I do for comics, because all those tiny panels and details and things are not going to be too easy to do. 😊

Jeremy: Did you always have the **idea create** painted comic books?

Alex: I always want to be on that cutting edge... in art school it was my ambition to try and learn how to create the most elaborate art style I could for my chosen medium. There was never any question for me about wanting to paint comics, it was just a matter of when would I be allowed to... Because of innovations in computer scanning technology for print, anything I was turning in for my first comic book company could be scanned and then printed whatever way it originally looked.

Jeremy: What were some of your influences?

Alex: Andrew Loomis was an enormous influence: how to light the human figure, the body structure, a lot of the rendering... looking at a human being and not over-idealizing them, maybe chiseling off some of the rough edges or completely embracing all of the rough edges... In comics, I wound up being an interpreter of the art style of Neal Adams to a great degree, because the entire period of my growing up was completely overthrown by his realistic art style, which changed the look of comics for all time.

Jeremy: You have also cited Norman Rockwell as a big influence. How did you come up with the concept of your artist **portait** that is featured in the exhibition?

Alex: Americana is so intertwined with his personal narrative and so much of his work, so here's his superhero costume: the American flag was his cape... and it's certainly not him striking any kind of a pose, not seeming majestic in that way, but showing a very humble dignity and strength.



for children,
teens & families

programs & events
November 2012 - May 2013

ART FOR PRESCHOOLERS

Kids Create!

Wednesdays, November 7, December 5,
January 2, February 6, & March 6
10:30 a.m.

Interact with art!
Hands-on art
making and activi-
ties help develop
brain capacity
during early child-
hood. Art is good
brain food! Chil-
dren ages 2 to 5:
\$2, members and
grown-ups free!



FAMILY FESTIVAL DAY

Superheroes! A Comics Celebration

Saturday, November 24, 1 - 4 p.m.

Meet favorite superheroes and design
your own dur-
ing this fun-filled
afternoon of tours,
art activities,
storytelling and a
visit with cartoon-
ist and children's
book author **Bob
McLeod**. Costumes
encouraged! Free
with Museum admission, members free.



SCHOOL VACATION WEEK PROGRAMS



Wednesday - Sunday
December 26 - December 30
1 - 5 p.m.

Comic Creations!

Design your own comic books inspired
by the work of comic book master,
Alex Ross. Superman, Batman, Wonder
Woman, and other favorite superhe-
roes will be on view. Come once or all
week! Free with Museum admission,
members free.

Monday - Saturday
February 18 - February 23
1 - 5 p.m.

Drawing and Painting from the
Comic Masters

Be inspired by superheroes of art—
Alex Ross and Norman Rockwell and
design your own masterpieces in
drop-in workshops for young artists of
all ages. Experiment with media and
techniques. Free with Museum admis-
sion, members free.

register for classes: call 413.931.2221 or email: rsvp@nrm.org

EXHIBITION OPENING



27th Annual Berkshire County
High School Art Show

Saturday, February 9, 1 - 4 p.m.

Commentary at 2 p.m.

Marvel at the amazing and diverse
talent of the region's creative youth.
Free. Sponsored by Berkshire Bank.

Norman Rockwell Museum gratefully
acknowledges the generous support
from the following:



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of Howard Pyle in memory of their mother, Anne Poole Pyle, 1940. PAGE 4: Photo of Howard Pyle at his studio easel, taken by C.P.M. Runeford, 1898 Howard Pyle Manuscript Collection. / *We Started to Run back to the Raft for Our Lives*, Howard Pyle. 1902. Delaware Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1912. / *Four Sporting Boys: Baseball*, Norman Rockwell. 1951. Collection of William High School Alumni Association on permanent loan to Norman Rockwell Museum. ©NREL: Niles, IL. PAGE 5: Photos ©Norman Rockwell Museum. All rights reserved. / Lynn Pauley illustration. ©Lynn Pauley. All rights reserved. / photo of Greg Manchess by Irene

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for adults

GALLERY TALK

Meet Rockwell's Models

Fridays, December 7, January 4, February 1, March 1, April 5, & May 3

2:30 p.m.

Find out what it was like to pose for America's favorite illustrator from Rockwell's own models, who share their personal experiences. Free with Museum admission, members free.



NORMAN ROCKWELL'S STUDIO

In the Studio With...

Friday, November 9, 2:30 p.m.



Join us in Rockwell's Stockbridge Studio with **Ann Opperman**, daughter of Eijner Handberg, who designed Rockwell's Shaker-inspired work space. Ms.

Opperman will share memories of her father, his relationship with the artist, and her own experiences assisting Rockwell with secretarial needs. Free with Museum admission, members free.

MINI COMICS CON EVENT

A Festival of Comics

Saturday, November 17, 1 - 5 p.m.

Celebrate the art of comics with artist talks and demonstrations, workshops, signings, comic book appraisals, and tours of *Heroes & Villains*. Dress as your favorite superhero and receive \$2 off admission! Free with Museum admission, members free.



SPECIAL SCREENING

Heirloom Meals: Christmas Special

Friday, November 30, 5:30 p.m.



Savor the holidays with this special screening of *Heirloom Meals Christmas Special*, an American Public Television special created and produced

by Stockbridge resident **Carole Murko**. The program features a segment filmed at Norman Rockwell Museum, and captures recipes, stories, and the deep connection between food, family, and heritage. Reception will follow. \$16 (includes Museum admission); \$10 members.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

Honoring Our Hometown Heroes

Thursday, December 6, 4 - 7 p.m.



What does it mean to be a hero in our world? Join us to honor the true superheroes in our region—from police and firefighters to veterans, medical professionals, and other community caregivers. Personal commentary, refreshments, and tours of *Heroes & Villains*. Free.

ART TALK

Norman Rockwell: Humorous Tales and Little-known Facts

Fridays, December 13, January 11, February 8
2:30 p.m.

Celebrate Rockwell's unique brand of humor during this engaging, enlightening series exploring the artist's adventures in illustration, with Curator of Education **Tom Daly**. Free with Museum admission, members free.

EDUCATORS' SYMPOSIUM

Comics in the Classroom

Saturday, January 12, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Explore curriculum-based connections to comics and creative applications for the classroom in this day-long immersion for educators inspired by *Heroes & Villains: The Comic Book Art of Alex Ross*. **Dr. William H. Foster, III** of Naugatuck Valley Community College will explore the changing image of African Americans in comics; **Dr. James Kimble** of Seton Hall University will discuss the prevalence of comics as domestic propaganda during World War II; and artist/educator **Marek Bennett** will offer a guide to Comics in World History. PDPs are available. \$30, \$24 members.

THE BUSINESS OF ART

Careers in Comics

Saturday, February 16, 1 - 4 p.m.

An inside look at the comics field with professional comics artists, who will discuss the narrative, artistic, and technical skills required and explore the range of opportunities available to aspiring creators—from writing, drawing, and inking to lettering and publishing. Bring along five examples of your art to discuss. \$25, \$20 members.

ROCKWELL CENTER LECTURE SERIES

New Perspectives on Illustration

Join us for this exciting series highlighting the latest scholarship relating to the art of illustration by the outstanding recipients of this year's **Rockwell Center Fellowships**, which support graduate and post-graduate scholarship in the field. Free with Museum admission, members free.

Saturday, Nov. 3, 5:30 p.m.

Graphic Consciousness: The Visual Culture and Institutions of the Industrial Labor Movement

An evening with **Dr. John Ott**, Associate Professor of Art History at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Saturday, April 6, 5:30 p.m.

Unsettled Masses: Transportation in American Art during the 1930s and 1940s

An evening with **Emily Schiller**, a Ph. D. Candidate at Pennsylvania State University at University Park, Pennsylvania.

Saturday, May 4, 5:30 p.m.

Bodies in Crisis: The Comic Grotesque in American Caricature of the 1930s.

An evening with **Bryna R. Campbell**, a Ph. D. Candidate at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.



MEMBERS OPENING EVENT

Heroes & Villains: The Comic Book Art of Alex Ross

Saturday, November 10, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Commentary at 7 p.m.
with a signing with the artist to follow

Meet Alex Ross, a true master of American comics who has revitalized the classic superhero by creating powerful, empathetic portrayals of favorite characters. Works from *Martians* and *Kingdom Come* from the artist's early career, and paintings and drawings from recent projects like *Justice*, *Flash Gordon*, and *Green Hornet* are testaments of his extraordinary skill. Norman Rockwell, Andy Warhol, and Andrew Loomis are among the artist's most significant inspirations.

Members free, guests \$20. Limited space available.



One Membership.

~~540~~ \wedge Museums.
625

Norman Rockwell Museum is a part of NARM, North American Reciprocal Museums! Upgrade your membership to the Illustrators' Roundtable level and enjoy free or reduced admission to over 625 museums across North America.

For details or to upgrade:
413.931.2234
membership@nrm.org

MEMBERS OPENING EVENT

All in the Family: The Art of Mary-Amy Cross

Saturday, December 1, 1 - 5 p.m.

Discover the art of illustrator and painter **Mary-Amy Cross**, the talented cousin of Norman Rockwell, who admired her creativity and love of experimentation. Talks, hands-on art making, performance, and festive refreshments. Free with Museum admission. Members free.



Arlington - Aug. 1940

THE NEW YORKER



save the date:

MEMBERS OPENING EVENT

Saturday, March 9, 6 - 8 p.m.

Istvan Banyai: Stranger in a Strange Land

Commentary by the artist at 6:30 p.m.



Holiday Bonus

Members Save **30%**

plus free gift wrapping!
shop online or in our store from
Nov. 23 - Dec. 31, 2012

Museum Store
where members always save and every purchase supports the preservation of Norman Rockwell's legacy.

store.nrm.org
800.742.9450

*sale excludes Rockwell signed prints and artist proofs.

NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM

fall/winter 2012/2013



always something new to see!

Heroes and Villains: The Comic Book Art of Alex Ross

November 10, 2012 - February 24, 2013

One of the greatest artists in the field of comic books, Alex Ross has revitalized classic superheroes into works of fine art with his brilliant use of watercolor. Featuring over 130 originals spanning his life and career from *Marvels*, *Justice*, and *Kingdom Come*, among many others.

Norman Rockwell: Home for the Holidays

November 16, 2012 - January 21, 2013

A special seasonal presentation of Rockwell's enduring holiday images, including original drawings for Hallmark cards, paintings inspired by Charles Dickens' classic story, *A Christmas Carol*, and costumes and props featured in Rockwell's artwork.

27th Annual Berkshire County High School Art Show

February 9 - March 10, 2013

A lively and diverse exhibition of original works by Berkshire County high school students celebrating the region's talented youth.

Norman Rockwell's 323 Saturday Evening Post Covers

Currently on view

Explore this comprehensive collection of every one of Rockwell's original *Post* cover tear sheets from 1916 to 1963.

coming soon

Istvan Banyai: Stranger in a Strange Land

March 9 - May 5, 2013

Step into the world of artist Istvan Banyai, who has been creating award-winning illustrations for more than thirty years. Imagery created for *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Rolling Stone*, and *The New York Times*, will be on view.

Rockwell on the Road

Visit our traveling Rockwell exhibits now on view at Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, CA; Vero Beach Museum of Art, Florida; Reading Public Museum, Reading, PA. View the entire schedule at nrm.org/rockwell-on-tour

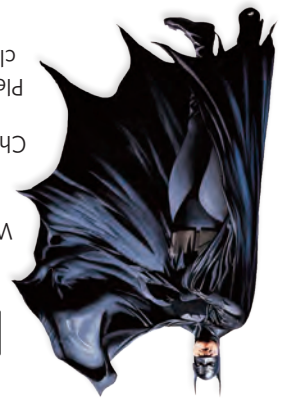
Fall/Winter Hours



November-April: Weekdays 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Weekends and vacation weeks: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

The Museum is only closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Please see the Museum website for weather-related closings or program cancellations.



portfolio

november 2012 - february 2013

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