

# What, Me Worry?

## The Art & Humor of **MAD** Magazine

A counter-cultural touchstone and venue for some of the nation's best satirical art and writing, MAD Magazine spoke truth to power for seven decades. The publication's satirical humor and subversive take on politics, the arts, and American popular culture helped to shape the worldview of generations of readers and inspired countless comedic successors, from *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy* to *Saturday Night Live*, *The Onion*, *The Daily Show*, and more.

*What, Me Worry? The Art and Humor of MAD Magazine* takes a fresh look at the publication's exciting history through the work of its most notable illustrators and writers from the 1950s to today. More than 150 original illustrations and cartoons span the decades to tell the story of MAD's origins, evolution, and far-reaching impact. The exhibition is co-curated by acclaimed illustrator and art journalist Steve Brodner and Norman Rockwell Museum Chief Curator Stephanie Haboush Plunkett. An advisory group of artists, writers, and historians, led by longtime MAD Art Director Sam Viviano, lends depth and authenticity to the exhibition.

MAD Magazine's influence and success reveal the power of published artwork to inspire, a core aspect of Norman Rockwell Museum's illustration mission. *What, Me Worry? The Art and Humor of MAD Magazine* draws on the Museum's focus and expertise, guiding audiences to discover, and rediscover, the artistry and impact of MAD's visual humor. In addition to delving into the publication's history, the exhibition features *MAD about Mort*, a special section devoted to the 55-year career of MAD illustrator and celebrity caricaturist Mort Drucker.



*This may be the perfect time for a MAD Magazine exhibition—a defining moment for old fans to rediscover the magazine and for young people to discover it for the first time.*

—Scott Bakal, illustrator/project advisor

Richard Williams  
 Alfred E. Neuman & Norman Rockwell, 2002.  
 Cover illustration for *Mad Art: A Visual Celebration of MAD Magazine and the Idiots Who Create It* (Watson Guptill, 2002)  
 Oil on canvas. James Halperin Collection,  
 Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

## EXHIBITION CONTENT

- More than 150 original illustrations and cartoons, including a special highlight gallery devoted to the art of Mort Drucker, MAD caricaturist for 55 years.
- Artifacts, photographs, and ephemera documenting MAD's history and impact.
- Exhibition text recounting the origins and evolution of MAD and contextualizing and exploring its influence on American art, culture, and society.
- Digital content including a 70-year publication timeline, digital interactive featuring MAD covers and Fold-Ins; videos exploring the artistic process and MAD's significance; and a commemorative publication featuring commentary by MAD artists, writers, and historians.

### Space Requirements:

Approximately 4,000 square feet

### Exhibition Fee:

\$55,000 for a 12- to 16-week period (approximately)

### Tour Availability:

Available beginning Winter of 2024-25



Mort Drucker (1929-2020)

*ER*, 1998. Cover for MAD #376, December 1998.

Pencil, pen and ink, watercolor. Mort Drucker Collection.

Peter Kuper,

*Spy vs. Spy [Museum]*, 2007

Illustration for MAD. Mixed media stencils, spray paint, Watercolor, ink, colored pencil, and collage. Collection of the artist.



## Exhibition Overview

*What, Me Worry? The Art and Humor of MAD Magazine* offers a timely and compelling look at the art, history, and impact of America's leading satire magazine. The exhibition includes more than 150 original illustrations and cartoons from MAD's "Usual Gang of Idiots" and next-generation creators, as well as artifacts, photographs, and ephemera that tell MAD's story.

Artists featured include longtime regulars and contributors Sergio Aragonés, David Berg, Paul Coker, Jack Davis, Mort Drucker (the focus of a special highlight gallery within the exhibition), Will Elder, Duck Edwing, Frank Frazetta, Kelly Freas, Al Jaffee, Harvey Kurtzman, Don Martin, Norman Mingo, Harry North, Antonio Prohías, Irving Schild, John Severin, Angelo Torres, Wally Wood, George Woodbridge, and others. Next-generation visual humorists include Scott Bricher, Emily Flake, Drew Friedman, Peter Kuper, Teresa Burns Parkhurst, C.F. Payne, Tom Richmond, Dale Stephanos, Sam Viviano, James Warhola, Richard Williams, and others.

Highlighted writers include Dick DeBartolo, Stan Hart, Tom Koch, John Ficarra, Arnie Kogen, Frank Jacobs, Larry Siegel, and others. Also featured are other publications and rarely seen artworks that reflect MAD's ethos, including *Panic*, with illustrations by Joe Orlando, and *Foo!* featuring art by Charles and Robert Crumb.

*What, Me Worry? The Art and Humor of MAD Magazine* begins by tracing the publication's history and genesis, and the development of its clueless but lovable mascot, Alfred E. Neuman. The work of its legendary editors, art directors, and eras comes into focus through the lenses of art, advertising, popular culture, politics, and celebrity—inviting audiences to remember or discover the events, trends, and personalities scrutinized by MAD's merciless comic eye. Exhibition sections present MAD's caricatures of presidents and political figures; television, movie, and music parodies (including its beloved song parodies); brand-name advertisements (including a memorable Rockwell parody for "Crust" toothpaste by Kelly Freas); and more. Bringing MAD into recent decades, the exhibition also examines the magazine's portrayals of

race, gender, and ethnicity, and its inclusion of a wider range of artistic and satirical talent.

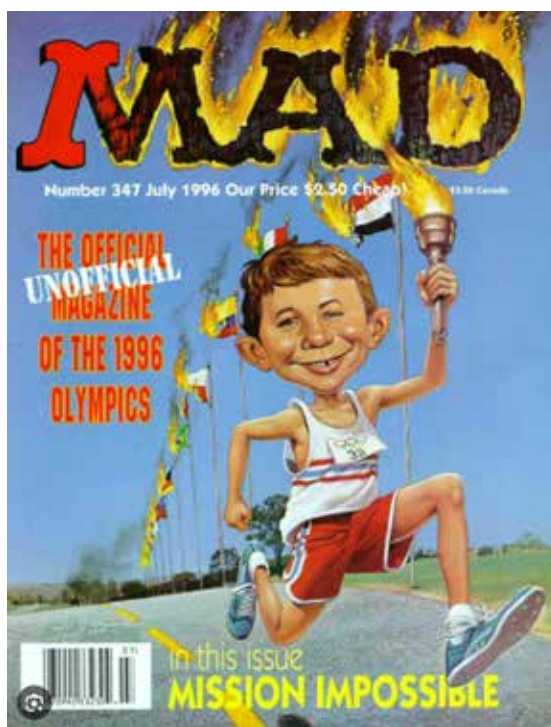
Other sections of the exhibition showcase MAD's iconic covers, as well as beloved special features like *Spy Vs. Spy*, *MAD Fold-Ins*, *Snappy Answers to Stupid Questions*, and *The Strip Club*. Also highlighted are fan letters and quotes from readers both famous and ordinary, revealing the surprising breadth of MAD's devotees. Interactive features include a comprehensive 70-year timeline of the publication; digital *MAD*

*Fold-Ins* and a complete guide to MAD cover art; and videos highlighting both MAD's significance and the process by which artists, writers, art directors, and editors mingled creative talents to produce a fresh and "snappy" magazine over many decades.

A final section of the exhibition explores MAD Magazine's far-reaching cultural legacy and influence—arguably greatest in the 1950s through 1970s, yet carried into the bloodstream and DNA of contemporary culture to shape the worldview, art, and humor of millions.

*This exhibition distills that time in print when MAD stood alone in publishing: smart, snappy, current, and bravely idiotic. Its mission connected with us every issue. MAD gradually changed the world, one kid at a time.*

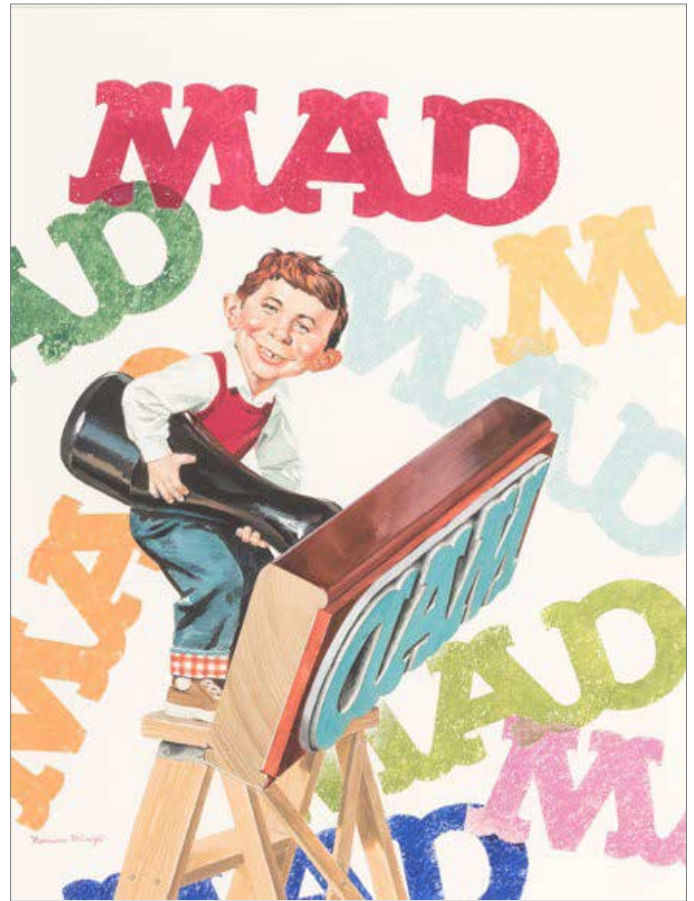
—Steve Brodner, Co-curator



CF Payne, *Olympics*, 1996

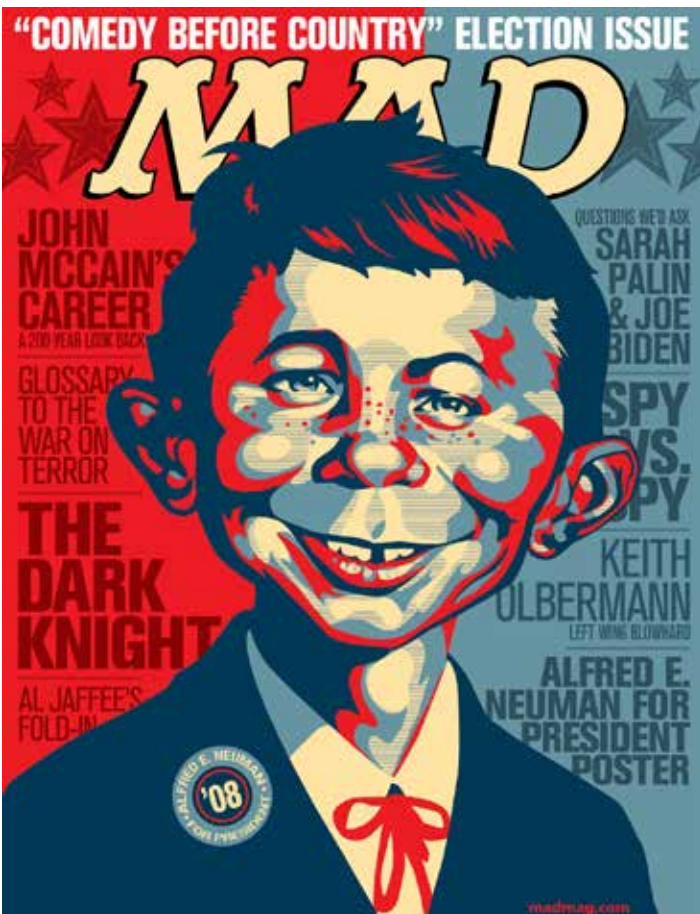
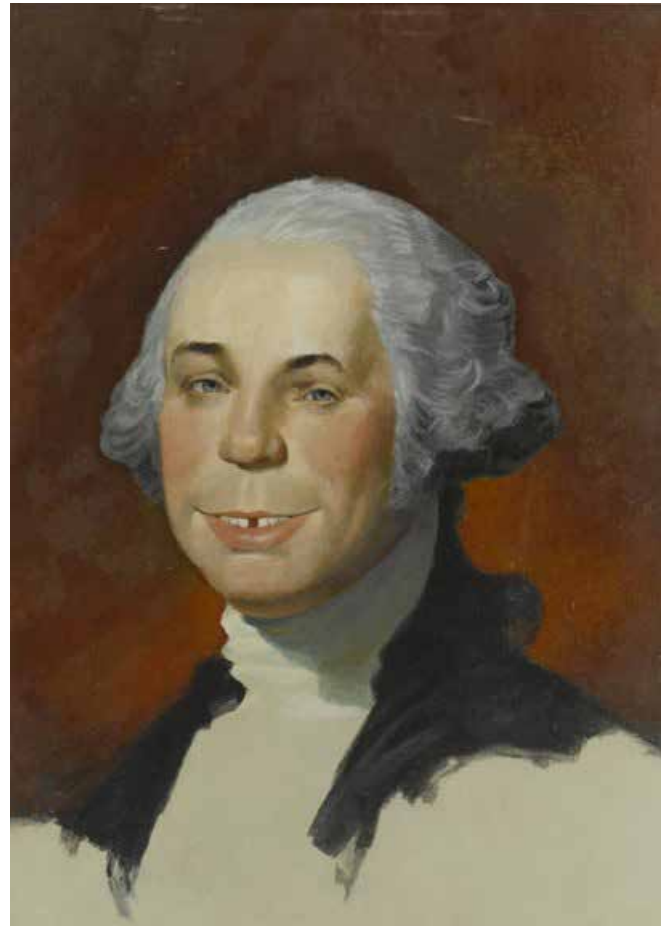
Cover for *MAD*, July 1996, #347. Acrylic, watercolor, ink, colored pencil. CF Payne Collection.

Top right:  
Norman Mingo (1896-1980)  
*Help Stamp Out MAD*, 1963  
MAD #78, April 1963  
Watercolor on illustration board  
James Halperin Collection, Courtesy of Heritage Auctions,  
HA.com



Bottom:  
Dale Stephanos  
Fatties vs. Fast Food - "Ronald McDonald is Sworn in Before a  
Jury of His Peers"  
MAD #425, January 2003  
Pencil sketch and final illustration  
Collection of the Artist.

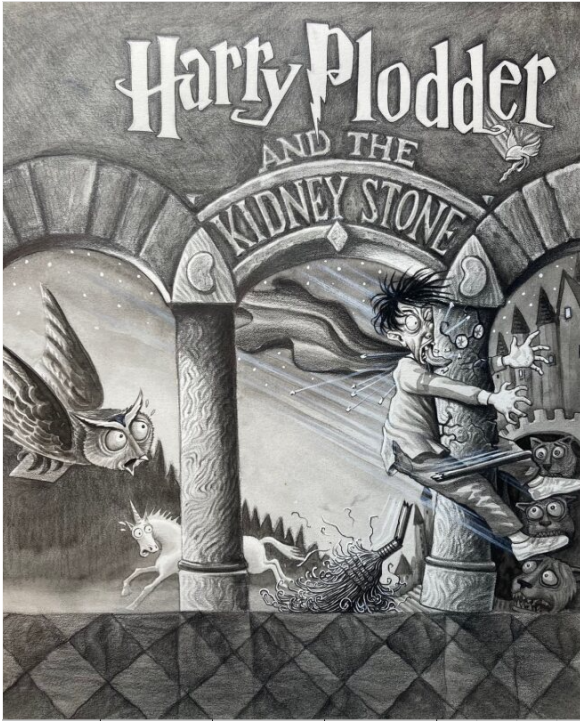




Top left:  
 Kelly Freas (1922-2005)  
 Cover illustration for MAD #51 (EC, 1959)  
 Ink and gouache on illustration board  
 James Halperin Collection, Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Top right:  
 Norman Mingo (1896-1980)  
*Portrait of George Washington* (Bicentennial tribute to the famous unfinished portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart), 1976  
 Cover illustration for MAD #181, (EC, 1976)  
 Oil on board  
 James Halperin Collection, Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Bottom left:  
 Sam Viviano  
*Alfred E. Neuman for President*, 2008  
 Cover illustration for MAD #495, November 2008  
 Digital  
 Design Director: Ryan Flanders.  
 Collection of the artist.



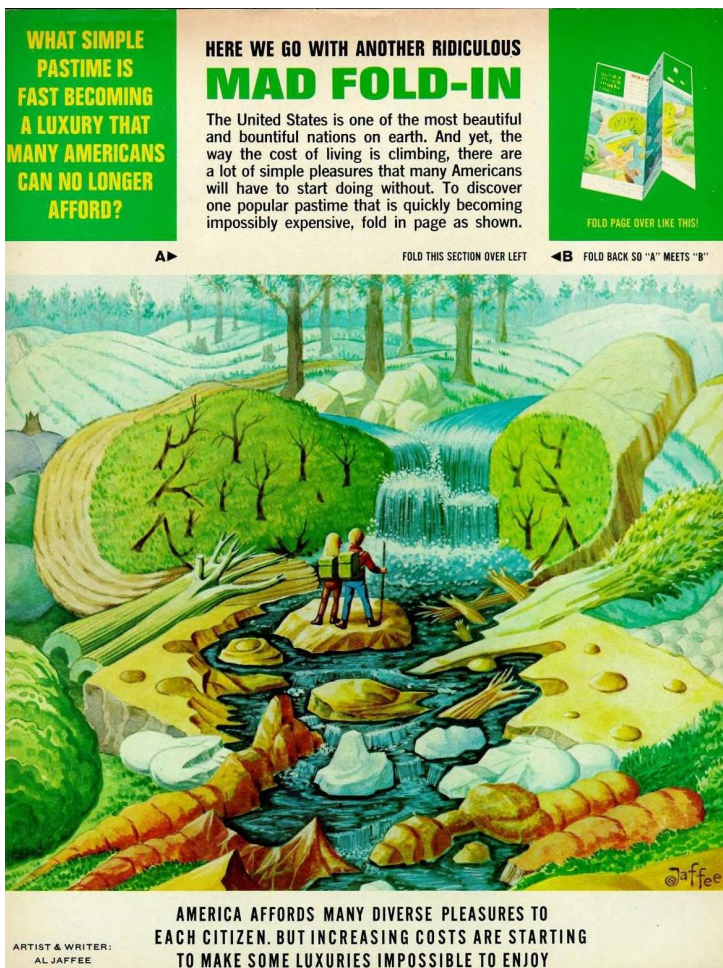
James Warhola  
*Harry Plodder and the Kidney Stone* by J.K. Rowling, 2000  
MAD #391, March 2000  
Collection of the artist



Bill Elder (as "Eldder" in tribute to Charles Addams) (1921-2008)  
Illustration for MAD #26 (EC, 1955)  
Ink and ink wash on paper  
James Halperin Collection, Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com



Richard Williams  
*Trump Crossing the Delaware*, 2017  
Illustration for MAD, October 2017, #547  
Oil on canvas. James Halperin Collection



Al Jaffee (1921-2023)  
*What Simple Pastime is Becoming a Luxury that Many Americans Can No Longer Afford?* 1979  
 Fold-In illustration for MAD #172, (EC, 1979)  
 Ink and gouache on board  
 Collection of Dr. Louis Kaminester

**ALL IMAGES**

MAD and all related elements  
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**EXHIBITION CURATORS**

Stephanie Haboush Plunkett is the Chief Curator and Rockwell Center Director of Norman Rockwell Museum. She has organized many exhibitions focused on the art of Norman Rockwell and the field of illustration, and leads the Rockwell Center for American Visual Studies, the first scholarly institute devoted to illustration. Her recent publications include "The Shifting Postwar Marketplace: Illustration in the United States and Canada, 1940-1970" in *History of Illustration*; *Drawing Lessons from the Famous Artists School: Classic Techniques and Expert Tips from the Golden Age of Illustration*; *Enduring Ideals: Rockwell, Roosevelt & the Four Freedoms*; *Norman Rockwell: Drawings, 1911 to 1973*; *Tony Sarg: Genius at Play*; and *Leo Lionni: Storyteller, Artist, Designer*.

Steve Brodner is today's foremost satirical illustrator and caricaturist. Acclaimed in the fields of journalism and the graphic arts as a master of the editorial idiom, he is a regular contributor to *The Nation*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. Brodner's art journalism has appeared in most major magazines and newspapers in the United States, such as *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Time*, *Mother Jones*, *Harper's*, and *The Atlantic*. His newsletter, *This Week*, can be found daily at [stevebrodner.substack.com](http://stevebrodner.substack.com) and weekly in *The Nation*. Norman Rockwell Museum presented an exhibition of his work in 2008 titled *Raw Nerve: The Political Art of Steve Brodner*.

**EXHIBITION CONTACTS**

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## EXHIBITION ADVISORS

**Lead Advisor Sam Viviano** is an award-winning humorous illustrator specializing in caricature and cartooning for magazines, books, and advertising. His first cover illustration for MAD appeared in issue #223, in June 1981. Eighteen years later, he became Art Director of MAD—a position that he held from 1999 to December 2017. His work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Family Weekly*, *Reader's Digest*, *TV Guide*, *Family Weekly*, *Institutional Investor*, *HITS*, *Dynamite*, and *Bananas*, among others.

**David Apatoff** is an illustration historian and *The Saturday Evening Post's* art critic. He is the author of several books and articles on art and has served as a museum curator, and has a special fondness for American illustration. He is author of the popular blog, [illustrationart.blogspot.com](http://illustrationart.blogspot.com).

**Scott Bakal** is an award-winning illustrator, photographer, and professor of illustration at MassArt in Boston. His clients include *Rolling Stone*, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Family Circle*, *Reader's Digest*, *Playboy*, *Smithsonian*, *Discover*, *Vancouver Opera*, *Variety*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Tor Books*, *Wizards of the Coast*, and *Yoga Journal*.

**Dick DeBartolo** is known as The Giz Wiz and MAD's Maddest Writer, having been featured in every issue of MAD for the past 50 years. As the Giz Wiz, he appears on *Ask The Tech Guys*, hosts *The Giz Fiz*, and does a weekly podcast with Chad Johnson on The Giz Wiz. Dick is also The Giz Wiz on ABC's *World News Now*.

**John Ficarra** was hired as Assistant Editor for MAD in 1980, shortly after his debut as a contributing writer. He became MAD's Editor in Chief in 1985 (with Nick Meglin until 2004), a position that he retained until 2018. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *AARP Magazine*, and numerous other publications. He is currently a regular contributor of humor to the digital weekly *Air Mail*.

**Emily Suzanne Flake** is an American cartoonist and illustrator. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Time*, and many other publications. Her weekly comic strip *Lulu Eightball* has appeared in numerous alternative newsweeklies since 2002.

**William H. Foster III** is an emeritus Professor of English at Naugatuck Valley Community College in Connecticut. A scholar focusing on African Americans in comics and books, Foster compiled his research in *Looking for a Face Like Mine* and *Dreaming of a Face Like Mine*. He was a catalogue essayist for Norman Rockwell Museum's *Imprinted: Illustrating Race* exhibition.

**Keith Knight** is the creator of the weekly comic strip *The K Chronicles* (1993), the weekly single panel comic (*Th*)*ink* (2003), and the daily strip *The Knight Life* (2008). In a style and wit reminiscent of MAD, Knight addresses serious social and political issues while incorporating signature humor. *Woke*, a television series partially based on Knight's life, debuted on the Hulu streaming service in 2020; the second season became available in April 2022.

**Peter Kuper's** work appears in *The New Yorker*, *The Nation*, and MAD, where he has written and illustrated *Spy Vs. Spy* for every issue since 1997. He is the co-founder of *World War 3 Illustrated* and has produced over two dozen books including *Sticks and Stones*, *The System*, *Diario de Oaxaca*, *Ruins*, and adaptations of many of Franz Kafka's works. His most recent graphic novels include *Kafkaesque* and an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. In 2011, Kuper began teaching Harvard University's first course dedicated to comics and graphic novels.

**Judith Yaross Lee** is Distinguished Professor Emerita at Ohio University. Dr. Lee is an award-winning teacher and scholar who has served as Distinguished Professor of Communication Studies and Director of the Central Region Humanities Center. She is internationally recognized as an authority on American literary humor from Mark Twain to the present, and is the author/editor of *Seeing MAD: Essays on MAD Magazine's Humor and Legacy* (University of Missouri Press, 2020), among other notable books on American humor studies.

**Louis Henry Mitchell** is Creative Director of Character Design at Sesame Workshop. He has designed and styled contemporary and classic Muppet characters as well as Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons and floats, including Big Bird and Super Grover. A gifted educator and portraitist, he is also a member of the Norman Rockwell Museum Board of Trustees. 2020), among other notable books on American humor studies.

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NORMAN  
ROCKWELL  
MUSEUM

For more information visit: [NRM.org/MAD](http://NRM.org/MAD)