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HOLIDAY WEEKEND EDITION



Illustration exhibition

Paintings in the National Museum of American Illustration's new exhibit, 'Norman Rockwell and His Contemporaries,' which opened Friday, include 'Flowers for the Teacher,' top, by Stevan Dohanos, oil on canvas, 30" x 24," Saturday Evening Post cover Sept. 7, 1946, and 'Russian Schoolroom,' bottom, by Norman Rockwell, oil on canvas, 22" x 44," art for an article on education in Look magazine Oct. 3, 1967. The exhibit at the Newport museum will run until Labor Day. Story on Page A3.

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ILLUSTRIOUS ILLUSTRATORS

'Norman Rockwell and his Contemporaries' opens at National Museum of American Illustration

By Sean Flynn
Staff writer

NEWPORT — Norman Rockwell, the most famous American artist-illustrator, influenced other great illustrators of his time and was inspired by them as well. He also had his mentors.

Judy Goffman Cutler, co-owner and curator of the National Museum of American Illustration, has drawn from the more than 3,000 works of art created by about 150 illustrators in the museum's collection to document these influences.

She and her husband, Laurence S. Cutler, welcomed the public on Friday to the opening of their new exhibition: "Norman Rockwell and his Contemporaries." It will continue until Labor Day.

Judy Cutler has paired Rockwell with other illustrators or grouped them by themes.

In a small section devoted to politics, there is a Rockwell painting from 1949 titled "Breakfast Table Political Argument." In the group is a Robert O'Reid painting from 1942 also showing a man and woman arguing and titled, "Save that Energy for the War," and a John Falter illustration from 1952 depicting the GOP convention.

Rockwell and Falter created hundreds of covers for the Saturday Evening Post, which catapulted them into homes across the country for decades.

Rockwell, born in 1894, was an inspiration to Falter, born in 1910, but he also acknowledged Falter's influence on him.

"Falter told me that Rockwell said to him at one point, 'I'm in my Falter period,'" Cutler said.

Fifty years ago, Cutler recognized that American illustrators such as Rockwell were true artists who were vastly undervalued, while other art dealers dismissed them as producers of prints for mass distribution mainly through magazines. She got to know many of the illustrators personally, and the public's



appreciation of them now has reached new heights.

This week, Rockwell's "The Rookie," sold for more than \$22 million. About a dozen years ago, Judy Cutler sold the painting for a client for less than \$1 million, Laurence Cutler said.

Besides Rockwell, Falter and O'Reid, other illustrators featured in the new exhibit include John Clymer, Dean Cornwell, Stevan Dohanos, J.F. Kernan, J.C. Leyendecker, Norman Price, George Hughes, Howard Pyle, N.C. Wyeth and Maxfield Parrish.

Wyeth, the father of noted artist Andrew Wyeth, has a painting titled "Snowbound" that is paired with Rockwell's "28 Degrees Below." Wyeth portrayed himself standing with his son in the snow, while Rockwell showed a man sticking his

head out the door in the falling snow to read the thermometer.

"People wrote that the snowflakes would not be that big if were that cold," Judy Cutler said. "After that, Rockwell realized more than ever that everything had to be authentic."

Those paintings were grouped by the winter season. Summer season interpretations are shown with beach scenes at the ocean or lake, featuring Falter's "Maine Surf" from 1948, Dohanos' "Labor Day at Putnam Memorial State Park" from 1954, and Leyendecker's "Labor Day at the Beach" from 1932.

Another display shows paintings that Rockwell, Wyeth and Parrish all did for the Edison Mazda Co., which sold light bulbs. The illustrations were for calendars that hung in countless homes in the 1920s.

Rockwell's painting, "The Party After the Party," shows a young woman in a party dress at home confiding in her grandmother what she just experienced. They are in the darkness, talking in the intimacy of light cast by a single lamp.

A Dohanos painting from 1946, "Flowers for the Teacher," shows a boy entering a classroom late with flowers he cut from a window box next to the door. A 1967 painting from Rockwell shows students focusing in a Russian classroom, with one student looking away.

It's fun for the visitor in the exhibit to see how the different illustrators portrayed summer baseball games or youngsters running after fire engines — or just alongside a volunteer fireman, in Rockwell's case.

Cutler juxtaposes a 1909

Leyendecker painting with a 1935 painting from Rockwell, both showing a man hiking with a dog next to him in strikingly similar poses.

"Clearly there could not have been a Norman Rockwell without a J.C. Leyendecker," Judy Cutler said.

When Rockwell wrote his book, "My Adventures as an Illustrator," he devoted a whole chapter to Leyendecker.

A 1946 Rockwell painting showing "Charwomen in the Theater" is paired with a 1950 Hughes painting titled "Theater Rehearsal with Maid." Clearly, Hughes was inspired by Rockwell.

Many of the illustrators capture servicemen leaving their families, coming home or attracting attention in their uniforms. Many of Rockwell's

'These illustrators reflected and molded American society by depicting universal themes still held dear today.'

JUDY GOFFMAN CUTLER

co-owner and curator of the National Museum of American Illustration in Newport

Paintings in the National Museum of American Illustration's new exhibit, "Norman Rockwell and His Contemporaries," include "Uncle Sam" by J.C. Leyendecker, left, original artwork for July 1, 1916, Saturday Evening Post cover; and "Uncle Sam" by Norman Rockwell, right, oil on canvas, 29" x 21", Red Cross magazine cover, April 1918.

Jacqueline Marque
Staff photographer

painting depict life on the homefront during World War II.

"I thought it would be interesting to exhibit the artists in this way, in the context of what was happening in America in different time periods," Cutler said. "People are familiar with Rockwell and can get introduced to the other artists."

"The most noted artist-illustrators of Rockwell's time knew each other as colleagues, classmates and friends, living and working together in relevant artist communities, sustaining one another, sharing clients and models," Cutler said. "These illustrators reflected and molded American society by depicting universal themes still held dear today."

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