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## National Museum of American Illustration opens "Norman Rockwell and His Contemporaries"



JC Leyendecker (1874-1951), Lune De Miel (Honeymoon), 1926, oil on canvas, 28 ¼" x 21 ¼", signed lower right, Saturday Evening Post, July 17, 1926 cover.

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**NEWPORT, RI.-** [The National Museum of American Illustration](#) announces its newest exhibition: Norman Rockwell and his Contemporaries. The show will debut with the 2014 Summer Season on Memorial Day Weekend (Thursday, May 22nd, 2014), and run through Labor Day Weekend (Sunday, August 31st, 2014).

Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) is best known for his iconic covers for the Saturday Evening Post throughout the 20th century. His heart-warming depictions of American life are universally relevant, creating a lasting connection to national and international audiences alike. His ability to create memorable stories and quintessential scenes through his artworks makes them perennial, continuing to connect with audiences today. Despite past criticisms of illustration art, as of December 2013, Rockwell now ranks amongst the most expensive artists. This monumental record elevates illustration art and its historical and cultural significance, marking an unprecedented recognition and appreciation by the art world.

Norman Rockwell and his Contemporaries is a thematic exploration of artworks by Rockwell and his peers: those who were influenced by Rockwell and those who influenced the master himself. 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, and sharing clients and models. They were united with a common purpose: to accurately portray our nation visually, and meet its ever-rising demands for more images as publishing and distribution systems expanded capabilities. Illustrators featured alongside Rockwell include John Clymer, Dean Cornwell, Stevan Dohanos, John Falter, J.F. Kernan, J.C. Leyendecker, Norman Price, among others.

These illustrators reflected and molded American society by depicting universal themes that are still held dear today, including courtship, family gatherings, sports, love, holidays, seasons, and many more. In 1946, Rockwell depicted two maids enjoying a break to read an abandoned playbill while cleaning after the show; George Hughes took this idea of working class women at rest in a behind-the-scenes setting and, four years later, painted a maid pausing to listen to the orchestra's rehearsal. John Falter similarly recycled Rockwell's unique depiction of ice-skating children for a magazine cover. Rockwell showed two boys skating in profile to emphasize the excitement of their race, while Falter shows the joy of arriving at the skating pond, highlighting the togetherness of the community around the pond below. This exhibition also highlights those illustrators who came before Rockwell, influencing his, and many others careers. Artists including Howard Pyle and JC Leyendecker taught Rockwell and his contemporaries how to identify universal themes to appeal to the intended audience, and what it meant to capture an entire story in a single image.

Other exhibitions concurrently on display include Howard Pyle & His Brandywine Students, featuring the works of Pyle, N.C Wyeth, and other notable students. The American Muse is a homage to American women of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and to the illustrators who accurately portrayed their unique and quintessential American beauty and character. Original artworks by contemporary illustrator Mary Jane Begin from her new My Little Pony: Under the Sparkling Sea are also on view. As always, highlights from the NMAI's American Imagist Collection, featuring works by Maxfield Parrish, J.C. Leyendecker, John Falter, and other Golden Age illustrators will be on display.

This exhibition will be available for public viewing during the NMAI's Summer Season hours: Thursday through Sunday, 11am – 5pm, beginning May 22nd through August 31st. Guided tours are available every Friday at 3pm, or by reservation.

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