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PREMIERE OF HOWARD PYLE, HIS STUDENTS & THE GOLDEN AGE OF AMERICAN ILLUSTRATION

“The only distinctly American Art is to be found in the Art of Illustration.” – Howard Pyle

The National Museum of American Illustration (NMAI) in Newport, RI, is pleased to announce the debut of a new traveling exhibition, which will premiere on April 3rd at Drexel University’s Pennoni Honors College, Philadelphia, PA. A concurrent exhibition of the same theme will be on display at the NMAI beginning Memorial Day Weekend, May 26th, the start of the NMAI’s summer season.

Howard Pyle, His Students & the Golden Age of American Illustration is a exhibition featuring oil paintings, works on paper, and accompanying artifacts that highlight the work of Howard Pyle, known as the “Father of American Illustration”, and the generation of celebrated illustrators he taught. In 1894, Pyle founded the first School of Illustration in America at Drexel Institute of Art, Science and Industry, now Drexel University, shaping the way illustrators created artworks thereafter.

“A.J. Drexel founded the Drexel Institute in 1891, and when he did, he made it clear that his vision should be accessible for both men and women from all backgrounds, which was unique for a college of that time period,” said Paula Marantz Cohen, Pennoni Honors College dean. “Pyle’s time at Drexel undoubtedly shaped the field of American Illustration. He was an early parallel advocate of Drexel’s philosophy of ‘learning by doing’ encouraging his students to go out into the world to study their subject matter, an approach reflected in Drexel’s present-day Co-op program.”

Howard Pyle taught at the Drexel Institute until 1900 when he founded the Howard Pyle School of Illustration in Wilmington, Delaware. His students at both schools became known as “The Brandywine School,” which included some of America’s greatest illustrators: Stanley Arthurs, Anna and Ethel Betts, Harvey Dunn, Anton Otto Fischer, Philip R. Goodwin, Elizabeth Shippen Green, W.H.D. Koerner, Violet Oakley, Frank Schoonover, Jessie Willcox Smith, Sarah Stilwell Weber and N.C. Wyeth.

Pyle’s innovative teaching methods encouraged his students to live their illustrations, therefore painting from experience, not merely from observation. This new principle, taught at the verge of the publishing boom of the 20th century, laid the foundation for a century of America’s iconic illustrators. His influences greatly contributed to illustrative painting and drawing becoming one of the truest forms of applied art.

“Today everyone knows the name Norman Rockwell but few people know the name Howard Pyle, let alone his art or his impact on generations of artists and American illustration,” says Judy Goffman Cutler, co-founder of the National Museum of American Illustration. “This exhibition will give viewers a first-hand and close-up look at the marvelous original paintings that most people have only seen in reproduction form.” To highlight the importance of Pyle’s teachings on all of America’s Golden Age illustrators, a selection of artworks from later periods will be on display, including Norman Rockwell, J.C. Leyendecker and Howard Chandler Christy.

A 260-page illustrated catalogue will accompany this exhibition, available for pre-order now through the National Museum of American Illustration’s Online Museum Shop. Please visit the store at www.AmericanIllustration.org.

Those interested in the exhibition at Drexel University may schedule a tour and find additional information at drexel.edu/pennoni.

The National Museum of American Illustration is an independent, educational and aesthetic organization with the goal to present the best venue for the public to appreciate the greatest collection of illustration art. The NMAI’s Summer Season begins Memorial Day Weekend, May 26th, open Thursday through Sunday, 11am – 5pm, with a Guided Tour every Friday at 3pm. It is located at Vernor Court, 492 Bellevue Avenue, Newport, RI. For information call (401) 851-8949 or visit www.americanillustration.org.

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