Polk Museum's largest exhibit to date will feature artists Norman Rockwell and NC Wyeth

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Take a preview: Famed artists Norman Rockwell and NC Wyeth at the Polk Museum of art

Take an early look at the Polk Museum's largest exhibition to date, featuring famed artists Norman Rockwell and NC Wyeth as rarely seen, side by side.
LAKELAND – The iconic images of Americana by Norman Rockwell and N. C. Wyeth have become familiar to most Americans through their works for the covers of the Saturday Evening Post from the 1910s to the 1970s.

But most people aren’t as familiar with the famed artists as painters.

That side of the two artists will be on display in a new exhibition in the Polk Museum of Art at Florida Southern College.

"Norman Rockwell Visits a Country School " by Norman Rockwell in the new Rockwell/Wyeth Icons Of Americana exhibit at the Polk Museum of Art in Lakeland Fl. Wednesday January 24,2024. Ernst Peters/The Ledger Ernst Peters/The Ledger

From Saturday through May 26, the PMOA will feature the largest art exhibition since its establishment in 1966. Called “Rockwell/Wyeth: Icons of Americana,” the art exhibition will feature 40 paintings by Rockwell (1882-1945) and Wyeth (1894-1978). In addition, there will be 321 covers of “The Saturday Evening Post” illustrated by Rockwell. The paintings will be housed in the Dorothy Jenkins Gallery, Harper Family Gallery and Perkins Gallery.
The works in the loan-based exhibition were handpicked for POMA and curated in partnership with the National Museum of Illustration in Newport, Rhode Island, and the American Illustrators Gallery in New York City. The works come from that shared collection, and obtaining them has been five years in the making, said Alexander Rich, executive director and chief curator of the PMOA. He said the exhibition features “two of the great American masters who have rarely been explored side by side.”

“Most every visitor coming through the door will be familiar at the very least with Rockwell, and many will be familiar with both Rockwell and Wyeth, and we want them to see familiarity in the artwork on display but also understand new aspects of both artists’ lives, work and careers,” he said.

The featured artists came to national acclaim in different eras, but over the years have become very familiar names through the accessibility of their work. Both men’s art commercial art careers were varied, ranging from advertisements to magazine covers.

Wyeth is best known as a prolific book illustrator, who drew for Scribner Classics like “Treasure Island” and “Robin Hood.” Rockwell has become synonymous with “The Saturday Evening Post” and the cover illustrations he produced.

"The Doughboy and His Admirers " by Norman Rockwell in the new Rockwell/Wyeth Icons Of Americana exhibit at the Polk Museum of Art in Lakeland Fl. Wednesday January 24,2024. Ernst Peters/The Ledger Ernest Peters/The Ledger
The “Rockwell/Wyeth: Icons of Americana” exhibit will show visitors the depth of their work beyond the magazine cover illustrations that graced newsstands. It examines Rockwell's and Wyeth’s commercial illustration process, and while often overlooked, shows how each illustration was initially conceived as a full-size painting before being scaled and mass-produced in print.
“People will be surprised they were skilled, fine painters,” said Rich, who’s been PMOA executive director since 2019. “We hope that sheds new light on both artists and the world of illustration.”

The exhibition is supported by the Votum Foundation, Alan and Linda Rich, a gift in memory of Maurice Raymond, the Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Foundation, CORE Wealth Advisors, Florida Southern College, Culture Builds Florida, LKLD Mayor’s Council for the Arts and Visit Central Florida.

### If you go

**WHAT:** “Rockwell/Wyeth: Icons of Americana”

**WHEN:** Saturday to May 26

**WHERE:** Polk Museum of Art at Florida Southern College, 800 E. Palmetto St., Lakeland

**COST:** Free

**INFO:** See www.polkmuseumofart.org/rockwell or call 863-688-7743

"Snowbound" by N.C. Wyeth in the new Rockwell/Wyeth Icons Of Americana exhibit at the Polk Museum of Art in Lakeland Fl. Wednesday January 24,2024. Ernst Peters/The Ledger Ernst Peters/The Ledger