

# ANTIQUES

## And The Arts Weekly

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\* July 10, 2009



Newsstand Rate \$1.50  
Outside CT \$1.75

Published by The Bee Publishing Company, Newtown, Connecticut

INDEXES ON  
PAGES 66 & 67

July 10, 2009 — Antiques and The Arts Weekly — 7

## 'American Imagist' Is Rhode Island's First Norman Rockwell Show

NEWPORT, R.I. — The National Museum of American Illustration is hosting "Norman Rockwell: American Imagist," open to the public through August 30. This is the first Norman Rockwell exhibition ever to be shown in Rhode Island and includes more than 60 original paintings, drawings and studies, encompassing more than half a century of the artist's extensive career.

Rockwell's heartwarming depictions of everyday life made him the best-known and most beloved American artist of the Twentieth Century. He lived and worked through one of the most eventful periods in the nation's history and his paintings vividly chronicled those times. His images often served as a mirror of American life.

Rockwell was a storyteller during a time when so-called "serious" art was neither narrative nor representational. His painted stories were folksy, humorous and often topical, but Rockwell was more than just a chronicler of the times. He had a genius for knowing which stories to tell, how to tell them and what details to emphasize. It has been said that a Rockwell



Norman Rockwell, "Shuffleton's Barber Shop — Study," 1950, oil on canvas, 33 by 31 inches, unsigned, *Saturday Evening Post*, April 29, 1950, cover study.

painting does not require an explanation, a caption or even a title. It speaks to the viewer directly.

Although Rockwell is most associated with small-town America, he was in fact born and raised in New York City. At 21, he moved to New Rochelle, N.Y., to be near his idol, the notable illustrator and icon-maker J.C. Leyen-

decker. He set up a studio and began to sell freelance work to magazines such as *Life*, *Literary Digest* and *Country Gentleman*.

In 1916, at the age of 22, Rockwell painted his first cover for the prestigious *Saturday Evening Post*, beginning a long (1916–1963) and fruitful relationship. Most readers immediately recognized his



Norman Rockwell, "Cousin Reginald Under The Mistletoe," 1917, oil on canvas, 22 by 22 inches, signed lower right, *Country Gentleman*, December 22, 1917.

covers and responded well to the charming portraits of American life. Readers became fans and followed his covers through the Depression years and World War II.

In 1943, the entire nation joined together when he created the "Four Freedoms," which toured in an exhibition raising \$135 million for the war effort through the sale of

war bonds.

The *Saturday Evening Post* covers became Rockwell's greatest legacy. Yet he parted ways with the publication in 1963 and began to work for *Look* magazine, where he had more creative freedom. The *Look* illustrations included his first socially conscious work concerning Civil Rights, space travel and other issues of national concern.

Rockwell lived the last 25 years of his life with his wife Molly in Stockbridge, Mass. On November 8, 1978, he died in Stockbridge at the age of 84, leaving an unfinished painting on his easel.

Some critics have called his art too sentimental to be taken seriously, but the fact that his work continues to resonate and find new audiences in the Twenty-First Century says something else. There is a universality to his appeal, suggesting that Rockwell's real subjects were not simply "grandfathers, puppy dogs — stuff like that," as the artist once said, but something larger, if less tangible.

National Museum of American Illustration is at 492 Bellevue Avenue. For information, 401-851-8949 or [www.americanillustration.org](http://www.americanillustration.org).