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Laurence S. Cutler listens as Judy Goffman Cutler talks about Norman Rockwell's studies for his painting 'The Problem We All Live With' during a tour Friday at the National Museum of American Illustration in Newport. Below is Rockwell's 'Boy Graduate,' a painting of his son for the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* on June 6, 1959.

# Feeling nostalgic?

## Rockwell's timeless works on display

By Sean Flynn  
Daily News staff

NEWPORT — The college graduate stands holding a degree against a background of newspaper pages with headlines about job woes, nuclear fallout perils and denouncement of the U.S. by China. But the headlines do not refer to today's high unemployment, fear of North Korean missile tests or China's concern about the value of its \$1 trillion-plus reserves in U.S. dollars.

Norman Rockwell painted his son, Tommy, and superimposed the work over the newspapers to create a cover for *The Saturday Evening Post* of June 6, 1959.

Today, exactly 50 years later, is the opening of the exhibition, "Norman Rockwell: American Imagist," at the National Museum of American Illustration inside Vernon Court at 492 Bellevue Ave. The museum founder and owners, Laurence S. Cutler and his wife, Judy Goffman Cutler, say it is the first Rockwell exhibition to be shown in Rhode Island. There are more than 60 original paintings and studies from six decades of the artist's career, from 1916 through the 1960s.

"It's the same headlines as today," said Laurence Cutler as he talked about the life-sized portrait of the





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Laurence and Judy Cutler welcome visitors to the National Museum of American Illustration on Friday in Newport. The museum is located inside Vernon Court on Bellevue Avenue.

## Nostalgic

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bewildered yet optimistic “Boy Graduate” used for the magazine cover. College graduates of today find themselves in a similar dilemma, trying to find careers in a tight job market amid concerns that international affairs could hurt the global economy.

The first show of the Rockwell exhibition was last fall at the Naples Museum of Art in Naples, Fla., where it broke all the museum’s attendance records, Cutler said.

“With everything that is going on with the economy and the wars, people want more nostalgia,” he said, talking about Rockwell’s popularity, which seems to increase with the years. His painting “Breaking Home Ties” sold for \$15.4 million at a 2006 Sotheby’s auction, a painting that sold for \$600 in 1960.

“They are looking for the warm and cozy feelings we don’t have anymore,” Judy Cutler said. “Norman Rockwell can evoke positive and optimistic feelings with a painting.”

Visitors to the museum will be familiar with many of the paintings through illustrations, but there are masterpieces that have not been seen very often. One of the paintings, “Young Valedictorian,” has never been exhibited or published before, Laurence Cutler said.

“It’s a secret Rockwell,” he said. “Judy convinced the collector to lend it to us.”

The girl stands in light and the work originally was conceived as a General Electric ad for light bulbs. The original owner of the 1928 painting used to work for the company and hired Rockwell to do GE ads, Judy Cutler said.

“It’s amazing the amount of work he put into this painting that was not used,” she said. Rockwell gave the man the painting, she said.

“People have seen the paintings, but they don’t know the



Norman Rockwell works hanging at the museum are, from left, Christmas – Knight Looking in Stained Glass Window,’ ‘Volunteer Fireman’ and ‘Boy Graduate.’

### TO GO

**What:** ‘Norman Rockwell: American Imagist.’

**Where:** National Museum of American Illustration, Vernon Court, 492 Bellevue Ave., Newport.

**When:** Today through Aug. 31, Saturdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sundays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Guided tours take place Fridays at 2 p.m. No reservations required.

**Admission:** Adults, \$18; seniors, military and ages 60 and older, \$16; groups of 10 or more, \$15; students, \$12; and children ages 5-12, \$8.

**More info:** [www.americanillustration.org](http://www.americanillustration.org) or call 851-8949.

story behind the paintings or how much work went into them,” she said.

Rockwell could paint like the old masters, and the Cutlers show “The Runaway” to make the point. The 1922 painting shows a clown trying to cheer up a young boy who ran away from home to join the circus, and apparently found out it was not the adventure he thought it would be.

“It shows the breadth of his skill and experience,” Laurence Cutler said. “The work was

inspired by Rembrandt’s work.”

An ad for art supplies at the time shows a photo of Rockwell in his studio with a Rembrandt print on the wall.

One of Rockwell’s iconic paintings from 1964, “The Problem We All Live With,” shows a young black girl, Ruby Bridges, being escorted into school by four federal marshals, two in front of her and two in back. A thrown tomato has splattered on the wall behind her. Visitors to the exhibit can view studies that led to the composition of the painting.

The paintings and studies are displayed throughout the museum on two floors, but many are in a ground-floor Loggia gallery that took two years to restore. The 1898 Tiffany murals on the upper walls and ceiling were restored by staff from the Winterthur Museum in Delaware, the University of Delaware and the Sorbonne in Paris, Laurence Cutler said. The public will be able to view the restoration for the first time.

On Friday, a visitor looked at the murals and said, “It’s a miracle.” The man had visited the museum about three years ago and viewed the murals before the restoration began, he said.

The Rockwell exhibit will be on display in Newport until Aug. 31.

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