Norman Rockwell Museum wins the National Humanities Medal. Story on page 7.
FROM THE DIRECTOR

When I began working at Norman Rockwell Museum in 1977 during college, the small house museum then known as the Old Corner House was only eight years old. I did not realize at that time how recently the Museum had sprung into being, the community effort of civic-minded Stockbridge citizens, Norman and Molly Rockwell among them, to save an old home on Main Street. That same year, Norman Rockwell received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, for his vivid and affectionate portraits of America. He died a year later in 1978, and the nation mourned his passing.

Last November, Norman Rockwell Museum received the National Humanities Medal, the nation's highest recognition for significant scholarship in the humanities. There was a satisfying symmetry between the two medals—one given to America's illustrator, the other given to the museum that is, in the words of the presidential citation that accompanied the medal, "the careful curator of the archives, illustrations, and benevolent spirit Norman Rockwell bequeathed to the nation."

The Museum's award was utterly unexpected and even, in a sense, improbable. Norman Rockwell Museum is the first museum to receive the medal, which is most often bestowed on individuals. And it is not all that many years ago that Norman Rockwell's art would have been the least likely candidate for scholarly recognition. Yet, in fact, Norman Rockwell Museum has always been rooted in scholarship; one of our first scholarly projects was publishing the two-volume *catalogue raisonné* of Rockwell's work in 1986.

I must confess to not knowing much about Rockwell when I first joined the Museum. As an art history student in college, my first introduction to his work was veiled with snobbery about his standing as an artist. The condescending academic view did not jibe with what I witnessed during my early Old Corner House months when thousands of visitors lined up around the historic home, waiting for as long as an hour to see Rockwell's paintings. Once in the welcoming rooms that held his artwork, people were visibly moved by their experience with these powerful images. I was simultaneously struck by the joy these paintings brought to people and the lack of regard the art world accorded to this distinguished artist's work. The contrast galvanized me.

Much has transpired since then. Providing for the care of the collection is at the core of the Museum's stewardship role, and as the Museum outgrew the Old Corner House, plans were made to build a new home for the collection with proper climate control and collections storage. The new Museum opened in 1993. As essential and beautiful as it was, board and staff understood that a museum is much more than its buildings. During this year, our 40th anniversary, we celebrate our core mission of bringing joy and meaning to people across the nation and world—and in our own backyard—through our collections stewardship, exhibitions, programs, scholarship, and warm, engaging visitor experience. Please join us!

Laurie Norton Moffatt
Director/CEO
How did you get started at Norman Rockwell Museum?
I was hired to help former director David Wood get organized, which was quite a feat! The creation of the Definitive Catalogue was already underway, and Laurie Norton Moffatt [then Museum curator] was busy finalizing all of her entries. One of the things that was really great about my early work with the Museum was that David and Laurie made themselves very accessible to help me learn everything there was to know about the Museum—it was a true team.

The Museum was located in the Old Corner House then. What was it like?
Fall was insane! There were wall-to-wall people in the shop and the holding area, where people would come in, pay admission, and need to wait until a group of 25 left. We had a guard stationed downstairs and a guide upstairs to regulate the traffic flow, so that people could get past each other in the narrow hallways.
In addition to seeing Rockwell’s art on the walls, how did you begin learning about his work?

Once the DEFCAT [Definitive Catalogue] material came back from the printers, Laurie asked me to file it. I spent my time filing the photographs of the artwork back with the documentation. It meant looking at all of the 4,000 images that were in the catalogue. That was a great experience for me because I got a really good understanding of Rockwell’s work.

The Museum eventually made plans to relocate to the Linwood property, and Rockwell’s studio was brought over first. What are your recollections of that?

That was really exciting for us! To see it being transported through town, cut in half on two flat-bed trailers. It was early March and there was a lot of snow on the ground, but it was a warm day, which made it harder because the wheels kept getting stuck. They had to keep putting boards under the wheels of the trailer to be able to move it.

It was around that time that you took on formal curatorial responsibilities.

Shortly after the studio contents were packed and moved, Laurie and David decided to create a position for a curatorial assistant, and they offered it to me.

What are some of the highlights of the curatorial work you’ve done since then?

It was my idea to [situate] Rockwell in his three locations [New Rochelle, Vermont, and Stockbridge]. I thought it would help to see the work in terms of these three contexts, to consider what influence they had on his work and on him, and see the evolution of his painting. [Ed. note—The Museum’s core Rockwell galleries are arranged in this way.]

Exhibitions done through the archives were very gratifying—and illuminating to the public. The *In Rockwell We Trust* exhibit was really fun. We had so much archival material to draw on. I was trying to communicate that Rockwell didn’t just recently become a celebrity. Even as a young illustrator he was so well-known that he was asked to do endorsements for national companies. It wasn’t as much a financial struggle for him as it is for many artists and illustrators. He was probably struggling during the *Boys’ Life* years, when he was honing his technical skills, and that was good for him because he really grew artistically during that period. By the time he was in his twenties, he was very accomplished and made a name for himself.
You've been involved with the Norman Rockwell Archives for over 20 years. How would you characterize the collection? The collection is a huge resource: the reference photos, correspondence, financial documentation.

Rockwell kept so much. Do you think he had the foresight to know his records would be valued by scholars? I don't know if he had any sense of how interesting or important his records are. He kept everything as far as I can tell. Ironically, not all of his artwork—he would often give away or sell his work. When he became concerned about his studio in 1976, I'm not sure whether he was thinking of the building he so lovingly designed and furnished, his mementos from traveling, or the things buried in file cabinets. Was he thinking about how these would inform [future] understanding of his work?

How does the archival collection inform you? It tells you what other illustrators he was friends with, whose opinion he considered. Certainly the fan mail he kept is an indication of how important public opinion was for him.

Have there been any discoveries in the archives that have surprised you? I'm always having those little wow moments. They are not huge epiphanies, just little fascinating things—the collection is full of them. One thing I discovered recently was that he was a member of the NAACP before he met and married Molly. So [his progressivism] wasn't just her influence on him.

It's a common perception that Rockwell idealized things, but do you think there was a "truth" in his work? I think so. I think a lot of his pictures do accurately capture what American life felt like for a lot of people. There are good times—those moments depicted in his paintings—you can't deny that.

Since Rockwell had something of a reputation for creating "rose-colored" images, why do you think Look pursued him in the 1960s to create images that reflected the Civil Rights movement? Bear in mind that Rockwell chose what he was going to paint. It wasn't as if [the Look editors] said, 'We want you to depict Civil Rights.' Look went after Rockwell because they knew he was disenchanted with the Post and they could get him. Maybe Rockwell had a certain level of frustration from not being able to do that kind of work for all those years because of the Post's editorial policies—he'd not been allowed to be political.

Is there anything connected with Rockwell and the archives you wish you knew more about? It would be so wonderful to see him actually applying paint. There might be a few newsreels where you see him putting a dab or two on a canvas, but how fascinating would it be to see the way he developed a painting and his method of glazing in between to save the work he was sure of, and then play on top of that and be able to remove [what] he didn't like?
Rockwell threw himself into so many of his paintings. If he hadn't had deadlines a lot of the paintings would probably be different today! He would have continued to work on and change things. I mean, look at the portrait of the woman in *Art Critic*—we have studies he created for about 10 different faces until he decided on the actual face!

Do you have a favorite Rockwell painting?
I think *Art Critic* is one of my favorite paintings because you see so many of his artistic influences. I also love *Checkers*. I know a painting is my favorite when I don't want to lend it!

The Museum was able to purchase the original *Art Critic* painting in 1998. Does it surprise you to see how much Rockwell works are going for now on the auction block? It's amazing! We have documentation in the archives where we turned down paintings once offered to us in the $100,000 range that are now selling in the millions! But everything is relative—we just didn't have enough money back then.

How has the Museum contributed to the awareness and demand for Rockwell by collectors and the public?
The traveling shows did what they were intended to do—raised awareness and interest. [The Museum has] established a very good reputation; I am always getting feedback to that effect. It's hard to imagine that people come from so far afield—we're hard to get to! A lot has to do with the ambience that's created by our staff and our willingness to accommodate people.

How do you think Rockwell would feel about what the Museum has become?
I think he'd be thrilled with it. He wanted the collection to be available for educational programs; he wanted the studio to be available. I think his idea was to inspire art and illustration as a career.

Thirty years after Rockwell's death, what's the state of illustration as a field?
There has been a renaissance of great illustration in this country; there are so many people doing such wonderful work, especially children's book illustration. Artists are doing illustration in order to make a living, and the schools are creating such great illustrators.

What have you enjoyed most about your work in the archives?
In general, I would say that I have loved trying to impose an organization on the archives—trying to make it more accessible. We've done a lot, but there's still much more to do, especially now with the capacity to digitize and associate the material with other documents. This is going to be an amazingly organized and accessible collection—very, very rich.

Final question: if you could ask Norman Rockwell one thing, what would it be?
There wouldn't be just one thing—there would be tons of things!

**Jeremy Clowe** is Norman Rockwell Museum's communications assistant.
And the Winner Is...
America’s Highest Humanities Honor Bestowed on Norman Rockwell Museum

It was a day for rejoicing. On November 17, Laurie Norton Moffatt, Director/CEO, stepped up onto a platform at the White House and accepted the National Humanities Medal on behalf of Norman Rockwell Museum. President George W. Bush bestowed the honor during a special White House ceremony for arts and humanities medal winners. Norton Moffatt was joined at the ceremony by her daughter, Leigh Moffatt, and colleagues Stephanie Haboush Plunkett, Chief Curator and Deputy Director; Daniel M. Cain, President of the Board of Trustees; and Lila Berle, President Emeritus.

The National Humanities Medal is America’s highest honor in the field. It recognizes extraordinary work by individuals and, less commonly, institutions in deepening the nation’s understanding of the humanities. Remarkably, Norman Rockwell Museum is the first museum to receive the medal in the award’s 11-year history. Every year, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts each select up to 12 recipients of arts and humanities medals nationwide, which are presented jointly by the president on behalf of all citizens. Norman Rockwell Museum's selection as a humanities medal winner is especially significant. The honor reflects both the deeply humanitarian nature of Norman Rockwell's work, as well as the Museum's role in preserving and interpreting not just the art itself, but the ideals and history it expresses.

Fittingly, the medallion presented to Norman Rockwell Museum was designed by illustrator and former medal winner David Macaulay—one of over 450 contemporary illustrators whose work has been exhibited by the Museum. The medal, together with a beautiful hand-calligraphied citation, is currently on view in the Four Freedoms gallery at the Museum. We invite you to visit and share in the honor!

Norman Rockwell’s work is an essential part of American art and the 20th-century American experience, and the Museum’s work to preserve the legacy of this iconic American artist is truly deserving of this honor.

—Bruce Cole, Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

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Norman Rockwell Museum is being recognized for honoring and studying the life, work, and ideals of an icon of American art. The Museum has been the careful curator of the archives, illustrations, and benevolent spirit bequeathed to the nation by Norman Rockwell.

—Citation by President George W. Bush
A Postscript to the Election
Norman Rockwell, painter for all the people

Norman Rockwell, patron saint of Main Street? This is the Norman Rockwell that has captured the popular imagination, especially in the 30 years since his passing. His name is routinely invoked as shorthand for small-town, plain-spoken, “just folks” America.

Norman Rockwell’s Main Streeter reputation was particularly prevalent during last fall’s election season. Rockwell’s name cropped up everywhere—from the Op-Ed pages of the New York Times to the myriad blogs that shape our political culture.

And while this image of Rockwell isn’t inaccurate, it’s incomplete. For 40 years, Norman Rockwell Museum has enticed viewers to look beyond the surface folksiness ascribed to Rockwell and consider the full scope of his extraordinary oeuvre—4,000 works spanning 65 years—and his extraordinary sensibility.

Norman Rockwell is the artist who painted Golden Rule, a vision of diversity and tolerance across the human family; Peace Corps, a tribute to John F. Kennedy’s international service program; The Problem We All Live With, a depiction of the ugliness of racism and the strength of those who defy it; and Murder in Mississippi, a haunting portrayal of murdered Civil Rights workers.

His less overtly charged works depict quieter human dramas: the kitchen-table bickering between husband and wife over politics; the defiant schoolgirl outside the principal’s office sporting a black eye; the coming together of family around the holidays; the return of a soldier to his doting mother; the yearning of a girl to grow up; the bond between a police officer and his young charge, a would-be runaway. “I was showing the America I knew and observed to others who might not have noticed,” Rockwell explained.

In 1941, Rockwell painted his iconic Four Freedoms, inspired by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s January address to Congress. The next year, Four Freedoms went on a cross-country tour and helped raise $133 million in war bonds and stamps. The paintings brilliantly distilled each of Roosevelt’s lofty ideals into specific, recognizable human experiences. Freedom of Speech, for example, depicts a man standing up to speak his mind at a town meeting. His meticulously rendered clothing, face, and, hands mark him as a working man, in contrast to those seated around him. His views, we surmise, may represent the minority opinion. Yet still he speaks, and is listened to. The image is signature Rockwell, in both its iconographic power and its embrace of decency.

Norman Rockwell was an illustrator, a painter of narratives. He dwells in the particular, unerringly finding the eternal in the fleeting. This is not accomplished through simplicity, but rather through complexity deftly handled. (“Every single object shown in the picture should contribute directly to the central theme,” he noted.) His skill as a painter is to communicate a theme instantly, as well as reward
the longer look of many minutes or a lifetime. Like all virtuosos, he made it look simple—and that may be why we sometimes think it, and he, was.

In fact, Rockwell was a complex and worldly man. Born in New York City, he led a bi-coastal life. He traveled frequently from New England, where he resided most of his adult life, to California, the home state of his second wife. He was as comfortable in Hollywood as he was in Washington, D.C. He painted portraits of six U.S. presidents, and a wide range of national and international dignitaries, including Egyptian president Nasser, British philosopher Bertrand Russell, and Josip Tito of Yugoslavia. He documented the Soviet education system and the activities of the Peace Corps in countries such as Ethiopia, India, and Columbia. In 1955, Rockwell traveled around the globe for Pan Am airlines to promote leisure air travel, making numerous stops and hundreds of sketches. Rockwell visited dozens of countries in his lifetime; he was a true citizen of the world.

Norman Rockwell's art and spirit endures because he speaks to all of us—Main Streeters and Wall Streeters, East Coasters and West Coasters, Heartlanders and Cosmopolitans. His vision is gentle, wry, compassionate. Beneath our political divisions and economic turmoil, he sees our common humanity—and helps open our eyes to it, too.
Norman Rockwell Museum Turns 40
A look back, a look forward

In 1969, Norman Rockwell Museum opened its doors in the Old Corner House. Two years earlier, a group of concerned citizens, including Norman and Molly Rockwell, had banded together to save the historic building on Stockbridge's Main Street. Norman Rockwell had generously put a few of his original paintings on view to draw visitors...and visitors came, first in a trickle, then in a torrent. Several years later, Norman Rockwell and his estate put artwork and other materials in trust to the new museum, as well as the artist's studio and its contents. In 1993, Norman Rockwell Museum opened with great fanfare in its new home: a New England Town Hall-style building designed by Robert A.M. Stern, located on 36 beautiful acres graced by Rockwell's transplanted and restored studio. For 15 years, we have welcomed millions of visitors from around the nation and world to our campus, and taken our collections on the road to share with millions more.

In 2009, the Museum celebrates its 40th anniversary year! We invite all our members and friends from near and far to join us in honoring the artistic and cultural legacy of Norman Rockwell. Highlights of the year are featured on the facing page. We enter our 40th year cherishing our role in preserving and sharing Norman Rockwell's art and spirit, and embracing our commitment to his beloved field—American illustration art. Since our founding, the Museum has presented the art of more than 450 illustrators working in a wide array of fields: political illustration, magazine cover and editorial illustration, graphic novels, children's book illustration, and cartooning. As we move into the next 40 years, we will continue to put Norman Rockwell and the art of illustration into context—keeping our work fresh, always relevant, and sometimes surprising. Beyond the art on our walls and in our collections, the Internet and related technologies give us new platforms for engaging audiences anytime, anywhere.

Come Celebrate with Us!
Highlights of our 40th anniversary year

**february**

3 Norman Rockwell’s Birthday & 40th Anniversary Preview
Come celebrate Norman Rockwell’s 115th birthday with cake and festivities, followed by a preview of our 40th anniversary—including announcements about exciting new initiatives.

7 Artists in Their Studios opens
Get a glimpse into the work spaces of more than 75 American artists from the 19th century to today. On view through May 25.

**may**

2 A Day in the Life: Norman Rockwell’s Studio opens
The first ever precise recreation of Rockwell’s Stockbridge studio. This exciting reinstallation turns back the clock to 1960, when Rockwell was working on Golden Rule.

3 Community Day
Friends from the Berkshires and beyond are invited to a day of festivities.

**july**

4 American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell opens
Our major Rockwell retrospective comes home to Stockbridge for the summer before returning to its nationwide tour. On view through September 7.

**october**

9 Stone’s Throw: Peter Rockwell, Sculptor opens
Stroll our grounds and galleries and enjoy the work of noted sculptor and art historian Peter Rockwell, youngest son of Norman Rockwell.

**november**

7 Norman Rockwell: Behind the Camera opens
A frame-by-frame look at the composition of Rockwell’s paintings, through the photographs the artist himself took. On view through May 24, 2010.

16 Public launch of ProjectNORMAN
Digital archive of photographs, artwork, and reference materials goes online!
Powerful Posters

Museum members and friends marveled over the vibrant colors and stirring imagery of 90-year-old posters during the opening of our late fall/winter show, Over the Top: American Posters from World War I. Attendees learned about the role these posters played in raising funds for the war effort from James Meehan of Meehan Military Posters, and were regaled with the fascinating story of how the posters were preserved and restored from the collection’s owner, Thomas Leffingwell Pulling. Mr. Pulling is the grandson of the original owner, the Honorable R.C. Leffingwell, who, as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury and head of the War Loan Organization, was charged with devising a strategy for underwriting the war. The posters, created by leading illustrators of the day and used to spur Americans’ participation in the war bond and stamp programs, were given to R.C. Leffingwell by Treasury staff in gratitude for his work. An extraordinary collection, and a memorable evening!

Party Animals

Illustrator Steve Brodner was the man of the hour during the opening of the Museum’s summer/fall show, Raw Nerve! The Political Art of Steve Brodner. One of America’s most important art journalists, Brodner celebrated with a crowd of nearly 300, including New York Times Book Review contributor Steve Heller, illustrators Barry Blitt and Thomas Woodruff, and filmmaker Gail Levin, who worked with the artist on a series of videos for the New Yorker about the 2008 presidential campaign. Museum members and friends enjoyed browsing over 100 original works, and learning about Brodner’s technique through interactive touch screens with links to Brodner’s daily art blog. Attendees also got in line to choose their favorite political candidate in an old-fashioned voting booth, and contrast Brodner’s work with a series of political portraits created by Norman Rockwell. In the midst of a long primary season during an historic election, the party was in full swing!
Get into the Zone!

Next time you visit the Museum, venture into our transformed creative center, located on the building's lower level. Our new Art Zone is open daily, and invites the young and young-at-heart to get in touch with their “inner Rockwell” and create artwork of their own. Art materials, books, prints, project ideas, and a creative atmosphere provide the tools and inspiration for creative expression. On Sunday afternoons from 1 to 4 p.m., join us in the Art Zone for drop-in family art-making. Over the recent school holidays, the Museum offered special holiday art-making workshops for families looking for fun, imaginative activities to enjoy together.

Free Tuesdays

This winter, the Museum is welcoming all our friends in the Berkshires and beyond through our doors with free admission every Tuesday. We invite you to come in from the cold and warm your spirit with Norman Rockwell’s images of family, community, and everyday experience. Special programs for children and adults are offered on select Tuesdays; check your new Programs & Events guide (mailed in January) for details. And remember, Museum members are free every day! Free Tuesdays also complements our ongoing Kids Free Every Day program, a gift to families from Country Curtains, Blantyre, and The Red Lion Inn.

Green Savings

In a challenging economy, going green means saving green...dollars, that is. The Museum already had a 10-plus year commitment to recycling when Laurie Norton Moffatt, Director/CEO, charged Museum staff with taking that commitment to a new level. Out of that charge, our very own Green Team was born. This cross-departmental team, now almost a year old, has taken numerous money-saving actions that save the environment, too. We have significantly reduced our use of copy paper and toner cartridges, replaced some paper mailings in favor of electronic communications, and recently installed energy-saving bulbs in all staff offices and meeting spaces. Our staff meetings now include a “Green Minute” with helpful tips and updates. Go, Green Team!
Can’t Find Your Favorite Post Cover?

Now you can! Our new, complete line of giclee prints features every *Saturday Evening Post* cover Rockwell ever painted. Giclees are beautiful, museum-quality reproductions that offer superior color and detail. Also available for the first time are giclee prints of selected *Post* studies, advertisements, and story illustrations. Warm your heart and your home!

Please visit www.nrm.org to shop the full line of prints.

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