



The Art Innovators

Creators and inspirators of modern design



Norman Rockwell

Artist of illustration and innovation

Born in New York City in 1894, Norman Rockwell always wanted to be an artist. At age 14, Rockwell enrolled in art classes at The New York School of Art (formerly The Chase School of Art). Two years later, in 1910, he left high school to study art at The National Academy of Design. He soon transferred to The Art Students League, where he studied with Thomas Fogarty and George Bridgman. Fogarty's instruction in illustration prepared Rockwell for his first commercial commissions. From Bridgman, Rockwell learned the technical skills on which he relied throughout his long career.

Rockwell found success early. He painted his first commission of four Christmas cards before his sixteenth birthday. While still in his teens, he was hired as art director of Boys' Life, the official publication of the Boy Scouts of America, and began a successful freelance career illustrating a variety of young people's publications.

At age 21, Rockwell's family moved to New Rochelle, New York, a community whose residents included such famous illustrators as J.C. and Frank Leyendecker and Howard Chandler Christy. There, Rockwell set up a studio with the cartoonist Clyde Forsythe and produced work for such magazines as Life, Literary Digest, and Country Gentleman. In 1916, the 22-year-old Rockwell painted his first cover for The Saturday Evening Post, the magazine con-

sidered by Rockwell to be the "greatest show window in America." Over the next 47 years, another 321 Rockwell covers would appear on the cover of the Post. Also in 1916, Rockwell married Irene O'Connor; they divorced in 1930.

The 1930s and 1940s are generally considered to be the most fruitful decades of Rockwell's career. In 1930 he married Mary Barstow, a schoolteacher, and the couple had three sons, Jarvis, Thomas, and Peter. The family moved to Arlington, Vermont, in 1939, and Rockwell's work began to reflect small-town American life.

In 1943, inspired by President Franklin Roosevelt's address to Congress, Rockwell painted the Four Freedoms paintings. They were repro-

duced in four consecutive issues of The Saturday Evening Post with essays by contemporary writers. Rockwell's interpretations of Freedom of Speech, Freedom to Worship, Freedom from Want, and Freedom from Fear proved to be enormously popular. The works toured the United States in an exhibition that was jointly sponsored by the Post and the U.S. Treasury Department and, through the sale of war bonds, raised more than \$130 million for the war effort.

Although the Four Freedoms series was a great success, 1943 also brought Rockwell an enormous loss. A fire destroyed his Arlington studio as well as numerous paintings and his collection of historical costumes and props.

In 1953, the Rockwell family moved from Arlington, Vermont, to Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Six years later, Mary Barstow Rockwell died unexpectedly. In collaboration with his son Thomas, Rockwell published his autobiography, *My Adventures as an Illustrator*, in 1960. The Saturday Evening Post carried excerpts from the best-selling book in eight consecutive issues, with Rockwell's Triple Self-Portrait on the cover of the first.

In 1961, Rockwell married Molly Punderson, a retired teacher. Two years later, he ended his 47-year association with The Saturday Evening Post and began to work for Look magazine. During his 10-year association with Look, Rockwell painted pictures illustrating some of his deepest concerns and interests, including civil rights,

America's war on poverty, and the exploration of space.

In 1973, Rockwell established a trust to preserve his artistic legacy by placing his works in the custodianship of the Old Corner House Stockbridge Historical Society, later to become Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge. The trust now forms the core of the Museum's permanent collections. In 1976, in failing health, Rockwell became concerned about the future of his studio. He arranged to have his studio and its contents added to the trust. In 1977, Rockwell received the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.





Real Life Dreams

Creating an idealistic America

Cheerful, tolerant, sympathetic to all (or nearly all) of society, starting early, working late every day until his death in the saddle, Rockwell himself seems to exemplify the American virtues he portrays. No wonder the country loves him, a cynic might argue; no wonder Steven Spielberg and George Lucas collect him. He is all about making the dream look real, selling the best possible version of America back to America. But Rockwell's is not an art of realism. His images announce themselves as artifice straightaway, and not just because they are self-evidently painted.

Almost every image takes the form of a vignette, a moment floating free of time and place, a self-contained truth. And this is emphasised, over and over again, by graphic abstractions – a silver circle, a free-floating scarlet disc, a black frame or a pure white background against which the whiplash silhouettes appear indelibly crisp.

Rockwell is famed, even among detractors, for his social observation. But what he saw is never the same as what he made of it. For one thing, all facial expressions are held at their most extreme – squinting and sighing and beaming and frowning. For another, his figures are not quite of this world, being more classically proportioned than anything in life; they are people from (and of) art.

It seems to me that Rockwell had two different talents. As an illustrator, he was second to none. Look at his April Fool cover with its 60 different jokes, including a tiny – haloed – Mona Lisa tucked in one corner. Cinema tickets, pub signs, photographs, playing cards, posters, he could pastiche and condense any form of graphic art, what's more, within his own.

But as a painter, his ideas are more purely expressed. In a canvas like Charwomen in Theater, in which two cleaners pore over the programme in the dead yellow gloom of the empty auditorium, the raked light and solid shadow between which they seem to slip is as poignant as anything in Edward Hopper.

Rockwell is typically attacked for his lack of a downside. Why aren't there more segregated blacks or persecuted communists in his art? Because the Post did not allow it. He parted company with the magazine in the 60s when it sank into the celebrity mire, longing instead to paint "pictures of civil rights, astronauts, poverty programmes..." They are his least successful works of art.

For Rockwell's gift is for the small but resonant truth. Look at After the Party, where the elderly woman, bathed in kindly lamplight, listens to the young girl's avid account of her evening. Who hasn't felt that need to confide, to tell the story in order to make it real? Montaigne writes of it; Rockwell depicts it. Why is the latter to be despised?

Without thinking too much about it in specific terms, I was showing the America I knew and observed to others who might not have noticed.
—Norman Rockwell



Andy Warhol

Revolutionary art and illustration

Andy Warhol was born Andrew Warhola on August 6, 1928, in a two-room row house apartment at 73 Orr Street in Pittsburgh. His parents, Carpatho-Rusyn immigrants Andrej and Julia Warhola, had three sons. Andy was their youngest.

Devout Byzantine Catholics, the family attended mass regularly and observed the traditions of their Eastern European heritage. Warhol's father, a laborer, moved his family to a brick home on Dawson Street in 1934. Warhol attended the nearby Holmes School and took free art classes at Carnegie Institute (now The Carnegie Muse-

um of Art). In addition to drawing, Hollywood movies enraptured Andy and he frequented the local cinema. When he was about nine years old, he received his first camera. Andy enjoyed taking pictures, and he developed them himself in his basement.

Andrej Warhola died in 1942, the same year that Andy entered Schenley High School. Recognizing his son's talent, Andrej had saved money to pay for his college education. Warhol attended Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) from 1945 to 1949. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Pictorial Design with the goal of becoming a commercial illustrator. During these years he worked in the display department at Horne's department store.



Creativity Through the Decades

Warhol from the 1950s to the 1980s

Soon after graduating, Warhol moved to New York City to pursue a career as a commercial artist. His work debuted in Glamour magazine in September 1949. Warhol became one of the most successful illustrators of the 1950s, winning numerous awards. He had a unique, whimsical style of drawing that belied its frequent sources: traced photographs and imagery. At times Warhol employed the delightfully quirky handwriting of his mother, who was always credited as “Andy Warhol’s Mother,” Julia Warhola left Pittsburgh in 1952 and lived with her son for almost 20 years before her death in Pittsburgh in 1972.

Warhol rewarded himself for his hard work by taking a round-the-world vacation with his friend Charles Lisanby from June 16 to August 12, 1956. They toured Hawaii and many countries in Asia and Europe. It was Warhol’s first trip abroad and a significant event in his life. In the late 1950s, Warhol began to devote more energy to painting. He made his first Pop paintings, which he based on comics and ads, in 1961. The following year marked the beginning of Warhol’s celebrity. He debuted his famous Campbell’s Soup Can series, which caused a sensation in the art world. Shortly thereafter he began a large sequence of movie star portraits,

including Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, and Elizabeth Taylor. Warhol also started his series of “death and disaster” paintings at that time. Between 1963 and 1968 Warhol worked with his Superstar performers and various other people to create hundreds of films. These films were scripted and improvised, ranging from conceptual experiments and simple narratives to short portraits and sexploitation features. His works include *Empire* (1964), *The Chelsea Girls* (1966), and the *Screen Tests* (1964-66). Warhol’s first exhibition of sculptures was held in 1964. It included hundreds of replicas of large supermarket product boxes, including Brillo Boxes and Heinz Boxes. For this occasion, he premiered his new studio, painted silver and known as “The Factory”. It quickly became “the” place to be in New York; parties held there

were mentioned in gossip columns throughout the country. Warhol held court at Max’s Kansas City, a nightclub that was a popular hangout among artists and celebrities. By the mid-1960s he was a frequent presence in magazines and the media.

Warhol expanded into the realm of performance art with a traveling multimedia show called *The Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, which featured *The Velvet Underground*, a rock band. In 1966 Warhol exhibited *Cow Wallpaper* and *Silver Clouds* at the Leo Castelli Gallery.

Warhol self-published a large series of artists’ books in the 1950s, but the first one to be mass-produced was Andy Warhol’s *Index (Book)*, published in 1967. Two years later he co-founded *Interview*, a magazine devoted to film, fashion, and popular culture. *Interview* is

still in circulation today. His later books include *THE Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (1975), *Exposures* (1979), *POPism* (1980), and *America* (1985). Most of his books were based on transcribed conversations.

In 1974, Warhol started a series of *Time Capsules*: cardboard boxes that he filled with the materials of his everyday life, including mail, photos, art, clothing, collectibles, etc. The artist produced over 600 of them and they are now an archival goldmine of his life and times. Throughout the 1970s Warhol frequently socialized with celebrities such as Jackie Kennedy Onassis and Truman Capote, both of whom had been important early subjects in his art. He started to receive dozens—and soon hundreds—of commissions for painted portraits from



wealthy socialites, musicians and film stars. Celebrity portraits developed into a significant aspect of his career and a main source of income. He was a regular partygoer at Studio 54, the famous New York disco, along with celebrities such as fashion designer Halston, entertainer Liza Minnelli, and Bianca Jagger. In 1984, Warhol collaborated with the young artists Jean-Michel Basquiat, Francesco Clemente, and Keith Haring. Warhol returned to painting with a brush for these artworks, briefly abandoning the silkscreen method he had used exclusively since 1962. In the mid-1980s his television shows, *Andy Warhol's T.V.* and *Andy Warhol's Fifteen Minutes* were broadcast on New York cable television and nationally on MTV. He created work for *Saturday Night Live*, appeared in an episode

of *The Love Boat* and produced music videos for rock bands such as The Cars. Warhol also signed with a few modeling agencies, appearing in fashion shows and numerous print and television ads. Warhol was a prolific artist, producing numerous works through the 1970s and 1980s. His paintings, prints, photographs, and drawings from this period include: *Mao*, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, *Skulls*, *Hammer and Sickles*, *Shadows*, *Guns*, *Knives*, *Crosses*, *Dollar Signs*, *Zeitgeist*, and *Camouflage*. Warhol's final two exhibitions were his series of *Last Supper* paintings, shown in Milan and his *Sewn Photos* (multiple prints of identical photos sewn together in a grid), exhibited in New York. Both shows opened in January 1987, one month before his death.



Paul Rand

Graphic design at its best

Paul Rand was one of the foremost American graphic designers of the 20th century and helped establish the so-called Swiss Style of design in the United States. Trained in the 1930s at Pratt Institute, Parsons School of Design, and the Art Students League, he went on to become an educator himself at Cooper Union, Pratt, and later at Yale University, where he taught graphic design in the graduate program from 1956 to 1969. He returned to Yale in 1974. Rand was a versatile designer whose career can be divided into three periods. From 1937–1941, he worked in media promotion and book

design; from 1941–1954, he focused more on advertising design; and from 1954 on, he began to concentrate on corporate identity programs, producing some of the most iconic logos and identity marks of the modern age including logos for IBM, Westinghouse, UPS, and ABC television.

His views on the role of the designer in commercial advertising were emphatic: “The sincere artist needs not only the moral support that his belief in his work as an aesthetic statement gives him, but also the support that an understanding of his general role in society can give him. It is this role that justifies his spending the client’s money and his risking other people’s jobs, and it entitles him to make mistakes. Both through his work and through the personal statement of his existence he adds something to the world:

he gives it new ways of feeling and of thinking, he opens doors to new experience, he provides new alternatives as solutions to old problems.” Excerpted from his article “Advertisement: Ad Vivum or Ad Hominem?” (Originally published in a special issue of *Daedalus: The Visual Arts Today*, edited by Gyorgy Kepes (Winter 1960).) The Paul Rand complete archive is located in the Department of Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. RIT owns a fine sample collection, primarily posters, that was given to RIT by Marion Rand in 2001.



Criticism

Innovation that breaks the rules

Despite the prestige graphic designers place on his first book, subsequent works, notably *From Lascaux to Brooklyn* (1996), earned Rand accusations of being “reactionary and hostile to new ideas about design.” Heller defends Rand’s later ideas, calling the designer “an enemy of mediocrity, a radical modernist” while Mark Favermann considers the period one of “a reactionary, angry old man.” Regardless of this dispute, Rand’s contribution to modern graphic design theory in total is widely considered intrinsic to the profession’s development.

Sources

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