

Images available upon request.

Denver Art Museum to Present the Power of Art and Propaganda in 2020's Norman Rockwell: Imagining Freedom

Exhibition to focus on depictions of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Four Freedom Ideals

DENVER—March 21, 2019—The Denver Art Museum (DAM) is proud to announce *Norman Rockwell: Imagining Freedom*, an exhibition focused on the artist's 1940s depictions of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Four Freedoms. Popularized by Rockwell's interpretation following President Roosevelt's 1941 speech, the freedoms include the Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want and Freedom from Fear. Organized and curated by the Norman Rockwell Museum and curated locally by Timothy Standing, Gates Family Foundation Curator at the Denver Art Museum, the exhibition will be on view from May 3, 2020 to Aug. 23, 2020, in the Anschutz Gallery and Martin & McCormick special exhibition galleries.

"The presentation of *Norman Rockwell: Imagining Freedom* is the most comprehensive traveling exhibition to date of creative interpretations of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Four Freedoms," said Christoph Heinrich, Frederick and Jan Mayer Director of the DAM. "We look forward to presenting works that will challenge our visitors to consider the concepts of the common good, civic engagement and civil discourse."

In the 1940s, Roosevelt's administration turned to the arts to help Americans understand the necessity of defending and protecting the Four Freedoms, which were not immediately embraced, but later came to be known as enduring ideals. Artists, writers, actors, designers and musicians were encouraged to take on the challenge of advancing the Four Freedoms and creating a compelling



narrative as the U.S. prepared to enter World War II and away from its policy of neutrality. Rockwell, a renowned illustrator, was among those who took on the challenge to visually communicate the notions of freedom in support of the war efforts. The results were depictions of everyday community and domestic life through universally beloved subjects. These works received much praise by the public after they ran in *The Saturday Evening Post* and were subsequently embraced by the U.S. government to

represent the nation's Four Freedoms to promote war bond efforts.

“Recent scholars have recognized that Norman Rockwell was much more than an illustrator,” said Standing. “His ability to create powerful imagery and appeal to mass audiences about notions of civil discourse helped a country come together and rally for the greater public good. This incredibly difficult task of bringing people together makes his work relevant today, and ensures his inclusion in the canon of important American artists.”

In addition to focusing on critical themes that made Rockwell stand out from his contemporaries, *Norman Rockwell: Imagining Freedom* also will present how the artist and his contemporary illustrators became important storytellers who advanced important civic ideas through their creative advertising and imagery—all garnered to promote and support war efforts. Widely circulated publications, such as *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Good Housekeeping* and *McCall's Magazine*, were essential to influencing the cultural beliefs and desires of the millions of individuals these publications reached each week.

The exhibition narrative also will showcase Rockwell's war-era artworks that reinforced the positive approach of bringing Americans together for the common good. Some of the artworks in the exhibition will focus on imagery of recruiting determined and capable women into the workforce, as well as portrayals of black and white Americans working side by side to push the critical message of unified industrial efforts, despite the challenging segregation and racial barriers that existed in the 1940s. This inclusive and unified imagery was used to comfort and remind Americans what they were fighting for during the war. Post-war artworks by Rockwell featured in the exhibition will focus on the challenging topics of civil rights, human rights and equality for all.

Rockwell's 1961 *Golden Rule*, which presents the idea of equality regardless of background, is a powerful image that will be on view in the exhibition. The artwork features people of different religions, races and ethnicities with the inscription “Do Unto Others as You Would Have Them Do Unto You.” His 1964 painting, *The Problem We All Live With*, which depicts 6-year-old Ruby Bridges walking to an all-white public school escorted by four deputies during desegregation, will also be on view. It is considered one of the most iconic images of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.



Illustrations and paintings by Rockwell's contemporaries, such as Alfred Charles Parker, J.C. Leyendecker, J. Howard Miller and Martha Sawyers, will add to the exhibition narrative, as well as demonstrate how they helped propel the Four Freedoms nationally and globally. Contemporary artworks and interactive displays will encourage visitors to reflect on what the Four Freedoms mean to them in today's political and cultural landscape.

Exhibition Organizers and Sponsors

Norman Rockwell: Imagining Freedom is organized by The Norman Rockwell Museum. Leadership support for the exhibition is provided by Jay Alix, The Alix Foundation and the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation. National Presenting Sponsor is The Travelers Companies, Inc. Major support provided by Anonymous, Michael Bakwin, Helen Bing, Elephant Rock Foundation, Ford Foundation, Heritage Auctions, Annie and Ned Lamont, National Endowment for the Arts, Lawrence and Marilyn Matteson, and Ted Slavin.

The presentation at the DAM is generously funded by the donors to the Annual Fund Leadership Campaign and the citizens who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). Promotional support is provided by *5280 Magazine* and CBS4.

Media sponsorship has been provided by Curtis Licensing, a division of *The Saturday Evening Post*, and by the Norman Rockwell Family Agency.

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About the Denver Art Museum

The Denver Art Museum is an educational, nonprofit resource that sparks creative thinking and expression through transformative experiences with art. Its holdings reflect the city and region—and provide invaluable ways for the community to learn about cultures from around the world. Metro citizens support the [Scientific and Cultural Facilities District](#) (SCFD), a unique funding source serving hundreds of metro Denver arts, culture and scientific organizations. For museum information, call 720-865-5000 or visit www.denverartmuseum.org.

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Image credit lines

Image 1: Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), *Freedom of Speech*, 1943. Oil on canvas, 45-3/4 x 35-1/2 in. Illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, February 20, 1943. Collection of Norman Rockwell Museum. ©SEPS: Curtis Licensing, Indianapolis, IN. All rights reserved. www.curtislicensing.com

Image 2: Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), *The Problem We All Live With*, 1963. Oil on canvas, 36 x 58 in. Illustration for *Look*, January 14, 1964. Collection of Norman Rockwell Museum.