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“Telling Stories: Norman Rockwell from the Collections of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg” Opens at the Smithsonian American Art Museum July 2, 2010

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is organizing the first major exhibition to explore the connections between Norman Rockwell’s iconic images of American life and the movies. Two of America’s best-known modern filmmakers—George Lucas and Steven Spielberg—recognized a kindred spirit in Rockwell and formed in-depth collections of his work. “Telling Stories: Norman Rockwell from the Collections of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg” will be on view in Washington, D.C., from July 2, 2010, through Jan. 2, 2011. The museum is the only venue for the exhibition.

“Norman Rockwell is an artist and a storyteller who captured universal truths about Americans that tell us a lot about who we are as a people,” said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. “Like Rockwell, both George Lucas and Steven Spielberg embrace the idea that ordinary people can become unlikely heroes. I am delighted that the Smithsonian American Art Museum is organizing the first exhibition to explore these new connections between Rockwell’s art and the movies.”

Rockwell was a masterful storyteller who could distill a narrative into a single moment, and his pictures tell stories about the adventure of growing up, of individuals rising up in the face of adversity, the glamour of Hollywood and the importance of tolerance in American life. His images contain rich character development, subtle scenic contexts and implied narratives that resemble movie-making strategies.

“Rockwell’s pictures highlight topical issues that emerged in movies, popular fiction and the news,” said Virginia M. Mecklenburg, senior curator and organizer of the exhibition. “This exhibition and its catalog offer new insights into why Rockwell chose to paint particular subjects with particular points of view and dramatically expands our understanding of Rockwell as an observant commentator on pressing issues of the day.”

The exhibition will showcase more than 50 major Rockwell paintings and drawings from these private collections that are rarely seen by the public. Excerpts from interviews in which Lucas and Spielberg talk about Rockwell and the works in their collections will be shown in the exhibition galleries. Booz Allen Hamilton, a global strategy and technology consulting firm, is supporting the exhibition.

“In Norman Rockwell’s art, we see ourselves, our families and our neighbors—the heart and spirit of America,” said Ralph W. Shrader, chairman and CEO of Booz Allen Hamilton. “We look forward to supporting the Smithsonian American Art Museum on this major project, including an exciting series of public programs.”

“Lucas, Spielberg and Rockwell perpetuate ideas about love of country, personal honor and the value of family in their work,” said Mecklenburg. “With humor and pathos, they have transformed everyday experiences into stories revealing the aspirations and values that have sustained Americans through good times and bad.”

Publication

An illustrated book written by Mecklenburg, with a contribution by Todd McCarthy, film critic for Variety, will accompany the exhibition.

Credit

“Telling Stories: Norman Rockwell from the Collections of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg” is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Booz Allen Hamilton has provided generous support as the corporate sponsor of the exhibition. The museum also gratefully acknowledges the contributions of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg.

About the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with approximately 41,500 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. Its National Historic Landmark building is located at Eighth and F streets N.W., above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Museum hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Follow the museum on Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, ArtBabble, iTunes and YouTube. Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Web site: americanart.si.edu.

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