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HOLIDAY WEEKEND

ART OF ILLUSTRATION



Jacqueline Marque | Staff photographer

Judy Goffman Cutler and Laurence S. Cutler are seen on Friday with panels from Maxwell Parrish's, 'A Florentine Fete' (1911), in the Rose Garden loggia of their National Museum of American Illustration in Newport.

Art form is no longer taken lightly, gains celebrity following

By Sean Flynn
Staff writer

NEWPORT — Fifty years ago, Judy Goffman Cutler recognized that American illustrators such as Norman Rockwell were true artists who were vastly undervalued, while other art dealers dismissed them as producers of prints for mass distribution mainly through magazines.

"I recognized they were very talented and that Rockwell in particular had studied the old masters," said Goffman Cutler, co-founder of the National Museum of American Illustration in Newport with her husband, Laurence S. Cutler.

'People should look at art for its intrinsic value, not its monetary value, but prices do get people's attention.'

JUDY GOFFMAN CUTLER
co-founder of the National Museum of American Illustration in Newport

Now, Goffman Cutler's early instincts are receiving more validation than ever.

Famous film producer George Lucas, creator of "Star Wars" and "Indiana Jones," recently announced a proposal to create a Cultural Arts Museum in San

Francisco that would prominently feature great American illustrators such as Rockwell, N.C. Wyeth, Maxfield Parrish, and J.C. Leyendecker. He plans to invest about \$1 billion in the proposal.

Goffman Cutler helped Lucas build his collection through her American Illustrators Gallery in New York City.

"I sold him a lot of paintings, 250 or more during the past 25 years," she said.

She also helped filmmaker Steven Spielberg build a collection of Rockwell's art. Lucas and Spielberg showed their combined Rockwell collection at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C., in 2010.

In a Washington Post story at the time, Lucas explained why Rockwell appealed to him.

"He was telling stories on issues I could relate to," he said. "I wanted to be an illustrator, but finally went into filmmaking."

He said he started collecting various illustrators soon after the 1973 film "American Graffiti" gave him enough money to invest in art.

Goffman Cutler recalled providing Lucas with American illustrators catalogs from her gallery in the 1970s, when he still had an office in Los Angeles. He began making purchases soon afterwards.

ILLUSTRATION A9



Jacqueline Marque | Staff photographer

The library at Judy Goffman Cutler and Laurence S. Cutler's National Museum of American Illustration in Newport displays the type of artwork that George Lucas hopes to bring into the spotlight in a Cultural Arts Museum in San Francisco's Presidio National Park. Artists such as Norman Rockwell, N.C. Wyeth, Maxfield Parrish, and J.C. Leyendecker, all featured prominently in the Cutler's Bellevue Avenue museum, would be in Lucas's museum. Many of the paintings in Lucas's collection were purchased from Goffman Cutler.

Illustration

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In the Lucas museum proposal, James Cuno, president and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust, expressed his support with a reference to the Cutlers' Newport museum.

"Such an institution could demonstrate the importance of illustration as an integral part of art history," he wrote. "It would take its place among well-established museums with similar missions, including the National Museum of American Illustration in Rhode Island."

Goffman Cutler said when she followed her future husband to the University of Pennsylvania, he gave her a book called "Mainstreams of Modern Art" by John E. Canaday. She was a member of the Class of 1963 and Cutler was a couple years ahead of her. They later married other people before getting back together in the 1980s.

"The book got me interested in art and I decided to minor in art history," she said. "In the late 1960s, I started collecting illustrators and became a dealer to fund my habit. I was a schoolteacher who got pregnant and had two kids, so I did not have a lot to invest."

"My first big purchase was \$40,000 for a Rockwell that recently sold for \$1 million," she said.

When she purchased Rockwell's "Homecoming Marine" in 1983 for \$250,000, it made

national news for its high price, she said. She went on to sell the painting to Ross Perot. Not long ago, the painting sold for \$10 million. The record price for a Rockwell work is now up to \$15 million.

After auctions at Sotheby's and Christie's this week in New York, art dealers came up to Goffman Cutler and said things to her like, "You were so smart, so early on."

"Finally, they realize this is important art," she said.

When she started in the field, other dealers used to laugh at her for hanging around at auctions until the end when the illustrators' works came up for sale. Now, the illustrators' works are the centerpieces of auctions, she said.

"Judy still says the masterworks of the illustrators are still undervalued," Cutler said. He pointed out that works of Jeff Koons, an artist known for his reproductions of banal objects, have sold for between \$25 million and \$30 million.

"People should look at art for its intrinsic value, not its monetary value, but prices do get people's attention," Goffman Cutler said.

In 1916, Rockwell received \$100 when he sold three of his paintings. Many times, he gave away his original paintings.

"If he could know that those paintings are now selling for millions, he would be turning over in his grave," Goffman Cutler said.

Rockwell lived from 1894

to 1978 and is best known for the cover illustrations he created for The Saturday Evening Post magazine for more than four decades.

In his proposal, Lucas quotes from a book the Cutlers wrote about Leyendecker who they called "the Prototypical American Imagist, a global standard-bearer for illustration."

Goffman Cutler recalled selling the Leyendecker work, "Football Players" from her American Illustrators Gallery to Lucas. She also sold him other "Golden Age Illustrators" such as Howard Pyle, J.W. Smith, Frank Schoonover and Howard Chandler Christy besides many Rockwell, Parrish and Leyendecker works.

Goffman Cutler said Lucas plans to spend \$250 million to \$350 million on his proposed museum building and create an immediate endowment of \$400 million for the museum. He pledged another \$400 million to the project from his estate when he dies.

Goffman Cutler welcomed the new attention the Lucas museum will bring to this field of art.

"Many early advocates of American illustration art were movie actors and directors," she said. "They were all early to recognize the parallels between American illustration and film in reflecting our culture and the human condition while telling a story within a particular aesthetic framework."

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