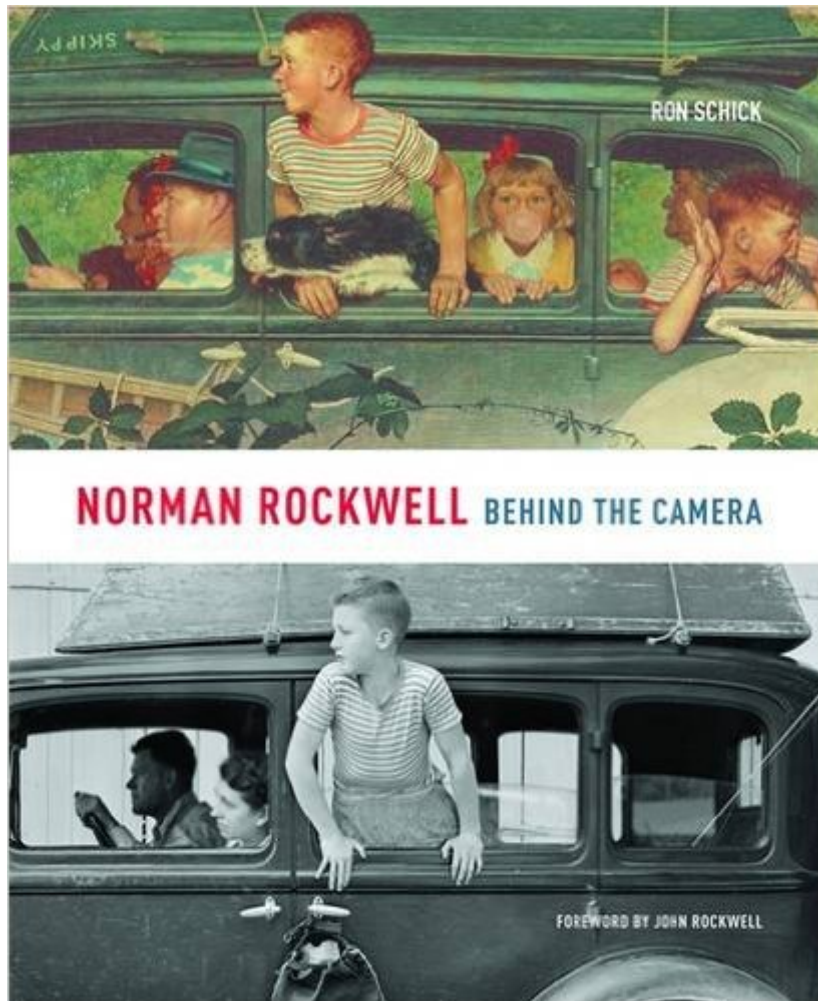


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# Norman Rockwell: Behind The Camera



## Synopsis

Norman Rockwell: Behind the Camera is the first book to explore the meticulously composed and richly detailed photographs that Norman Rockwell used to create his famous artworks. Working alongside skilled photographers, Rockwell acted as director, carefully orchestrating models, selecting props, and choosing locations for the photographs--works of art in their own right--that served as the basis of his iconic images. Readers will be surprised to find that many of his most memorable characters--the girl at the mirror, the young couple on prom night, the family on vacation--were friends and neighbors who served as his amateur models. In this groundbreaking book, author and historian Ron Schick delves into the archive of nearly 20,000 photographs housed at the Norman Rockwell Museum. Featuring reproductions of Rockwell's black-and-white photographs and related full-color artworks, along with an incisive narrative and quotes from Rockwell models and family members, this book will intrigue anyone interested in photography, art, and Americana.Â

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Length: 0:26 Mins

Norman Rockwell: Behind the Camera is a book that brings you behind the scenes to look at how the legendary artist uses photographs for his paintings. It's filled with paintings and the reference photographs from the Norman Rockwell Museum. Apparently, Rockwell used live models for all of

his work. Every model will be meticulously costumed and posed until he could get his perfect composition. Preparing the shot almost seems like an art form itself as he tirelessly puts in all the details required, sometimes to the extent of staging elaborate settings, like deciding the items to display on the table behind models. Every painting is well conceived and composed in his mind even before he lays paint on canvas. If you've read any biography of him, you won't be surprised by his dedication. Included in this book is a great selection of his paintings and the photos he used, put side by side for comparison. The author Ron Schick has done a great job providing commentary to all the illustrations, through interviews with people who have worked with Rockwell. There's plenty of insight and a few lessons to be learned on posing models. You'll see what are the details Rockwell retains and those that he leaves out. This is an inspiring book recommended to all admirers of Norman Rockwell's paintings, and to artists who want to learn more on using references from the master painter. (More pictures are available on my blog. Just visit my profile for the link.)

I bought this book after reading David Kamp's review in the November 2009 issue of Vanity Fair, which also has good background information on Rockwell. I suggest reading that article for a lot more information than I will provide here. The book itself discusses the photographic process Rockwell used to plan his paintings. It includes interviews with models and a lot of background information on the technical processes used. This all turns out to be much more interesting than it might sound. One can see exactly which details Rockwell kept and discarded from the photographs. Of particular interest is how important each detail in the photos is, and the extent to which Rockwell worked to get them right. There is also some interesting commentary on the social milieu and attitudes of the time. Rockwell in some ways was consciously creating an American mythos, but it was a mythos very grounded in actual fact. Some of the original paintings or covers are reproduced in a small format (and sometimes not at all) but these are generally easy to find elsewhere, so it is not a serious flaw. All in all, this was a thought-provoking and educational book that is sure to increase readers' understanding and appreciation both of Rockwell and of painting generally.

Norman Rockwell is an American icon. His style is easily identifiable, but I had no idea of the processes he used to produce his paintings until I read *Behind the Camera*. At first, Rockwell posed his ideas using live models and made preliminary sketches to paint from later. But this proved difficult, as it was hard for the models to hold the expressions that are a hallmark of his style. The next step - photography. "Photography opened a door to the keenly observed realism that defines Norman Rockwell's art." But Rockwell struggled with the idea of using photography as a tool to

prepare for his painting. Indeed, he took criticism from some of his peers for this decision, but realized he could capture moments in time quickly and reproduce them at leisure. Thankfully, those photographs have been kept in the Massachusetts Norman Rockwell Museum. This book was produced with those photographic archives. It is utterly fascinating to see the finished painting on one side of the page and then view the photographs that he used to achieve the look he wanted. Rockwell always used everyday people. All of the props used in a picture/painting were authentic. Details were very important to him. "I love to tell stories in pictures." And his pictures do tell stories. The expressions and the details make his work fairly leap off the page. You have to explore every corner. Many times Rockwell painted himself in as an extra. There are detailed descriptions accompanying every plate. The book itself progresses linearly, from his early work, though to his last completed work - a self portrait in 1976. The book is beautiful, produced on heavy, glossy stock with hundreds of images. A wonderful coffee table book and one to share. I'm taking mine over when I visit my grandmother. I know she'll enjoy looking at remembered images.

This book provides an elaborate and captivating look into the creative process followed by one of the most truly American of artists. A gifted storyteller, Norman Rockwell made use of photography to expand on a theme and create a realistic setting for his story illustrations. With "props bought, borrowed or rented", he constructed a scene that was detailed and natural, peopled by neighbors and friends. These scenes were authentic simply because the people were real. He portrayed American life with gusto and great fidelity. Known as the "kid with the camera eye", the camera was the instrument used by Rockwell to serve as interface of the eye and the canvas, capturing the nuances and details of a scene which he later edited to reflect his own vision. Much like today's art director, he created a setting, cut and pasted some parts, then filled them with action and color to obtain the end-result he wanted. These visual images Rockwell created with the help of the camera resonated with the ordinary American. With titles like: "Merry Christmas, Grandma... we came in our new Plymouth" (1951); "Maternity Waiting Room " (1946); "Leaving the Hospital" (1954) these domestic vignettes realistically conveyed the excitement, anxiety, and various emotions of people settling into family life after almost a decade of war and deprivation. The automobile, the newest symbol of prosperity, brought a new way of life and clearly captivated him and his audience. Publisher: Little, Brown and Company; 1 edition (October 22, 2009) 224 pages. Review copy provided by the publisher.

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