FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Heckscher Museum of Art:
Norman Rockwell and Friends: American Illustrations from the Mort Künstler Collection
Opening Saturday, December 10, 2016

Huntington, NY – Norman Rockwell, the quintessential American illustrator, anchors an impressive new exhibit of iconic artwork from the collection of Mort Künstler, a gifted artist and a discerning collector of important American illustration.

The Heckscher Museum of Art’s Norman Rockwell and Friends: American Illustrations from the Mort Künstler Collection opens Saturday, December 10. Mort Künstler is a renowned painter of scenes from American history. His pictures have been exhibited in museums throughout the country, and his paintings are the subject of books and a documentary film. Mr. Künstler is also an astute collector. Encompassing 75 paintings and sketches acquired over decades, Norman Rockwell and Friends: American Illustrations from the Mort Künstler Collection, is the first time this important private collection is on public view.

Norman Rockwell, J.C. Leyendecker, Dean Cornwell, Charles Dana Gibson, N.C. Wyeth, Maxfield Parrish, and Winslow Homer are some of the names in the pantheon of great American illustrators represented in the Künstler collection. In the late 19th- and through the mid-20th-centuries, these artists produced images for illustrated magazines and books that were avidly read by an increasingly literate American public. Their illustrations assume a cultural significance equivalent to that of television and digital technology today. Depicting sentimental themes or dramatic adventures, the country’s illustrators envisioned the aspirations of the nation and gave visual expression to the American character.

“I started collecting because these guys were my idols. And no one else was interested. . . I started out dreaming of owning five artists: Howard Pyle, N.C. Wyeth, Norman Rockwell, J.C. Leyendecker, and Dean Cornwell. Once I had them, I couldn’t stop.” — Mort Künstler

Mort Künstler began collecting after establishing a successful career as an illustrator in New York. He recalls buying 10 works by J.C. Leyendecker at a time when there was little interest in American illustration. Künstler makes the distinction that he collected “fine” illustration – and sought quality work by the best artists. Norman Rockwell and Friends: American Illustrations from the Mort Künstler Collection remains on view through March 5, 2017.

Funding for Norman Rockwell and Friends is provided by Mr. and Mrs. Charles F. Dolan, the Rapaport Shallat Foundation, The Steven A. Klar Foundation, Frank Lourenso & Gary Stevens – Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, and The Henry Luce Foundation Directors’ Discretionary Grants program at the request of Thomas L. Pulling.
Included in *Norman Rockwell and Friends* is *Rush’s Lancers* by *Winslow Homer* (1836-1910). Rush’s Lancers – the Sixth Pennsylvania Cavalry – was a respected volunteer regiment in the American Civil War. Homer completed the oil sketch in the Künstler collection during the war. In 1886, a wood engraving after Homer’s sketch was published in *The Century Magazine*. Künstler, too, did a painting of Rush’s Lancers, and when the Homer sketch became available, he had to have it.

**J.C. Leyendecker** (1874-1951) is another major talent represented in the exhibition. After studies at the Chicago Art Institute, Leyendecker enrolled in the Académie Julian in Paris. He was a brilliant illustrator, and the leading cover artist for the wildly popular *Saturday Evening Post*. The *Post* alone commissioned over 300 cover images. Leyendecker was an image-maker whose chic subjects became icons of the early 20th century. His work influenced an entire generation of younger artists, Norman Rockwell among them.

*Maxfield Parrish*’s (1870-1966) career spanned nearly eight decades. His work was mass produced on posters, in books and magazines, and commercial advertisements. The artist’s use of the color lapis lazuli or “Parrish Blue” made his work recognizable to audiences across America. Parrish’s images evoke magical worlds that are radiant and idealized. He was the
most successful and best-known book illustrator during the early 20th century. Parrish’s *Janion’s Maple* is featured in the exhibition.

Maxfield Parrish. *Janion’s Maple (Under Summer Skies).*
Oil on board, 23 x 18 ½ in.

*Norman Rockwell and Friends* includes four original watercolor illustrations by Norman Price (1877-1951) for the book *Tales of Shakespeare*. Price was known for creating historical works that were meticulously researched. While living in New York, his illustrations appeared in widely read periodicals such as *Harper’s*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Woman’s Home Companion*. His advertising accounts included Coca Cola and Sherwin Williams Paints. But Price’s book art best exemplifies his talent and legacy.

*Norman Price. Illustrations for Tales of Shakespeare, 1905. Opaque watercolor on illustration board.*

Dean Cornwell (1892-1960) was a famous illustrator, highly regarded by his peers. Indeed, Norman Rockwell dubbed Cornwell the “Dean of Illustrators.” Cornwell received commissions from the finest magazines and illustrated the work of some of the most notable names in the world of literature, including Ernest Hemingway and Pearl S. Buck. His paintings have been exhibited at the Whitney Museum, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Chicago Art Institute.
Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) is represented in the exhibition by a number of paintings and sketches. Rockwell’s inner-city up-bringing in Manhattan apartments and boarding houses bears little relationship to his later artistic subject matter. Instead, modest family vacations in upstate New York inspired an idealized view of life that resonated with Americans. The widespread reproduction of his work and the popularity of his imagery made Rockwell one of the nation’s best known artists.

**Dean Cornwell. Captain Blood, 1930. Oil on canvas; 36 x 48 in.**

**Norman Rockwell. Under the Mistletoe, cover of The Saturday Evening Post, December 19, 1936. Oil on canvas, 37 x 32 in. And charcoal studies.**

**Related Program: Meet the Artist**

**Gallery Tour and Talk with Mort Künstler,** Thursday, January 12, 2017, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm. Members Free, Non-Members $5. The Heckscher Museum of Art, 2 Prime Avenue, Huntington, NY 11743.

Enjoy an intimate conversation with the preeminent painter of American history, Mort Künstler. Surrounded by Künstler’s artwork and works from his private collection in the Museum’s exhibitions, *The New Nation* and *Norman Rockwell and Friends*, the artist shares his collecting vision and stories behind amassing this extraordinary collection representing the Golden Age of American Illustration. (Inclement Weather Date: January 19)
Also on View:

**Mort Künstler: The New Nation** showcases the artist's most recent paintings which portray the dramatic story of America’s founding with striking detail and factual accuracy. Known for historical works emphasizing the Civil War, Mort Künstler has devoted his career to the portrayal of American history. **The New Nation** illustrates iconic scenes from America’s past, capturing the birth of the United States to the inauguration of George Washington as the nation's first president. **Mort Künstler: The New Nation remains on view through April 2, 2017.**

**Synapses: Threads for Thought** presents over two dozen works from the Museum's collection as a thread of diverse connections. Paintings, prints, and photographs are arranged so that each work links to those that precede and follow it. Works range from a late 16th-century Annunciation and George Grosz’s *Eclipse of the Sun* to abstractions by Arthur Dove and photographs by Larry Fink. **Synapses: Threads for Thought remains on view through April 9, 2017.**

**About The Heckscher Museum of Art**
The Heckscher Museum of Art, founded in 1920 by philanthropist August Heckscher, is located in scenic Heckscher Park in Huntington, New York. Through its exhibitions and related programs, the Museum provides inspiring and transformative experiences to encourage a broader understanding of the past and present and to enrich life-long learning. The Museum's collection comprises more than 2,500 works from the 16th to the 21st century, including European and American painting, sculpture, works on paper, and photography. For information about The Heckscher Museum of Art, visit Heckscher.org.

**Museum Hours**
**Wednesday - Friday | 10:00 am - 5:00 pm *  
Saturday and Sunday | 11:00 am - 5:00 pm *  
Monday and Tuesday | Closed**
* Huntington Township Residents admitted FREE Wednesdays after 2:00 pm and Saturdays before 1:00 pm. Proof of residency required.

**Free Admission for Active Military Personnel, Veterans, and Family**
Available to any bearer of a Geneva Convention Common Access Card (CAC), a DD Form 1173, a DD Form 1173-1, a Veteran's DD-214, or a Veteran ID card and a driver's license. Includes active military personnel (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard, and Reserve) or Veteran and up to five (5) family members (spouse, child, aunt, uncle, grandparent, etc.)

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) since 1972.