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Illustration

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From the Editor...

In the last issue I asked all of you to help in spreading the word about *Illustration* magazine, and I'm happy to report that it's been working like a charm! I've been picking up a lot of new subscribers from all over the world, and I've been hearing from folks who've never seen the magazine before. So keep up the great work—I appreciate your efforts!

To all of you who wrote in to suggest story ideas and various artists to cover in the near future, I value your input. If you or anyone you know is related to a classic-era illustrator, and is sitting on a pile of photographs or tear sheets or (hopefully) original art, please get in touch. I want to showcase these treasures in the magazine.

To all of you new subscribers—and the old ones—it's great to have you on board! We have a fantastic issue in store for you. In this number we start off with a feature by Gary Land on the Golden Age illustrator Edwin Austin Abbey. Far too little has been written about this American master, and we hope this feature will shed some new light on his career and incredible work. As a peer of John Singer Sargent and Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, it's surprising that his work is not more widely known today. Thanks to Yale University Art Gallery for providing most of the photographs seen in the article.

Our cover feature is on the sensational art of Bruce Minney, written by Thomas Ziegler, author of the new book *Bruce Minney: The Man Who Painted Everything*, now available through Amazon. Minney's prolific and imaginative work for the men's adventure magazines is something to behold, and I hope you enjoy the extensive showcase of work presented here. I want to extend a special thanks to collector extraordinaire Rich Oberg, who graciously provided much of the photographs and scans for this feature. Thanks, Rich!

Now, on with the issue...

Daniel Zimmer, Publisher

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY
BRUCE MINNEY
(b. 1928)
Cover for Man's Story, June 1973
Photo Courtesy of Rich Oberg

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ILLUSTRATION-MAGAZINE.COM
THEILLUSTRATEDPRESS.COM

PRINTED IN CHINA

Edwin Austin Abbey [illegible]

Edwin Austin Abbey:
Master of Detail

by Gary Land

The late 1800s were a golden period for illustration. The development of new printing processes made the finer reproduction of images possible, and large circulation magazines became a showcase for the results of this technology. Of all the titles on the newsstands, none were bigger than the Harper family of publications. Edwin Austin Abbey would become Harper's star illustrator and would emerge as one of the premier artists of his generation. His name is little known today due to a number of factors, not the least of which was his wife's donation of the vast bulk of his work to Yale University upon his death. Museum politics being what they are, no major exhibit outside of Yale has ever occurred, and Abbey has slipped away into undeserved obscurity. His biography, published in the 1920s, is the only book published on his life and work outside of Yale exhibition catalogs. Books on his close friends Lawrence Alma-Tadema and John Singer Sargent only briefly touch on Abbey or ignore him entirely. It is my hope that this might change. Abbey was a master artist, proficient in pen and ink, water color and oils. He deserves recognition as the American treasure he is.

Edwin Austin Abbey, or "Ned" to his friends, was born in 1852 in Philadelphia. By age two his artistic abilities began to show. A friend of the family recounted the two year old Abbey demanding more paper while he was sketching omnibuses in his high chair. By age 13 he was a regular letter writer to Oliver Optic magazine, a spin-off of a series of juvenile adventure books. Another frequent contributor to the letter pages of this magazine was William H. Low, later to be Abbey's studio mate in New York. The two struck up a correspondence which led Abbey to travel by canal boat to Albany to visit Low. Low returned the favor and traveled to Philadelphia. In retrospection published after Abbey's death, another of his Oliver Optic correspondents relates that Abbey traveled to visit him in Brooklyn, which at age 15 speaks of his outgoing character and indomitable spirit.

In Abbey's time it was customary for a boy to be apprenticed to a trade, and although his parents were hoping for something more noble, his unflagging interest in art lead them to secure him a position with local engraving firm Van Ingen and Snyder. For whatever reason the apprenticeship was never formalized with a contract, something which would later prove fortuitous for Abbey. His duties at the firm reflected their appreciation of his potential. He served as Art Editor, scanning manuscripts to select passages for illustration—some assigned to other artists, some done himself—and working in the office rather than in the larger room with the other engravers. Seeking to develop himself further, he enrolled in night classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts along with Willard Snyder, son of one of the partners in the firm. Snyder, in letters used in writing E.V. Lucas' book on Abbey, Royal Academician, describes Abbey's time here this way: "While the members of the class were giving the best they

Original illustration, [illegible]. Ink on paper. Image courtesy of Illustration House, Inc.

could to one point of view, he would perhaps be busy with a dozen sketches, some of them simply a part of the figure. For example, I have seen him devote considerable attention to the forearm and hand, with particular drawing of the veins and the masses of hair on the back of a hand. At the best his attendance was not regular, but he always had a composition to show, sometimes several."

During this period, Abbey also was steadily submitting pieces to *Harper's Weekly* in hope of publication. In the December 3, 1870 issue his hopes were answered with *Harper's* acceptance of "The Puritans' First Thanksgiving." In February of 1871 he moved to New York. This was only possible because of a lack of contract with the engraving firm. For that, Abbey, and we who benefit from seeing what he was to become, can only be thankful.

Charles Parsons, the head of the art department at Harper and Brothers, had written to Abbey's father about his son's promise and talent and probably to assure him that his coming to New York wasn't some reckless adventure, but a good career move. Abbey, and indeed the rest of the art staff, were effectively journalists with the pencil. Subjects would pour in and assignments were handed out. Art was produced in time for publication so the artist was sent to look for such elsewhere. This had the effect of honing Abbey's mind and making his hand more sure, a skill he would put to much use later.

Abbey settled in nicely at Harper's, and the atmosphere was hardly reserved. The painter Gilbert Gaul, then a 17 year old art student, was sent to Harper's offices to deliver a message to Charles Parsons in 1872. "It was a dreary place, up a winding iron stair and through ill-lighted lofts to a lead-colored board partition, on the door in the center of which was a sign 'Art Department.' There was considerable commotion on the other side of the door, I thought, but I proceeded to enter. I had no sooner shown my head than a heavy hair cushion belonging to one of the office chairs struck my head with a bang and fell to the floor. Instinctively I drew back, using the door as a shield, and when I again looked round it into the room everyone was at a desk and working so rapidly and seriously that one would imagine there was no other object in life. The man at the nearest desk to me finally slowly left his absorbing task and very gravely asked me my business. When I found that [Parsons] was absent I voiced my appreciation of the state of affairs, for the young man smiled also and invited me to wait. This was Abbey, but I found afterwards that it was he who had thrown the cushion." One of their number had left the room and when Gaul's footsteps were heard approaching, it was assumed he was returning.

By 1874, Abbey was starting to chafe at the pay Harper's was willing to give. Having negotiated his pay level from a starting $15 a week in 1871 to $20, and later $35 by 1874, they refused to bump it to $40, and so Abbey, with fellow Harper artist James Edwin Kelly, later known for his sculptures, went freelance, renting a studio at 35 Union Square. While still maintaining work contracts with Harper's, Abbey also took on work from *Scribner's*. Among his most notable works were

The Illustrated Gallery

Ellen B.T. Pyle (1876 - 1936)

Cover for the Saturday Evening Post, October 25, 1930. Oil on board

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N.C. Wyeth (1882 - 1945)

"The Christmas Ship in Old New York" Advertising illustration for Interwoven Stocking Company
[illegible]

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Earl Mayan (1916 - 2009)

Cover for the Saturday Evening Post, December [illegible]. Oil on board, [illegible]

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[illegible] Image courtesy of the University Art Gallery, Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection

illustrations in Bryant and Gay's *History of the United States*, a four-volume history that contained a showcase of some of the best illustrators of the age, along with an annotated index not customary for the time. The book was later reprinted and expanded by Scribner's to five volumes and in total contained more than 1600 illustrations. Money came and went, either being spent on research material, props, and costumes, or sent to his family who suffered from perpetual money problems. It should also be mentioned that 1874 was Abbey's first public watercolor showing at the American Water Color Society, *Rustics Dancing in a Barn*. In 1876, the National Academy of Design solicited entries for its exhibition. Abbey produced *The Stage Office* and Kelly *The Vigil* from a Walt Whitman poem. The reviews were published and they raved about Abbey, comparing him to Winslow Homer—to Homer's disadvantage. Upon reading this, Abbey became upset and left immediately for Homer's studio to apologize. Upon his return, Kelly recalls Abbey saying, "Homer seemed cut up over the article and said 'All these years they have been calling me a rising young artist, and now in one day they call me an old fossil.'" Soon after, Homer visited the studio and went over Abbey's work with great interest.

In late 1876, Harper's, perhaps realizing what they had in Abbey, made an offer to put him back on the payroll. $50 a week, being more than he could justify refusing, led him back to the Franklin Street offices, but in a more independent role. Another of Harper's staff, the cartoonist W.A. Rogers, relates the atmosphere of the office: "All about the domain of Charles Parsons were the marks of Abbey's buoyant spirits. In the east room, on each hook or nail, he had painted the legends: 'Ab, his nayle.' 'Frosty, his nayle.' 'Pinky, his nayle,' etc., and over his own desk, suspended from a gimlet, swung a trapeze where he sometimes sought relief from the monotonous grind of office work. It was characteristic of Abbey that he must be always either at work or at play. His enthusiasm for one or the other never seemed to flag." Another recollection of this time was published in the *New York Tribune*, December 3, 1899:

> "All these 'great boys,' as they may properly be called, since they have developed into great men, were among the objects of interest which were shown to country visitors in Franklin Square. They worked in separate boxes with the light, which was not a North light, by the way, coming in from the Pearl Street windows, long before the days of Roebling's Bridge or the elevated road, and, no doubt, they in their humble degree impressed the visitors even as

The Illustrated Gallery

Neysa McMein (1888 - 1949)

Cover for McCall's, June 1925. Pastel on board, 31.75" x 23.75"

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The Play Scene in Hamlet, Act III, Scene II, [illegible]

Composition study for The Play Scene in Hamlet, Act III, Scene II, [illegible] Memorial Collection

Original Illustration. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of Illustration House, Inc.

Head of Ophelia, study c. [illegible] on [illegible]. Image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery [illegible] Collection

Crusaders Sighting Jerusalem, 1906. Oil on canvas, 60" x 40". Image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection

Study for head of a Gothic woman from The Play Scene, Hamlet, Act III, Scene 2, 1897. Black and white chalk, [illegible]. Image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection

Mary, the Wife of Cleophas, study for The Three Marys, c. [illegible]. Charcoal heightened with white and orange chalk on dark grey-green paper, [illegible]. Image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection

the great editors impressed them. But they did not like this kind of glory, and that was how the system of 'personally conducted tours' through the Harper's building was brought to an end. The illustrators, instigated, instructed and led—so the story goes—by Mr. Abbey made a plot by which, whenever they should ascertain from their scouts that tourists were approaching, each illustrator should simulate some specified wild beast. It would have been interesting to know what beast each played, whether Abbey took the lion's part himself and made a menagerie of A.B. Frost, and whether Thulstrup or Pyle acted like a bear, but these details could not be gathered in time for the present article. The effect, however, was that as soon as the regular show boy brought his party to that part of the building, saying, 'Here are the rooms where our artists work,' the air was rent with growls, squeals, grunts and roarings, and the visitors, peeping in, saw men on all fours. The visitors thought that the artists at Harpers' 'acted very strangely' and the report that those periodicals were illustrated by a corps of lunatics might have spread and wrought harm had not Mr. Parsons interfered and induced the powers to put a stop to the institution of 'showing around.'"

In 1877, decorative art became chic in America and Abbey's circle of fellow artists were taken by the craze. One evening's discussion of it led them to form "The Tile Club." Members included Frederick Dielman, Earl Shinn (art critic), Arthur Quartley, William Laffan, Julian Weir, Stanford White, Napoleon Sarony (photographer), F. Hopkinson Smith (designer of the foundations to the Statue of Liberty), Frank Millet (who would die on the Titanic), A.B. Frost, Gilbert Gaul, and several other members who would come and go over the next decade. The club would meet at the studio of one member each Wednesday. The host would supply the tiles. Members would decorate a tile in mineral colors and then fire it. The host would then get to keep the results.

Since 1874, Abbey had been producing for *Harper's* illustrations of the poems of medieval poet Robert Herrick, recently rediscovered and adored by the public. It was decided in 1878 that Abbey should, in order to develop more authenticity, travel to Herrick's homeland, England. Abbey rejected Parsons' terms as he was starting to get offers which he simply could not turn down:

> My Dear Mr. Parsons,
>
> I have thought very carefully over the project of my going to London and the proposal you are so kind as to make me. I should like to go, of course—and I know it would be of great advantage to me—but I think I would be doing myself injustice did I accept the proposition as I understand you to make it. If I take the money you have so kindly placed at my disposal ($600) it would be a long time before I could hope to work it off (at $50/pg), and

the consequence would be I should be always in debt, which you know I'm pretty tired of. The next batch of drawings I bring in will make me all clear—and I want to stay so. I have been offered a great deal of work of late at twice the prices I receive from you, and in one case more than that, and today I received an order from Cassell of London for two drawings which I could have charged my own price for. These I was obliged to reject because I could not do them with the other work I have promised. It seems to me that I should not go over unless I received in advance what it would cost me to make the change—say $500—and that I should then receive the same price I could get here for the same work. You know that I am attached to *Harper's Magazine*, and would do more for them and at less prices than anyone else—but you also know how I am situated and how necessary it is for me to put myself in a way to assist those dependent on me as quickly as possible. These are the reasons which lead me to decline your proposition. If the Harpers are willing to advance me $500 now and pay me $75 a page for the work I do—it being understood that I am guaranteed all the work I can do for one year and that I am at liberty to return the $500 in work during the year—I think I would be willing to go. I presume this will appear high to you—it does to me—it did—but I find I can earn it and I am glad I can.

'Very Respectfully, E.A. Abbey'

Parsons clearly assented to these terms, and Abbey left for England December 7 of 1878, celebrated by a breakfast given by Harper's that morning, and a dinner given by the Tile club in early November.

Abbey was clearly struck by the beauty of the place, spending the holidays in Stratford on Avon before heading to London in early January. He had with him letters of introduction from A.B. Frost, and called on George Henry Boughton, another American artist established in this foreign land. Boughton took Abbey under his wing and included him in various gatherings of London's Society and Art community. On one such occasion, Abbey was invited to go up to Boughton's studio and wait till a dinner he was hosting was adjourned. (Abbey wasn't being slighted. Boughton often had two such dinners in a night and he saw no reason to put Abbey through the formality when the after dinner gathering was the object.) In attendance was James Whistler, and Abbey was effusive in his praise of Whistler's work on display in America. Also in attendance was Lawrence Alma-Tadema, later to be one of Abbey's close associates.

But all was not easy. Money became a problem again as many of his submissions were paid not by the size of the illustration, but by their final published dimensions, which he could never begin to predict. Abbey was forced to borrow money from Boughton, live with economy, and take to walking from his apartment to Harper's office. Still, there were benefits. Abbey writes of being so staggered by a Titian in the

Two figures: study for Galahad and the Siege Perilous from "The Quest of the Holy Grail" murals, Boston Public Library. Black chalk heightened with white on dark gray paper. [illegible]. Image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection

National Gallery that he was mesmerized and had to leave. He noted in a letter to Charles Parsons of how impressed he was seeing these masterworks in person.

In September of 1881, Abbey sailed for New York with Alfred Parsons, a landscape painter Abbey had met through Boughton, and who became a trusted friend and collaborator. The two, along with Abbey's cousin Charles Thurlow, rented a studio on West 10th Street. Tile Club attendance resumed, and Abbey instigated the other members to produce, through Harper's, "Harper's Christmas: Pictures and Papers done by the Tile Club and its Literary Friends," done for Christmas of 1882. During this period he was often at the Harper's office, where during one meeting he would agree to illustrate "She Stoops to Conquer," a book which would be his most notable early success outside of the pages of Harper's magazines, eventually seeing print in 1887. The Tile Club would produce one more volume of work before dissolving by mutual consent in 1887 as styles and tastes changed. Shortly before returning to England in May of 1882, Abbey would become one of the founding members of the Anglo-American association "The Kinsmen," a group of the famous, notable and powerful designed to forge closer ties across the Atlantic. Members would include Mark Twain, the actor/producer Henry Irving, Senators, Congressmen, artists, ambassadors, etc. Both Twain and Irving were noted for supplying all members with a pass by which they could attend any production given by those members gratis.

The next several years were spent working and touring the artistic centers of Europe. In 1883, Abbey was elected to the *Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours*. Work slowly progressed on *She Stoops to Conquer* as well as *Old Songs* and *Judith Shakespeare*, a fiction about the daughter of the Bard by William Black. Abbey struggled to get the costumes and the other details right. Ever the perfectionist on these matters, years later at Morgan Hall, his costume wardrobe would be described as being appropriate for a working theatre company due to its size and variety.

The summer of 1885 was notable for his discovery of Broadway village via Frank Millet, and what would become his residence there, Abbey's Grange. He would summer there for many years. At around this time Abbey made the acquaintance of John Singer Sargent, an artist a few years his junior just on the cusp of becoming widely known. Abbey invited him on a boat trip up to Broadway. On the journey,

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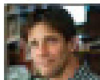
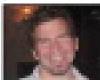
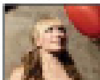
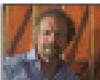
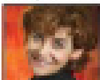
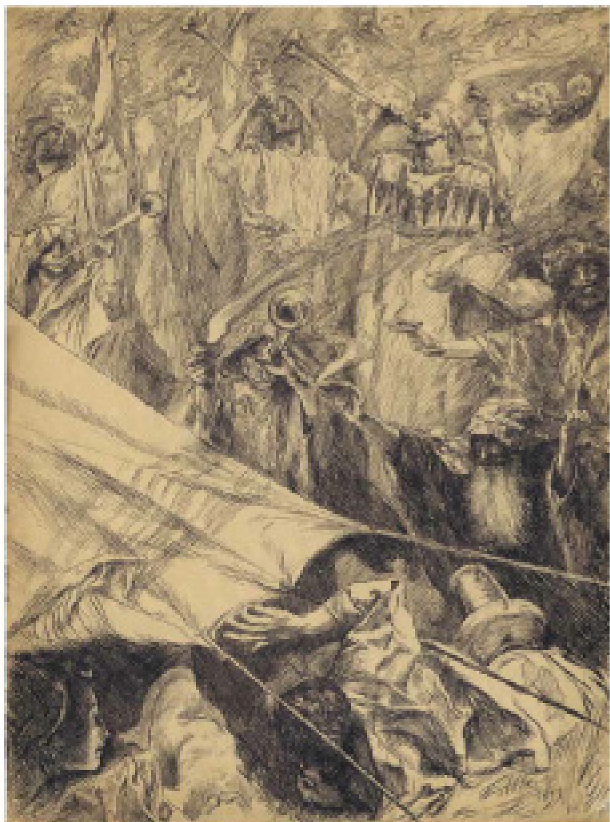






Original illustration, ink on paper, [illegible]

[illegible]

Bending Woman in Classical Dress, [illegible]. Charcoal and chalk on brown paper, [illegible]. Image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection

Titania, Act II, Scene II, A Midsummer Night's Dream, [illegible] Pen and ink over preliminary drawing in graphite, [illegible]. Image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and the Lady Anne, 1896. Oil on canvas, 50 1/2" x 108 1/2". Image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection

Sargent severely injured himself when he struck a spike while diving off Pangbourne Weir. Concerned for his health, Abbey insisted he stay on at Broadway for a time to heal and recover. The life at Broadway was high spirited and rowdy at times. Writing in 1886, Edmund Gosse describes events. "Nothing we do scandalizes the villagers. Fred Barnard, with an enormous stage slouch hat over his shoulders, chased one of the Americans down the village street, the man chased screaming all the time and trying to escape up lamp posts and down wells. Not a villager smiled... Whatever we do or say or write or sing they only say 'Them Americans is out again.'" But work was done as well. Gosse again describing Abbey's Garage, "A medieval ruin, a small ecclesiastical edifice, which was very roughly repaired so as to make a kind of refuge for us, and there, in the morning, Henry James and I would write, while Abbey and Millet painted on the floor below, and Sargent and Parsons fixed their easels just outside. We were all within shouting distance, and not much serious work was done, for we were in towering spirits and everything was food for laughter. Henry James was the only sedate one of all—benign, indulgent but grave, and not often abounding beyond a genial chuckle."

Due to the popularity of Shakespearian themes in popular culture at the time, Harper's wished to commission Abbey to do a series of illustrations based on the Comedies. The contract, signed in March of 1888, would see him produce 133 illustrations that were published between December 1889 and August 1893. Between payment for the art and royalties, he would take in $31,000. He was initially hesitant to do the

The Artist Abroad (E.A. Abbey) by John Singer Sargent, 1888. Charcoal, 10" x 18"

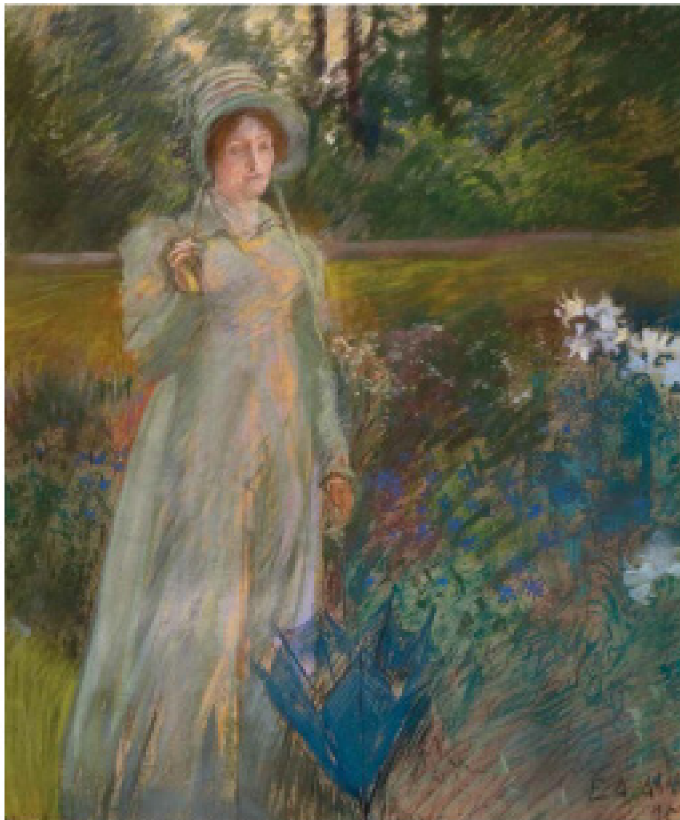
"The King's Questions" from Love's Labour's Lost, Act [illegible], Scene [illegible], [illegible]. Watercolor and gouache over preliminary drawing, [illegible]. Image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery, Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection

project, but fell to peer pressure as so many of his friends told him he should take it on."

1890 marked several significant moments in Abbey's life. In April he married Mary Gertrude Mead, whom he'd first met two years earlier at the Millet residence in Broadway. The wedding was held at Ms. Mead's parents. Sargent served as an usher. Mrs. Abbey wasn't satisfied with the accommodations at Broadway, and persuaded him to purchase a residence some 40 miles away, Morgan Hall. Although this was the death knell of the artistic community that had formed around Abbey during his years there, Morgan Hall would be the site of one of the most notable studios of its time. Of his wife he would later write, "A painter's finished work goes to the world, and the public generally may see it, but very few can know whence his greatest inspirations and his highest aspirations have been drawn. In saying this I am doing but scant justice to one who has been my daily and hourly companion and counselor and friend these twenty years."

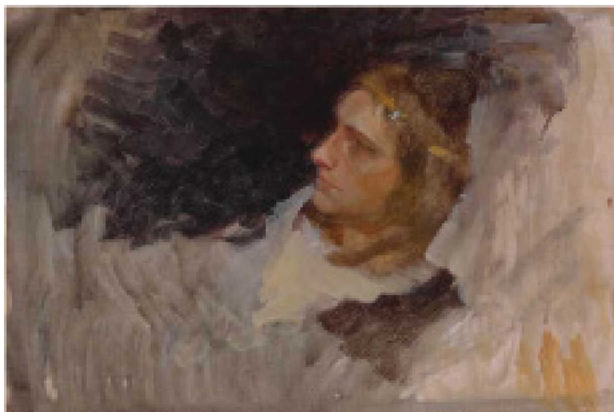
It was also the year that both Sargent and Abbey accepted commissions to do murals for the new Boston Public Library. The Library commission sprang from the sculptor St. Gaudens, a friend from the Tile Club's conversations with the then Ms. Mead who was posing for him as a surprise wedding present for the couple. He expressed a desire to have Abbey provide illustrations to the project, but lamented that due to budget constraints and cost overruns, they could never afford to pay him what he would need for such a long and drawn out project. Ms. Mead countered that it was exactly the kind of project that he would want to be involved in after recently completing *Comus*, and that he'd expressed a desire to work on a larger scale. In the end, Abbey was contracted for $15,000 and chose to depict the *Quest for the Holy Grail*.

Morgan Hall had to be readied for the Abbey's use, and they moved into residence in April 1891. Several days later, Mrs. Abbey's mother arrived and would live with them and help keep the household for the next three and a half years. Sargent soon followed and the four of them made a happy and contented household. The studio wasn't ready for use yet, but Abbey was kept busy working on the Shakespeare pieces, specifically *Love's Labour's Lost* which was set largely out of doors. Sargent would spend time in London and abroad doing portraits, but return in the autumn. A frequent visitor to the studio over the next several years was Alma-Tadema, who is described as, "Having the rare faculty, possessed by Mr. Sargent... of immediately perceiving what an artist was driving at, and could discuss it from the artist's point of view even when that differed from his own, so that Abbey was always encouraged and stimulated." The work itself was monumental. The frieze was eight feet high and 192 feet long. Working at essentially life size. "Large pieces of paper, huge rolls of



Original illustration for "[illegible]," [illegible], [illegible]. Pastel on board, [illegible]. Image courtesy of [illegible].

[illegible]



which Abbey always kept on hand, would be outlined and cut to fit a certain figure already painted on the canvas, to which the paper would be pinned so that it exactly covered this figure in order that the other figures might be painted on the paper directly over it and the new effect observed. Experiment would in this way follow experiment. The new figure would be roughly painted in, then removed to give place to a second, or even a third, a change in the background so that there would be tested, a different color would be tried here and there. In short, every aspect of the work both in conceit in pose would be talked over with the greatest eagerness."

Abbey was first and foremost always an illustrator. He struggled unceasingly for accuracy. In an undated letter from 1884 we see his thoughts on the role and value of illustration:

"It is only natural for an author to suppose or assume that the article illustrated is, as a rule, better than the illustrations. Of course there are two opinions as to this… but I am not sure that a temperate mind, able to judge of both, would not admit that it was an open question… Take the case again of the historical picture! If the right man… is found, one who knows, say, the period of the middle of the 17th century, in Holland for instance, he would have to work upon, possibly a subject like this:

"'The officer entering suddenly discovered the family quietly seated at their midday meal.'

"Nothing is said of the uniform of the officer—of the fact that the matron of the family has her hair smoothly drawn back and done into a small knob at the back of her head, which is covered by a small round cap like a black muffin ring, having two three-corner tabs coming down over her ears, the whole covered by another cap of white lace, stiffened and turned back in front, in the form of a half moon, to show her bare forehead, and tied at the back with a drawing string; that her black dress is cut low upon the shoulders, with wide short sleeves coming below the elbow, with narrow plaits at the top and bottom, a full, white undersleeve gathered into a small wristband showing beneath it, etc. etc.; that she wears a full round skirt, pulled up and pinned front and back, so that the folds fall to a point behind and before, showing a petticoat of perhaps satin, or some figured stuff, with two rows of braid close round the bottom, and two up the front; her shoes with her toes coming out beyond the thick clumped sole, the outer sole of which has one thick piece of leather following the shape of the sole and covering the front of the heel as well as the bottom of it. She has a double collar on, wide open at the neck, both upper and lower collar being sewn into a broad, stiff band…The artist must know what the officer wore and how he wore it…he must know 40 other things besides, that he hadn't allowed for when he sat down to make the drawing and

he must frequently get many of the things made up.... If he doesn't take all these pains... he has the assurance that the first time he goes into his club, after the drawing has appeared, a man will say to him, 'That binlings in your drawing this month won't do. You get that so-and-so, and it is one made 50 years after for such a man, etc.' ...This may happen to be the one item of knowledge this particular man has to boast of, but if an illustrator has any pride in his work... he is exceedingly ashamed of his blunder... I do not believe that authors, as a rule, see very clearly their characters—that is pictorially. I had to make a couple of drawings once for a story, and, as the story was rather nebulous, I called upon the authoress, hoping thus to get some inkling as to the appearance of the characters, but she had no clear idea in her head as to what they looked like, or would have been likely to wear, or anything at all about them that was of service to me. I supposed that she would say of course, when I showed her one drawing... that they were 'not like that,' but I was disappointed even there. She even went the length of saying that she should think that must have been very much like them. Fildes told me once that he had great difficulty in persuading Dickens that it would be impossible to make a drawing of John Jasper in *Edwin Drood* climbing a narrow winding stair in the pitch dark with a black scarf in his hand, and it has frequently happened to me, and I'm sure to other illustrators, to find that authors have some arbitrary and absolutely impracticable idea that they wish carried out in a drawing."

Edwin Austin Abbey at work, 1889

The first half of the *Grail* panels were done in mid 1894, and at the urging of Alma-Tadema, an exhibition was set up for early 1895 in London before they were shipped to New York for a second exhibition, and then on to Boston for installation. The London exhibition was done out of Abbey's own pocket, and was more than a little risk. Having done almost nothing other than painting, his funds were exhausted, and when they left England for New York it was with £8000 in debt. But it was a good investment. The acclaim generated by the showing greatly increased his prestige, and within a year the demand for his work led to the debt being paid in full. The New York exhibit, despite being held during a depression, was consistently full to the point the gallery managers thought it prudent to keep the exhibit open a week longer than scheduled. Abbey took with him 40-50 pastels as well, and sales/reproduction rights from these works were a major part of paying down his debts.

The *Grail* exhibitions were also the probable reason for his election to the Royal Academy the next spring as an associate, despite having only previously exhibited two paintings in these exhibitions. It should also be noted that neither water colors nor illustrations were deemed considerable for election to the Academy. This was a prejudice that Abbey would fight the rest of his life, regularly exhibiting works of this type at the Academy in protest. Abbey was elected to full membership in the Academy in 1898. Of the Academy, Abbey relates, "My Academy duties are heavy, and I shall be glad indeed when my two years penal servitude are up. It is a curious old institution—unique in a way—in that it is the only art institution managed by artists, without either Government aid or other outside help. It is small wonder that the more well-to-do of its members have enriched it with legacies from time to time—because one cannot help growing fond of it. Its fine old rooms are filled with relics of dead and gone predecessors. The silver candlesticks on the table at the Council meetings were presented by Benjamin West, and the big silver snuff-box, which always decorates the middle of the table, but Sir Francis Grant. The silver inkstands were given by other members and the chair in which the President sits is one in which all the presidents have sat. When a new Associate is elected the original parchment instrument signed by George III is taken out of the safe and read to him by the Secretary, and he signs his name on what is only the second sheet of parchment that has been used for this purpose. But an Associate is never admitted, officially, to any of the rooms set apart for the 'forty'—save on that one occasion—and on the conversazione nights, once a year. We are only thirty seven active Members, and all the work of the place is done by them, save that the Associates may teach in the schools—such of them as are selected to do so, and voting for candidates for the charity funds—there are half a dozen of them—auditing reports, and doing all the thousand things that have to be done in such an immense establishment—is weary work, and now it is extra because we are trying to reform the school."

Due to the success of the Comedies, Harper's also commissioned him to do the Tragedies. In 1901 Abbey signed a contract for $30,000 to be paid out pro rata upon delivery. This averaged out to $731 per work. This time however, Abbey kept possession of the art and the reprint rights at

say size larger than Harper's magazine. The project was supposed to be completed by 1896, but due to Abbey being commissioned to do the Coronation painting as well as the Harrisburg decorations, was not wrapped up until 1909. As a result, the planned hardbound collection of these works was never released.

The final series of panels for the Grail was finished in 1901, exhibited in London in November, and later in New York before reaching Boston in January 1902. It was a burden lifted, and the completion of a decade of work. While staying in Philadelphia in March of that year, Abbey was approached by Joseph Huston, the architect of the new Capitol building in Harrisburg. Abbey, however was unwilling to immediately agree to the project. Having only just shed the burden of the Boston frieze he was unwilling to do more than agree to think on it. Several months later he had come around to the point of sketching out one of the lunettes. By the end of the year he was heavily involved in concept work for Harrisburg, accepting the commission formally early in 1903.

The Coronation painting was comprised of over 100 portraits and was completed between 1902 and 1904. In keeping with tradition, a foreign born artist was commissioned to do the work. Abbey, a member of the Royal Academy, was chosen. The piece depicted the participants in medieval dress, participating in an equally medieval ceremony, tying Edward VII's reign with that of his royal predecessors. After completion it was sent on a tour of English cities.

Edwin Austin Abbey died in August, 1911 of a liver ailment that was not caught until it was too late. Work on the Harrisburg project being well along, but unfinished, his wife asked Sargent to finish the parts in production. Mary Abbey was to donate the bulk of Ned's art to Yale University. Two major exhibitions have been put on since the 1970s and Abbey's work is still on rotation in various displays. This article cannot hope to cover everything Abbey did. I heartily recommend the two volumes of *Edwin Austin Abbey: Royal Academician* by E.V. Lucas, *Unfaded Pageant* by Lucy Oakley, and the catalog of the 1974 Yale exhibit by multiple authors for more information on the man and his work. The book *An American Soldier: Letters of Edwin Austin Abbey* was compiled from the letters home of his nephew and namesake during World War I.

—by Cory Jund 2011

ENDNOTES

1. E.V. Lucas, E.A Abbey: Royal Academician, pg. 37
2. Ibid. 28
3. Ibid. 40
4. Ibid. 48
5. Ibid. 57-8
6. [illegible]
7. Lucy Oakley, Unfaded Pageant, pg. 31
8. Lucas 220
9. Lucas 257
10. Lucas 170-173
11. Ibid. 250

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THE ... COLLECTION OF
IMAGES

Bruce and Doris Minney, 1970

The Sensational Art of Bruce Minney

by Thomas Ziegler

I first met Bruce Minney in 1969. His daughter Carole and I attended Juniata College in Pennsylvania, and we met the second week of our freshman year. She took me home to meet the family that October. I remember Bruce had a little carved statue of a hand with the middle finger extended in his studio. He was not like most of the parents I met in the late 60s. Carole and I were married in 1971.

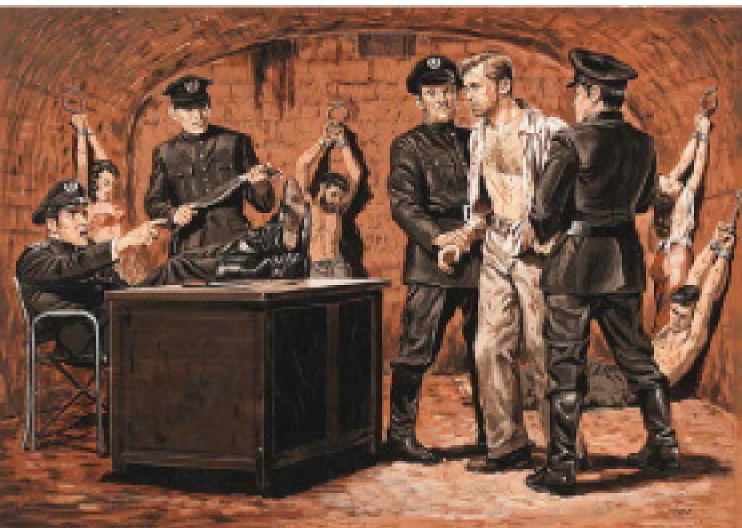
Bruce Minney spent 20 years working for men's adventure magazines, painting beautiful women, gorillas, lions, tigers, bears, elephants, alligators, headhunters, Nazis, airplanes, aircraft carriers, tanks, guns, and lots of explosions. He worked another 20 years painting covers for all kinds of paperbacks, including Westerns, historical romance, action, military, biography, and Gothic horror. He did storyboards for advertising agencies. For a few years he made award winning pottery. Currently he is making collages and paintings.

Bruce didn't sign many of the cover illustrations he did for the men's adventure magazines. At the time, he didn't think the illustrations would be his legacy. Like many of his peers, he always wanted to be a fine artist. Nevertheless, Bruce's skills and talents were put to good use over his career. Although he was always a stickler for accuracy, Bruce never missed a deadline. The men's adventure magazine field was very competitive, as Bruce recalls: "I took it all very seriously. It had to look right and be drawn well. In some respects, the subject matter was secondary to the technical requirements of the painting. You couldn't just make a joke out of it. There was a lot of competition for work and if you didn't execute, you didn't get any more work. I always tried to do the best I could. I was always looking over my shoulder. Now people look at it and think it's campy. For me, it wasn't."

Bruce was good. He had to be to make a living for almost 40 years as a commercial artist. The work speaks for itself.

In 2011, on a lark, Carole "Googled" Bruce Minney just to see what was out there about him. There were over 4,000 results. Intrigued, she started to click through. She found a few auction results of sales of his work, and a brief bio. She also found *The Men's Adventure Magazines Blog*. I started reading the blog from beginning to end. It was fascinating reading. In one post, there was a discussion about whether Bruce painted the cover for the June 1971 issue of *Man's Story*. I showed it to Bruce and he remembered painting it. I emailed the blog's editor, Bob Deis, and told him that Bruce was still alive and painting and that the piece in question was his. Within hours, Bob replied to my email and asked if Bruce would agree to be interviewed over the phone about his career and work. Bruce agreed.

The interview was a great success. It was also our introduction to collector extraordinaire Rich Oberg, and the book about his collection, *Men's Adventure Magazines* by Hagenauer and Collins. I emailed Bob and Rich telling them which illustrations in the books were Bruce's. Soon, we were



Original illustration for Adventure for Men, July [illegible]. Mixed media on board

emailing each other with questions and comments. Bruce identified many of his works. The enthusiasm was contagious.

Trying to identify Bruce's work 40 years after the fact was a challenge. The originals were long gone. We started with a few folders of illustrations that Bruce had torn out of the magazines when he was picking up or dropping off a job. We also had photographs of four originals that were sold at auction in 2003.

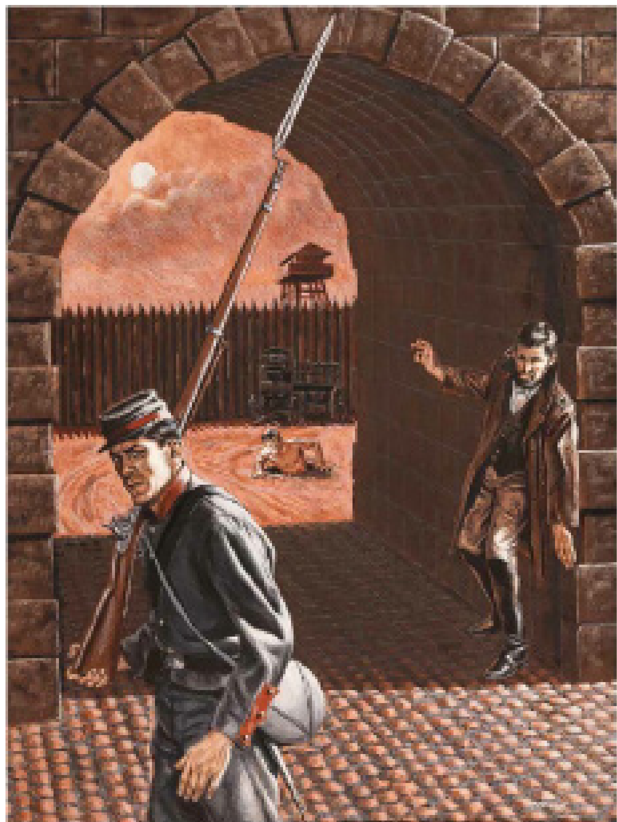
Covers were easy to identify because they had dates and titles. Finding and identifying the interior art was a little more difficult. Without the internet, we would have been unable to identify as much as we did. We looked on eBay and did a lot of Googling. We started out with a folder of about 75 interiors and have now identified over 500 original interior illustrations. Thanks to collector Rich Oberg, we didn't have to spend a fortune on old magazines. Men's adventure magazines that sold for 25 cents on the newsstand are now selling for $30 or $40 in some cases.

THE EARLY YEARS

Bruce Minney was born in Oakland, California, October 2, 1928, the son of Amy and Howard Minney. Howard survived the depression delivering the San Francisco Chronicle from his 1929 Model T. While in high school, Bruce assisted his father with the paper route and saved his money so he could attend college.

As a child, Bruce liked to draw, play with airplanes, and shoot his BB gun. It wasn't until his teen years that he realized that his artistic talent could be put to use. He remembers using leftover remittance envelopes from his father's newspaper collections because he didn't have paper, and drawing American planes shooting down Japanese Zeros for his friends.

"Drawing was what got me through school. In biology, everyone else would be doing experiments and I would draw airplanes on the blackboard with colored chalk. I didn't learn anything, but I could draw."



Original illustration for Zing, January 1998. Mixed media on board

Original illustration for Man's Conquest, October 1958. Mixed media on board

After graduating from high school in 1946, Bruce applied to the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, which later became the California College of the Arts. He recalls:

"On my first day of art school, my oil painting instructor told us to set up our palettes with gobs of paint: white, yellow ochre, cadmium red, burnt umber, thalo green, viridian, ultramarine blue. Then he asked us: "Would you like to eat these colors with a spoon?" For me, the answer was yes, and I knew I had chosen the right career. For four years, I studied drawing from a live model, paying attention to the dynamics of the human figure. I studied design, color theory and perspective. When I finished, I felt I was ready to pursue a career in art."

For four years, Bruce spent the morning drawing and the afternoon painting. He was ready for a career in art. Recently married to his high school sweetheart, Doris Sobala, with a child on the way, Bruce made a choice that shaped his future. In his senior year, he took a class in advertising art.

"The professor said only 1/10 of 1 percent of you will have a career in fine art. Here I was going to school for four years thinking I could make it in fine art. It was impossible unless you go commercial. That's the only way you can make money. I took an illustration course at night to learn the trade."

In 1951, Bruce's daughter Carole was born. To support his young family, Bruce got a job with United Airlines as a baggage handler. He was one of those guys you see on the runway with the orange batons directing traffic. At night, he worked on samples for his portfolio. He had hopes of becoming an illustrator for a top notch magazine.

One of the benefits of working for the airline was that Bruce got free airline tickets periodically. Encouraged by Doris, he decided he had enough samples. With his free ticket, Bruce flew to New York to start looking for an illustration job. He met with a few art directors. Most said "Good luck, kid." One art director was more positive and felt that he could use the 25-year-old Bruce. With soaring hopes, Bruce flew back to California. On the flight, he started thinking about what he needed to do next and suddenly realized he didn't have a studio, he didn't have a place to live, he didn't have enough cash to rent an apartment, he didn't have art supplies. He had a wife, a baby, and a 1950 Plymouth, and not a clue about how he was going to get started in New York. What started

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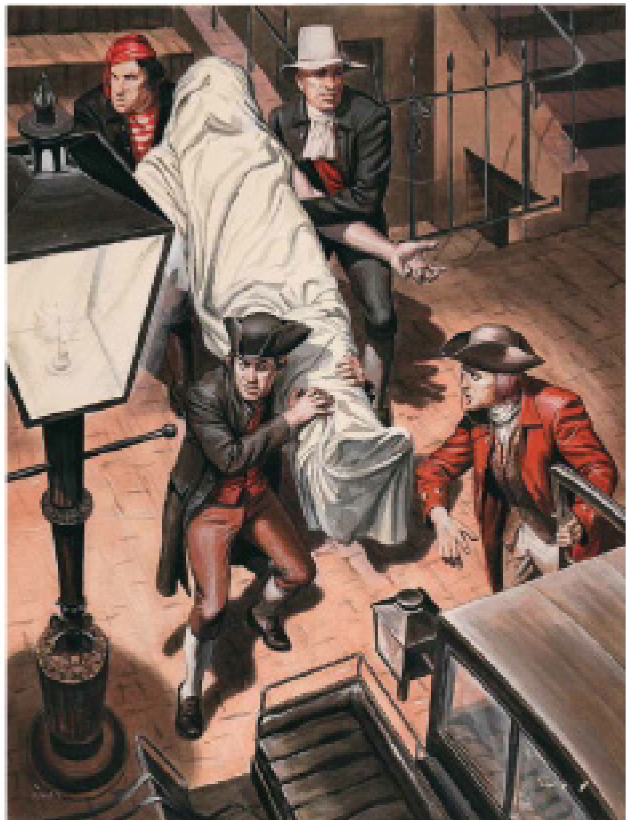


Original illustration for [illegible], May/June [illegible]. [illegible] on board

as a dream was now reality. When he got home, he wrote a letter to the art director thanking him for the opportunity but declining the job. For a time, Bruce was depressed. He had his chance and then, like a coward, he backed down. With Doris's support, he soon got back on his feet. He quit the [illegible] and got a job as a fireman in Orlando. He used his drawing skills to create a manual for firemen with illustrations that showed hose layouts and other fire fighting procedures. It was good enough to be featured in the local newspaper. The great thing about being a fireman was that you worked two 24-hour days and then had two days off. This schedule allowed Bruce to spend more time on his samples and come up with a plan.

"My plan was to take my samples to New York because, at the time, New York was the center for commercial art. I wanted to work for the *Saturday Evening Post* or *McCall's* or one of those. But they were all having problems when I was getting ready to go."

He saved some money and honed his skills. In 1956, he set off for New York.

MAKING IT IN NEW YORK

"You're stupid when you're young. We packed up everything in a 1950 Green Plymouth Sedan. We took a 9x12 shag rug, a vacuum cleaner, a table covered with green contact paper, all our dishes and pots and pans, and a filing cabinet with all my scrap photos that I was cutting out because I knew if I was going to be an illustrator I would need pictures to work from. We used the [illegible]. My daughter was in the backseat. It was like herding a monkey. We had a little hole for her and we shoved her in and she never complained."

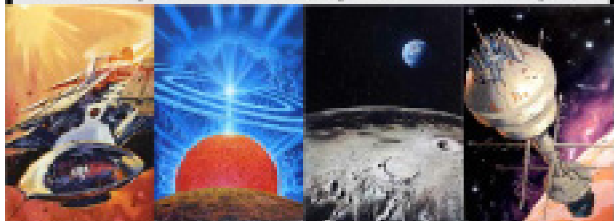
Bruce and his family found an apartment in Astoria, Queens. Doris got a job in advertising in Manhattan while Bruce stayed home with his daughter and created samples.

"Neither Doris or I had jobs lined up. We took our savings and a dream. We got to New York and stayed in a rooming house for a week, and then Doris found a place in Queens. Doris believed in me. What's the opposite of pessimism—that's what we were. We just believed that everything would work out. It was almost religious. She got a job with Doyle, Dane, Bernbach, who were just starting out in advertising. She was executive secretary to the media director."

Bruce started making the rounds with his samples. First, he visited the top tier magazines like *Saturday Evening Post* and *McCall's*. No luck. Then he began calling on the second tier magazines like *Argosy* and *True*. No luck. Bruce continued to show his samples. Finally he tried men's adventure, but was turned down.

"Doris was responsible for getting me into Magazine Management. We had a list of magazines to talk to and one day on her lunch hour she took my 'stuff' up to *Bluebook* magazine and told the art director that I couldn't get any work. He said 'Have you heard of Eddie Balcourt, the artists' rep?' She got Eddie's phone number and I went to see him."

It was through Balcourt that Bruce really began his career as



Curse of the Four-Tusker

Interior illustration for Sport Life, June 1957. Bruce Minney's first illustration job

Interior illustration for Space Science Fiction, 1957

a professional illustrator. Balcourt also posed for Tom Ryan, Robert Schulz, John Leone, Norm Eastman, John Duillo, Basil Gogos, Charles Copeland, Rudy Nappi, and Bob Abbott, among others. Bruce describes the first paying job he ever did:

"It was a two-page spread of a hunter sitting on the back of a dead elephant and smoking a cigarette. I used Eddie Balcourt as the model for the hunter, because I'd just arrived in New York and didn't know any models yet or any photographers. Eddie took me to see the fashion photographer Robert Scott to do the photos. Robert Scott and I shot Eddie Balcourt sitting on a chair which was supposed to be an elephant. That was my first job. It was a black-and-white two-page spread for *Sport Life* magazine. They must have liked it, because they gave me other work."

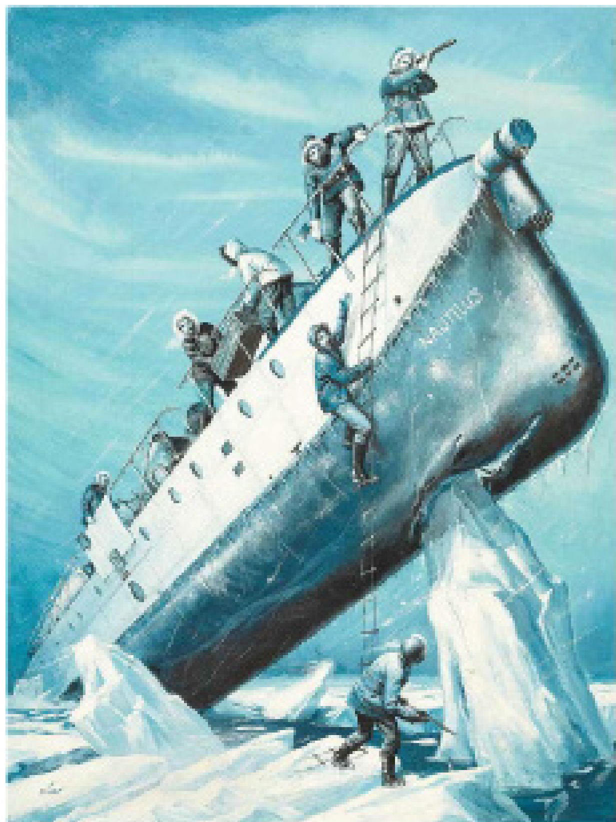
One of the early jobs Balcourt got him was for a new magazine called *Space Science Fiction*. They hired Bruce to do interior illustrations.

"They did two issues and then went under. That was one of the first jobs I ever did and I got screwed on it. That should have told me something. I never got paid."

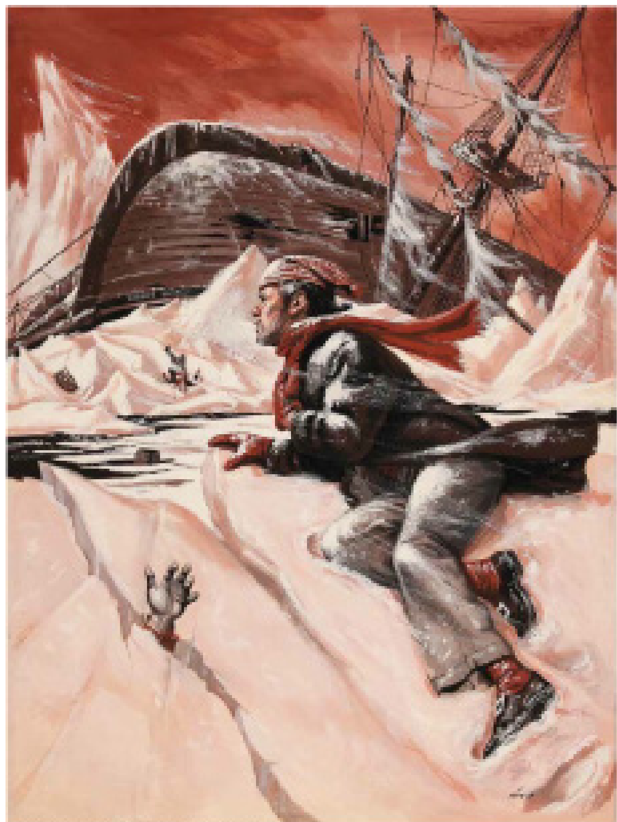
Space Science Fiction published two editions in 1957. The production quality of the book wasn't very good. They used cheap paper and low resolution illustrations. He used Doris and himself as models with Polaroid snapshots. But despite the occasional setbacks, his career was taking off and he started to get more work.

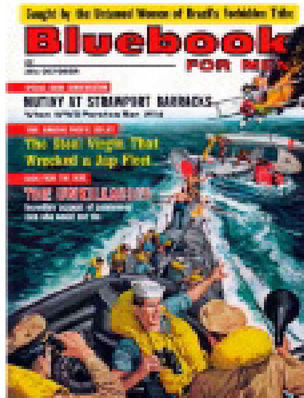
Original illustration for [illegible], [illegible]. Mixed media on board

Original illustration for [illegible], [illegible]. Mixed media on board



Original illustration for [illegible], April [illegible]. Mixed media on board





Bluebook for Men, October 1962

Man's Epic, November 1963

MEN'S ADVENTURE

Art directors would call Eddie, who would pick up the job. Eddie would call Bruce and Bruce would go into the city to pick it up. When he was done, Bruce would deliver the finished illustration to Eddie. Bruce rarely talked to the art directors. For this, Eddie took 15%.

After about a year, Balcourt started getting calls from art directors telling him they had a job for Bruce Minney. They also started calling Bruce directly if there were changes.

"At first, I worked almost 100% for Magazine Management. After doing illustrations for a few years, Balcourt got me into Bantam. Eddie would pick it up and I did all the work. When I was done, I gave him the final illustration to deliver. His office was on 46th street near the High School For the Performing Arts. In the beginning, I never talked to anyone but him. This went on for about 4 or 5 years. He got me started and I was grateful for that, but eventually he wasn't adding any value. I said, 'you're not getting me any new jobs.' He had no answer. When I told him I was leaving, he took it OK. Everyone else was doing the same thing. At that point in my career, I was confident I could make it."

In the meantime, he moved to the suburbs in Sparta, New Jersey.

After Bruce was on his own as a freelance illustrator, here is the way a typical job worked:

"I would get a call that they had a job for me. I would go into the city (New York) to meet with the art director. He would give me a one-paragraph synopsis of the story. I would then go home and do three pencil sketches. I always did three sketches. I never had a problem coming up with ideas for sketches. I read the paragraph describing the job and I could picture it in my head. That's what being an illustrator is all about. I had enough confidence in my abilities not to worry about coming up with ideas. I knew I could get it done. I was never terrified by white space. Deadlines didn't affect me that much. If you were scared, you didn't stand a chance. My biggest problem was finding good scrap. For some things, you needed a model or a picture to draw from, you couldn't just make it up. I had tons of file folders with scrap. They were all indexed and organized. Every time I read a magazine, I would tear out pictures for my scrap file.

"I did the sketches on tracing paper. I used tracing paper because if I liked part of the sketch but didn't like another part, I could reuse the good part by tracing over it. The sketches usually took a day or two. I would then go back to the city and show the sketches to the art director. He would approve one.

"After the sketch was approved, I shot pictures of the models. The whole job from start to finish took about a week and a half. When I first started, I took the photos and manually blew them up on the drawing board. Later, I got a Bausch and Lomb projector that would allow me to project the photos on to the board with the size I needed. The projector was invaluable and allowed me to work a lot faster.

"I never had an art director reject my sketches. They always

Samuel Nelson Abbott (1874-1953) "Salt Water Taffy" Oil on canvas, 29" x 26", signed. *Ladies' Home Journal* cover, August 1922

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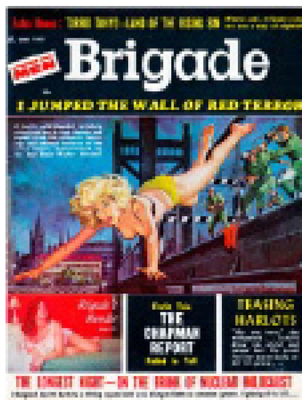


Brigade, May 1963

World of Men, July 1963

picked one. I think it was because of my drawing ability. After I had the illustration laid out, I filled in the colors with watercolors. Then I added more detail with acrylics. Finally, I finished them in oils. This allowed me to build up and balance the colors.

"Even if you weren't happy with a piece, I learned early on that you never apologized for the work. Artists have a tendency to apologize because the work is never perfect. You see something that isn't right and you want to apologize, but you can't. You have to hold your tongue. If you made excuses, you didn't last very long. You couldn't say, "If I just had another day I could have tightened it up." Art directors didn't want to hear that. They paid you for a job. If they didn't like it, they wouldn't use you again. I had a few of those with the paperbacks. With the magazines, I guess they liked what I did since they kept me employed for over 20 years.

"The sketch and illustration for Male, May 1965, show how different the final illustration could be from the original sketch.

"You had to be aware of the fold. You couldn't put anything key, like a face, in the middle of the page. You also had to allow for the title and the type. The art directors didn't always lay things out the way you sketched it, but you did the best you could. After I did a sketch, I didn't have to follow it to the letter. I could make adjustments to improve the composition or make it more dramatic."

Bruce used the Italian photographer, Robert Scott, to shoot and develop the pictures. John Duillo, who later became an illustrator, worked for Scott.

It wasn't all business all the time with Scott, as Bruce recalls. "I hired this girl from England once. I saw her pictures and I called her. She came to Robert Scott's. The job called for a girl in a tattered dress. Scott and I were fixing the lights and the girl was kind of cowering in the corner half naked. Scott says, 'That doesn't look right,' so he went over and tore the dress. Then I said 'Now it doesn't look right over there,' so I went and ripped the sleeve off. And the girl's eyes got real big—wondering why she was here. Scott and I were laughing and having a good time like a couple of kids. I used him for three or four years."

When Scott shot photographs for Bruce, he always provided two 8x10 prints of each image. For a job with more than a few shots, it could be very expensive. As Bruce got more work, he became more conscious of the costs, especially the photography.

"One day at Balcourt's office I was talking to illustrator Rudy Nappi about how expensive Scott was getting, and he told me I should shoot my own pictures. I said, 'I don't know how.' And he said 'I'll teach you. You ought to develop your own pictures, too.' And I said I didn't know how to do that, either. He says 'I'll teach you.' And he did, he taught me all that. Rudy had a studio with a bunch of other artists. They didn't paint there, but they shot their model photos there. When they shut down, I bought their equipment: enlarger,

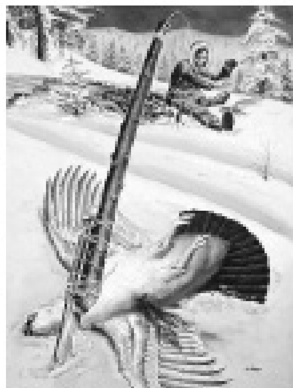
Preliminary sketch for illustration in Male, May 19[illegible]

Interior illustration for Male, May 19[illegible]

a LOUSY DRINK of WATER

Interior illustration for Stag, January 1958. Mixed media on board

Reference photo for interior illustration in Stag, January 1958



Original illustration for Male, December 1957. Mixed media on board

tops, and a diaper. In the meantime, I had set up a photo studio with John Duillo. He decided he wanted to become an illustrator and he did. His wife, Elaine, was one of the top illustrators for paperbacks. The studio was down near the Flatiron Building on 5th Avenue. I thought we would have the studio forever. John was an illustrator and so was I, and we shared the rent. We fixed it up and it was really nice. We had this studio for almost 10 years. One day he called me and said 'I can't do it anymore, Bruce.'"

Bruce tried to keep the studio himself, but the finances didn't work and he soon shut it down. Finally, he shot a few jobs at illustrator Norm Eastman's apartment. Norm had a studio set up there. Eventually, Bruce started shooting at home in Sparta.

Once all the photos were done, Bruce describes a typical day:

"This was my routine—I usually started at 8 or 9 every morning and would work until lunch. After lunch, I worked until 5, had 2 or 3 drinks, ate dinner, took a short nap in my studio and then worked until 11 or 12. I didn't have to see anybody. I didn't have to talk to anybody. I liked that."

In the 60s, models were typically paid $15 an hour. Combined with the cost of the photographer and tests, Bruce's net income from a $150 job wasn't too good.

"When I lived in Astoria, I used my neighbor as a model and took polaroids. I also took polaroids of Doris or she took them of me. I couldn't afford professional models. The polaroids really didn't work too well. I didn't have the projector then. I could draw well, but it was a lot easier with the projector."

In this early photo used for Stag, January 1958, Bruce knew exactly what he needed. Bruce is holding the bucket for his neighbor. Note how the model has his leg sticking up. This was done to leave space for the horse. His pants are tied to indicate where the boots would go. When you see the original photos and the eventual work that resulted, you can appreciate the technical skills and imagination that Bruce had.

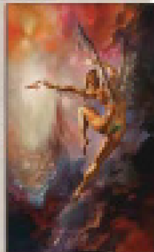
Male, December 1957—"I posed for that one and my wife shot it with polaroids. I fabricated the stick with the knife on it and I took a picture of that. I used scrap for the bird. I couldn't kill a bird. When I was a kid I killed a sparrow with a BB gun, and that was the last thing I ever shot. That was so sad."

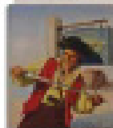
For most of the men's adventure magazines, Bruce used Steve Holland, who just about everyone used. Steve had played Flash Gordon in a short-lived television series in 1955. In the 60s, James Bama used him as a model for the Doc Savage paperbacks. As far as we can tell, Bruce began using Steve in 1961 and continued using him through the 80s.

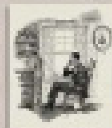
"I showed Steve the sketches and he would know what to do. I'd say give me a guy dying falling backwards. Now, give me a guy dying falling forward. We'd just go that way and I got lots of useful shots."

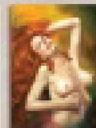
If there were five male figures in the sketch, Steve would pose for all of them. If there were 10 males, Steve would pose for all of them. According to Bruce, he could do 100 shots in an hour with Steve. If the job required a man and a woman

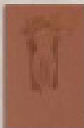
ORIGINAL ART FOR SALE











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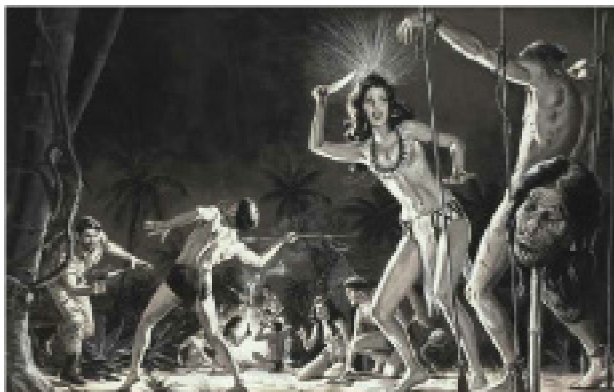


Original illustration for [illegible], October 1963. Mixed media on board

together. Bruce would schedule the sessions to overlap. He would shoot the girl for ½ hour. Steve would arrive and he would shoot Steve and the girl together. The girl would leave and he would finish the shoot with Steve.

"Steve was great. He could do anything. I used him in almost all my men's adventure jobs. He just knew what to do. He was a handball addict. He played handball all the time. And, amazingly he smoked about two or three packs of cigarettes a day."

Bruce didn't sign many of the cover illustrations. According to collector Rich Oberg: "Bruce was a men's adventure artist known for his interiors. After the interview for the Menspulpmag blog, he is now recognized as one of the top 5 most prolific cover/interior artists in the genre."

As he looked at some of his old work for the book about his career, Bruce could identify his work immediately even though he didn't always remember doing them. "When I see my old work I can identify it by the models and the technique I used. There were things from a composition perspective that I wouldn't do. The way a guy held a gun. Norm Eastman painted hair in a way I never did. Things like that."

"Not my girl" was a common response when we found works similar to his by Mandel or Eastman. Everyone used Steve Holland, but each artist had preferred female models.

MAGAZINE COVERS

Over a 20-year period from 1956 until 1977, Bruce painted hundreds of covers for men's adventure magazines.

Nothing Bruce painted ever actually happened. He used his imagination and artistic skills to create strong covers that would catch the buyer's eye. Looking at his work 40 years later, Bruce could see that his work was more than just a job.

"To do this for so long with this level of quality is pretty amazing. When you're doing a new painting every other week or so, you don't realize what you've accomplished. I did some pretty good work.

"I tried to use primary colors as much as possible. Red, yellow, blue and black—how can you miss? It comes across strong. We were trying to make strong covers. If you use pinks and plums, it doesn't quite have the same effect. I had to use green—with all the uniforms, but I always tried to work in red, yellow, and blue."

INTERIORS

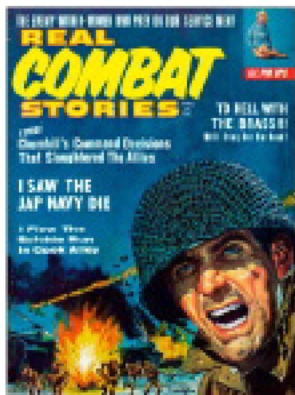
"I started doing interiors and it was a long time before I got a cover." Bruce did over 900 interior illustrations to accompany the sometimes outlandish stories in his men's adventure magazine career, with the vast majority being done for Magazine Management publications. Most of them were two-page, monochrome (brown, red, or blue) or black-and-white. Near the end, the magazines used color interiors as part of their desperate attempt to keep readers. All but two illustrations were done under Bruce's name. Magazine Management occasionally used the pseudonyms Ben Sachs and Bern Minnow.

"Interiors were easier to do because the type usually only went in 2 places. With covers, you had type all over the place.

Original cover illustration for World of Men, September 1965. Mixed media on board

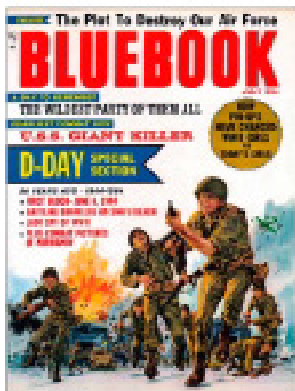
Original cover illustration for [illegible], September [illegible]. Mixed media on board

Original cover illustration for World of Men, December 19[illegible]. Mixed media on board

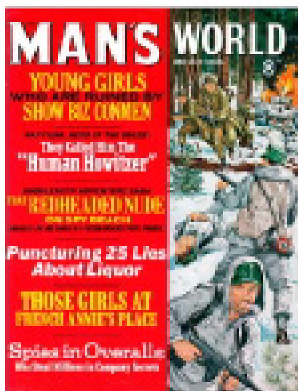


Real Combat Stories, April 1964

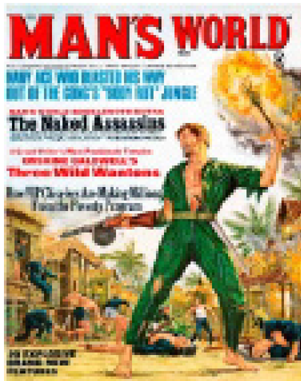
Real Combat Stories, June 1964



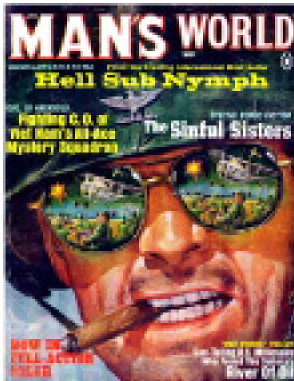
Bluebook, July 1964



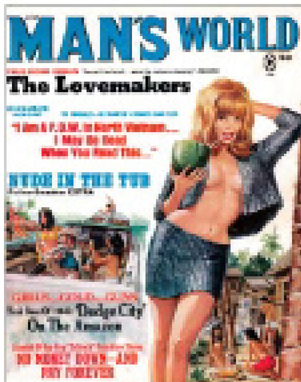
Man's World, April 1964



Man's World, February 1967



Man's World, April 1967



Man's World, June 1968

Action for Men, September 1968

Original illustration for *Man's Conquest*, February 1959. Mixed media on board

so the compositions were a lot more complicated. You didn't want the main focus to be hidden under type."

Bruce painted everything. His compositions are masterful and integrated. Some men's adventure illustrations look like the artist shot the models and then plunked them into the final painting with little thought to the overall lighting or the composition. Bruce had a natural ability to make every detail in the work relevant. There is rarely dead space. It all ties together.

STYLE CHANGES

Bruce painted in different styles over the years. When I asked Bruce about this, he didn't think his style had changed that much. He attributed it to the models and the technique required by the job.

In the early days (1958–1962) when Bruce was doing strictly interiors, his style was dictated by the job. He was also learning his craft. The illustrations for *Space Science Fiction* done in 1957 are primitive and he never painted in this style

again. Other illustrations from the early years are more painterly than those from the later years. He was painting like he did when he was in art school.

Mark Conquest, February 1959, is an example of Bruce's early style (left.) The highlights on the cleaver blade are smears of paint. The paint is thick. The figures are soft. A great deal of attention is paid to the folds in the man's shirt. The lamp is a gauzy blur. However, you can see the hallmarks of Bruce's later style: the dramatic tilt of the male figure, the ceiling beams framing the action, the blowing curtains framing the female, and little details like the painting on the wall, and the ornate mirror.

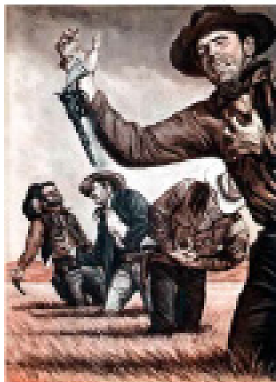
He also felt that acquiring the projector in 1960 enabled him to do more complicated compositions faster. Compare two airplane illustrations, right and below: one is from Stag, April 1960. The other is from Stag, June 1964.

The 1960 illustration is simple. There are only two planes and a flat background. The planes are sharp and attention is paid to the reflections on the wings. The 1964 illustration, done after Bruce got the projector, is wild: bombs dropping, explosions, at least 18 planes in the air or on the ground. Very little attention is paid to the metallic surfaces of the planes. There is simply too much else going on.

Original illustration for Stag, April 1960. Mixed media on board

Interior illustration for Stag, June 1964

Original illustration for Male, July 1960. Mixed media on board



Interior illustration for Adventures for Men, August 1959

Compare *Adventures For Men*, August 1959, to *Male*, July 1960. In the 1959 illustration, a lot of attention is paid to the folds in the clothing and you can see the brushstrokes. The figures are softer. The lighting is even and not very dramatic. There isn't any action in the background. In the 1960 illustration, the figures are sharp. The lighting is dramatic. The composition is complex with detail in the foreground and background. The positioning of the figures is more complex. When looking at these two illustrations, Bruce felt that the projector accounted for the differences. Bruce was unsure of who the model was in the 1959 illustration. Steve Holland is the model for the male in the 1960 painting. The woman was the daughter of Doris' employer who wanted to be a high fashion model. She figured she had to start somewhere.

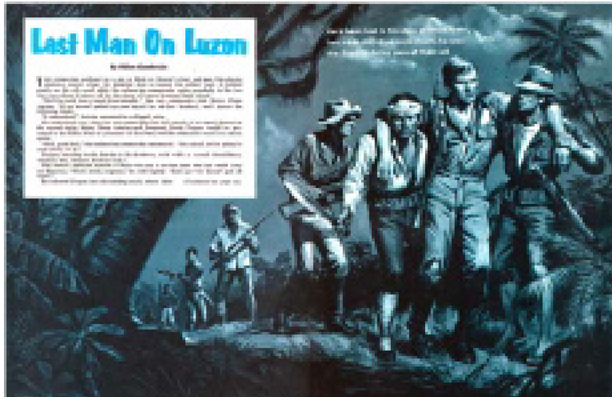
A few of the early works also used the acetate technique. In this style, the illustration is painted in black and white. Then the artist overlays a transparent piece of either orange or blue acetate and scratches out areas that should be white. *Male* magazine used this technique for a few years.

Blue duotones were prevalent in the early works and seemed to go out of favor in the 60s. They were brought back briefly in the 70s in *Adventure for Men*. Bruce painted quite a few in this style.

From around 1961 until 1972, there is a definite Bruce Minney style for interiors. By this point, Bruce was established and working without an agent. He knew what the art directors, particularly Larry Graber of *Magazine Management*, needed for a job. The figures are sharp. The lighting is dramatic. Little details

Interior illustration for Male, July [illegible], created using the [illegible] technique

Interior illustration for Male, February [illegible], created using the [illegible] technique



Interior illustration for [illegible], December [illegible], created using the [illegible] technique

are added to make the illustrations seem more realistic. The girls are gorgeous. Every inch of the canvas is used. Diagonals are used to create tension and strong compositions.

In the 70s, the magazines began to change styles. First, they abandoned the "good girl" style and began displaying uncovered female breasts. Next, they switched to a montage, paperback style with multiple scenes depicting the story instead of just one unified scene. *Male*, September 1974, is an example of the montage style.

Finally, they switched to color painted in a looser style. Bruce thrived in this environment as you can see in *Male*, January 1976.

Interior illustration for *Male*, September 1974

DECLINE OF MEN'S ADVENTURE

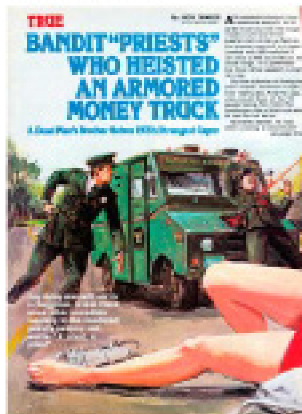
As the 60s wore on, the men's adventure magazines started to decline.

"They still paid promptly, but you could see the writing on the wall. I could see it coming. They kept changing the styles. I could tell they were desperate, so I figured it was time to change. Talking to the art directors, we knew it was coming to an end. They kept trying to change styles and circulations were down. After *The Godfather* came out in 1972, mafia stories were popular. We had done World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. When Vietnam ended that was it for war stories. We started doing biker stories and Mafia."

Circulations were down and new, more risqué magazines like *Penthouse* in 1969 and *Hustler* in 1974 emerged. If you look at the covers of the men's adventure magazines in the late 60s and early 70s, you see fewer illustrations and more nudity. By 1974, the covers were almost all photographs. By 1977, the magazines had all shut down.

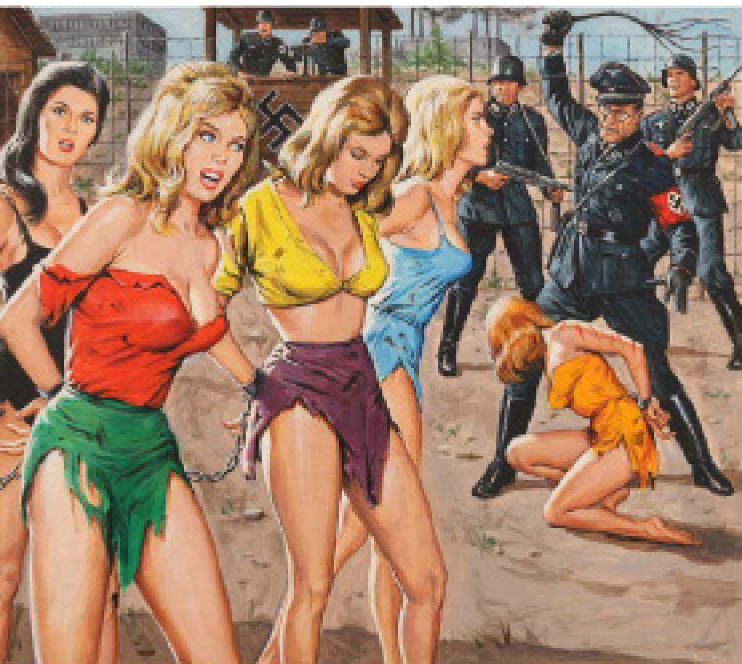
When the men's magazines were declining, Bruce and most of his fellow artists decided to take a chance on paperback covers.

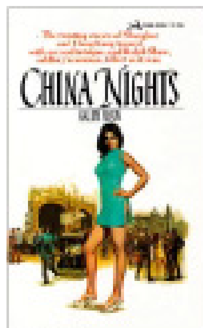
"I took my stuff around. I started making samples of people in love scenes. I made appointments. In those days, they would see you and comment on your work. Nowadays, they won't even see you. I called them on the phone and made an appointment. I didn't have an agent."



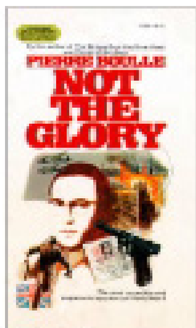
Interior illustration for *Male*, January 1976

Original illustration for National Lampoon, November 197[illegible] (Mixed media on board)

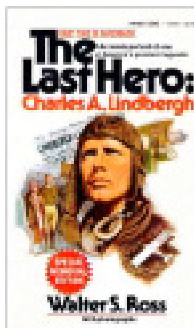




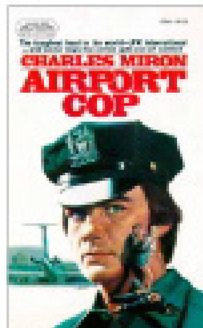
China Nights, 1970



Not the Glory, 1974

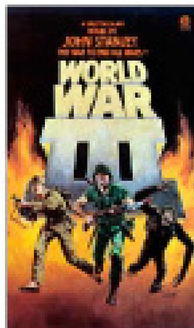


The Last Hero: Charles A. Lindbergh, 1977



Airport Cop, 1975

The Devil to Pay, 1977



World War III, 1978

PAPERBACKS

By his own count, Bruce did over 200 paperback covers. We have been able to identify 132 of them. He used models from the nearby Playboy club in Great Gorge, New Jersey, and shot the photos at home. When his son Craig grew up, Bruce used him as a model as well.

"Pinnacle really liked my stuff and accepted me right away. I did a lot for Pinnacle, Manor, Ace, and Pyramid," Bruce did his first paperback in 1962 for Midwood. Bruce doesn't recall painting it, but he was impressed by the execution and thought the model was cute. The book is about lesbians falling in love on a cruise.

Bruce did at least one other paperback for Midwood in 1962 and a few for Tudor, which we have been unable to find. As far as we can tell, he didn't do any other paperbacks until the 1970s when the men's magazines started to decline.

"I did a lot of historical romances—Bruce Lancaster. I also did a few of the girl-running-away-from-the-castle-with-a-light-in-one-of-the-windows books. Gothics.

"The work process was similar to adventure magazines. I would do three pencil sketches and they'd pick which one they wanted. Some guys did color sketches. I never did."

"Deadlines were about the same as the magazines. About a week and half for each job." Bruce did all kinds of paperback covers between 1971 and 1991: "Westerns, nautical (Horatio Hornblower), military, romance, action, gothic, historical, science fiction, and biography.

"The Lone Ranger series wasn't a big deal. I didn't get paid any extra for those jobs. They had the contract. I didn't have a horse, so I had a saddle on a wooden frame with rollers on it that I could move around when I shot the pictures. When I had to show the Lone Ranger reared up on Silver, I had a picture of a guy reared up on a horse in my scrap. I used that as the source for all the paintings. I used that horse and put the model on my wooden saddle so I could get the position right and went from there. You spend most of your time improvising until it looked right.

"After I did the Hornblower paintings, a guy from Texas wanted to interview me on the radio. I knew he was going to ask me about rigging and flags and the historical aspects of all these boats, but I didn't really know anything. I didn't know a jib sail from a mainsail so I never responded. I had a book on boats and a lot of scrap. I made up the scenes. I decided it would be better to turn him down rather than be embarrassed by my ignorance. Somebody wanted to make a calendar of the Hornblower paintings, but I only had 11, so I used another nautical painting from another job. Unfortunately, the guy was going through a divorce and ran out of money so the calendar never got made. Another sad story of the hard life of an illustrator. He was going to give me $2,000 for the whole project. He gave me $1,000 up front and then the deal fell through. I kept the $1,000 and the illustrations. My son still has one of them. I kept them for years and then burned the rest."

Around 1988, Pinnacle, which was Bruce's main account, moved to Los Angeles. His daughter was married and had moved out. His son had recently graduated from high school and Doris was working as a realtor.

"Some agent saw my work and told me I could get all the movie work I wanted. And that really paid big—five or six grand each. Doris said, 'I don't want to die in New Jersey' so we moved to California. I figured with Pinnacle out there and this agent I'd be OK."

Once again, Bruce and his family packed up a U-Haul truck and drove cross country to California in 1991.

BACK TO CALIFORNIA

Bruce had stacks of men's adventure illustrations piled up in the attic. Before they moved, he went to an art show in Atlantic City and set up a display of his old work.

"We had kind of a picnic day on the boardwalk. I put a bunch of my paintings in bins and sold them cheap. People were buying them for $5 or $50 each.

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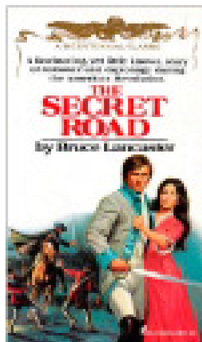
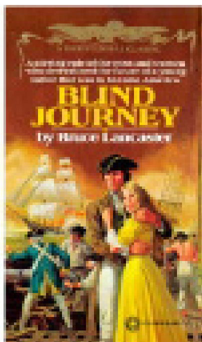
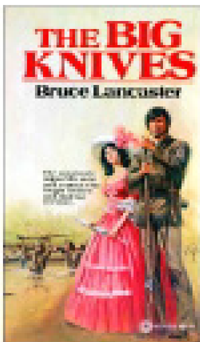


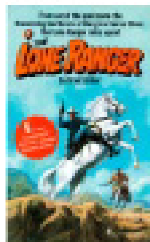
The Secret Road, 1979



Blind Journey, 1979

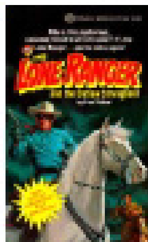


The Big Knives, 1979

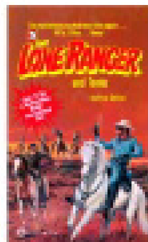


The Lone Ranger, 1978

The Lone Ranger and the Mystery Ranch, 1978



The Lone Ranger and the Outlaw Stronghold, 1978



The Lone Ranger and Tonto, 1979

"One guy bought 10 for $400 so the trip wasn't a total waste." Unfortunately, a few weeks later the check bounced. Bruce had a dilemma. Should he haul all these paintings across the country and put them in storage, or throw them out? He also had canvases and prints of his fine art, which were his pride and joy.

What should he keep? Like many of his contemporaries, he decided to toss the illustrations. A few were saved, but the rest were either burned or taken to the dump. How could he know that 20 years later collectors would pay thousands for the original art?

After settling into a duplex in Ventura, Bruce set up a studio in the garage and continued doing paperbacks. Unfortunately, the promised movie poster work never materialized.

"The agent, who promised me all the movie work, told me I had to have photographs of my work that he would send around. He knew a photographer who could do quality work at a good price. I paid a few thousand dollars for the photos. After the agent made me buy the photos, he got me one job and I got paid 6 months later. That was it. I called him a few times, but he stopped returning my calls. It was all a scam."

To keep costs down, he used Craig as a model. Doris got a job at a bookstore. Despite the lack of movie work, things were going well.

Then, in 1988, Doris died suddenly from a heart attack. A heavy smoker, she had a series of transient ischemic attacks in the 70s in New Jersey but seemed to be recovered. After 35 years of marriage, Bruce was alone. He continued doing paperbacks, mostly westerns, but that was starting to dry up.

"A lot of the paperbacks started using photographs or just raised lettering on their covers. So, that work kind of dried up, too. And, there were so many illustrators out there, hungry for work. In fact, I remember it got so bad that sometimes the publishers wouldn't pay you for a long time. I did a job once and they didn't pay me for six months. Six months later they pay you. After you put out money for models and did all the work. And, when that happened I said that was the end. I'm not doing this anymore."

At 55, Bruce decided to go back to school. "After Doris died, I went to UCLA and learned how to do the newer type of illustration art that used markers because I thought it might help me get some advertising work, which it did.

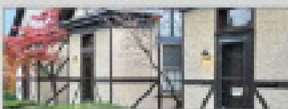
"I also hooked up with Jim Keeshen, who had just started a company called Studio Animatics. It was the closest you could come to doing a commercial without actually filming it. There were actors and music. If the client approved it, they would go into production and get real actors and locations and actually film it. It's probably all computerized today.

"I started doing storyboards, plus painting paperback covers. Storyboard work was brutal. You'd go in one day and you'd have to have six illustrations the next morning. I did storyboards for a few years. I did some for advertising agencies for companies like McDonald's and Chrysler. I also did storyboards for NBC. It was all freelance. I never worked at their studios. I always freelanced."

While Bruce was doing storyboards and occasional paperback covers, he continued with his fine art and began experimenting with collage.

Bruce also became good friends with artist Norm Eastman. Like Bruce, Norm had moved to California to do paperbacks and movie work. He knew Eastman casually from their days in New York, but it wasn't until they both ended up in California that they became friends.

Eventually, the brutal pace of advertising work convinced Bruce that it was time for a change. He had always been interested in sculpture, but he knew he couldn't make a living at it. He remembered ceramicist Peter Voulkos from his art school days. Could he make a living doing pottery? He took some pottery classes mainly to have access to a kiln and started to develop a style.



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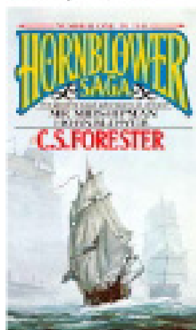
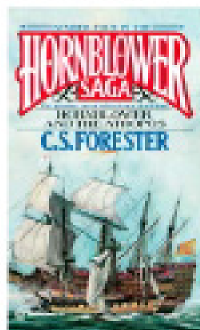
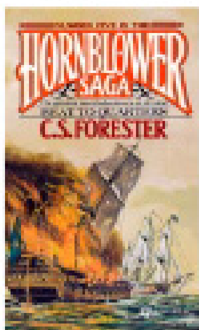
Hornblower During the Crisis, [illegible]



Mr. Midshipman Hornblower, [illegible]



Hornblower and the Atropos, [illegible]



Beat to Quarters, [illegible]

Flying Colors, 1978

He decided he needed to broaden his approach if he wanted to make a living doing pottery. At a craft show in California, he saw a woman selling pots for African Violets. Bruce thought he could improve the design. He would sell the African Violet pots cheap to make money and would do artistic pots to satisfy his creative urges.

After some research, he concluded that if he wanted to sell his pots at art and craft shows, he would need to move to Florida, the state with the most craft shows. He was 60 years old. In 1989, at an age when most people are thinking about retirement, Bruce packed his belongings into a U-Haul truck and again drove from California back east to Florida.

FLORIDA

In 1985, he had invested the proceeds of the sale of the Virginia duplex and a small inheritance from his mother into a money market account, which provided him with some income, but not enough to live on. He also did an occasional paperback job. He was convinced that he could support himself doing craft shows and still have time for fine art. In a few years, he could get Social Security, which would also help.

Bruce moved to Deltona and rented a house. The first thing he did was set up a studio and buy a kiln. He immediately began production of the African violet pots and started to experiment with glazes and painting the collages on the pots. He did art shows, won some awards and for the next 20 years made a living selling pottery. He also remarried in 2000. He had known his second wife, Marilyn Markofsky, in Sparta back in the 70s. She and her husband had moved to Florida in the 80s. In 1998, Marilyn's husband died after a long illness. Bruce moved to Marilyn's home in Winter Springs and set up a studio in the garage. Life was good. He was doing an art show every month and living comfortably. Then Marilyn got sick. She had pulmonary fibrosis, a lung disease, and it got worse. Marilyn died in 2011, and Bruce was on his own again.

When Bruce turned 80 in 2008, he decided to give up craft shows and retire. He sold the house in Winter Springs and moved to Ormond Beach, which is where his daughter lives. He continues to paint and do collages and enter them in local art shows. Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in men's adventure magazine art. There is a Facebook group about men's adventure magazines that has attracted young artists and illustrators who are in awe of the technical prowess of their predecessors. ◆

—by Thomas Ziegler, 2012

Thanks to Bruce Minney for allowing me to do over 15 hours of interviews and dredging up the past. Many thanks to Rich Oberg, M.D., for sharing and photographing Bruce's works from his collection. *Bruce Minney: The Man Who Painted Everything* is available as an ebook or paperback at Amazon.com.

THE BRUCE MINNEY CHECKLIST

Original illustration by Jessie Willcox Smith for the story "Curly Locks" published in Good Housekeeping, January 1914. Gouache, oil, and pastel on board, 20" x 18"

Jessie Willcox Smith Painting Found

A painting stolen from the Proctor Free Library in Vermont is recovered at auction

On April 16, 2009, an interesting story popped up in the Rutland, Vermont newspaper. A long-forgotten painting found in a Proctor, Vermont attic sold for $96,000 at auction.

The artwork, titled "Curly Locks," was painted by legendary illustrator Jessie Willcox Smith in 1914 for Good Housekeeping magazine. According to the story, the artwork was originally owned by three unnamed "spinster aunts" in Rutland. The eventual seller was given the work as a thank you by the last surviving aunt, whom she helped move into a retirement home. The seller, a woman who lived in Proctor, then put it in her attic for about 30 years, only pulling it out in 2009 for an appraisal that put its value at between $7,500 and $12,500.

Imagine her surprise when the dusty old painting sold through Kaminski Auctions in Beverly, Massachusetts for over $96,000!

The resulting publicity raised the attention of a few knowledgeable individuals in Proctor, and it didn't take long for the woman's story to unravel.

It turns out that the Jessie Willcox Smith painting "Curly Locks" had been part of the Proctor Free Library's collection since some time in the 1960s, and had occupied prominent place in the children's section of the library over many years. As one of a series of paintings for Good Housekeeping's Mother Goose series in 1914, the work had been a treasured cornerstone piece.

Library Trustee vice president Stephen Fallon was "shocked" to read in the Rutland Herald that an anonymous woman received the same painting from one of her spinster aunts years ago and decided to auction it off to help pay for her daughter's wedding.

About a week after reading about the painting's auction, Pellett said the Board of Trustees had gleaned the truth—head librarian Mary Brough, who had worked for the library for about eight years, confessed to taking the painting. She was forced to resign but did not face criminal charges.

"The board voted unanimously not to pursue charges," Pellett said. "For my part, the mission was our primary interest was to get the painting back. She immediately confessed her involvement and we have the painting... as far as we're concerned, it ends here."

The State Police and Rutland County State's Attorney James Mongeon followed suit.

After conducting an investigation that included interviews with members of the Board of Trustees and Brough, State Police Detective Sgt. Samuel Capogrossi said he brought the case to Mongeon. But after a meeting with the state's attorney, the decision was made not to pursue charges.

"I don't have a case," Mongeon said. "You should talk to the Proctor Library. I can't speak for them."

The buyer and auction house were made financially whole. Brough had not taken receipt of the full amount from the sale. She had received only a small portion of it by the time the board and police caught on to the painting's absence. What proceeds she did receive were all returned.

Pellett, whose board was in the process of hiring a new librarian, said the painting will not return to the children's section until it has been insured.

[illegible] (detail)

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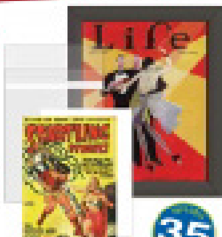

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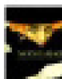
BY DAVID ASHFORD, EDITED BY PETER RICHARDSON
272 PAGES, FULL COLOR
$75.00 HARDCOVER
BOOK PALACE BOOKS, 2012

Most American illustration fans are not likely to be familiar with the work of British artist Denis McLoughlin, but if you're a fan of vintage paperback covers, Western art, or Western comics, you might want to investigate his career. Well-known in England for his superb Western covers and stories for British comics annuals, such as the *Buffalo Bill Annual* beginning in 1950, he is perhaps even better known for his paperback covers. His "Boardman Bloodhound" covers, starting in 1947, number almost 300, and they feature endlessly inventive compositions in classic hard-boiled detective and sexy cheesecake themes.

This new book features a full biography and interview with the artist, a humble and unassuming man who was happy to pursue his prolific career for years in obscurity. This is the first look at his entire body of work, and it's a first-class production featuring hundreds of illustrations, many from original artwork, and rare vintage paperback and comic book covers.



THE POSTCARD AGE: SELECTIONS FROM THE LEONARD A. LAUDER COLLECTION

BY LYNDA KLICH & BENJAMIN WEISS
288 PAGES, FULL COLOR
$45.00 HARDCOVER
MFA, 2012

In the decades around 1900, postcards were seemingly everywhere. Advances in color printing technologies opened new doors for all manner of printed products and ephemera, and a postcard craze quickly swept the world. Billions of the colorful cards were bought and mailed, or simply collected and pasted into albums. Many famous artists turned to the new medium, but one of the great pleasures of collecting postcards today is seeing how some of the most beautiful and interesting cards were made by artists whose names we barely know. This unprecedented exhibition traces fascinating historical and cultural themes of the modern age—enthralling, exciting, and sometimes disturbing—played out on the postcard's tiny canvas.

The Postcard Age features about 400 cards by a wide variety of artists and publishers from throughout Europe and the Americas. The book is arranged not by style or country, but by theme, with sections devoted to, among other things, urban life, the changing role of women, sports, celebrity, new technologies, the stylish collectors' cards of the art nouveau, and World War I. The result is a vivid picture of the cares and concerns of the age and a tempting sampler of the artistic and historical riches found in the Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Archive, the lifetime project of Leonard Lauder and a promised gift to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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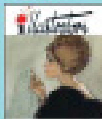

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EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

Istvan Banyai: Stranger in a Strange Land
March 9, 2013 through May 1, 2013
The Norman Rockwell Museum, MA

An innovative Hungarian-born artist whose illustrations have been sought after by clients throughout the world, Istvan Banyai made his mark as an award-winning artist in the United States, and has been creating persuasive, elegant artworks for publishers and corporations for more than thirty years. Banyai's striking imagery has appeared on the covers and pages of the *New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Playboy*, *Rolling Stone*, *Mother Jones*, the *New York Times*, *GQ* and *Esquire*, and has been featured by Absolut Vodka, Nickelodeon, MTV Europe, Encyclopedia Britannica, Penguin Putnam/Viking, and many others. The artist's influential visual commentary and his approach to image-making will be explored.

For more information, visit: www.nrm.org

State of the Art:
Illustration 100 Years After Howard Pyle
February 9, 2013 through June 1, 2013
The Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE

In the century following Howard Pyle's death, American illustration has diversified into a wide range of exciting forms. From animated movies and computer images to graphic novels and conceptual art, America's storytelling artists use the latest technologies to tell a richer blend of stories to broader audiences. This exhibition of over 60 works of art examines the work of eight important illustrators who have built on the traditional skills of Pyle's era to become significant voices in modern illustration.

For more information, visit: www.delart.org

The Comic Art of Harvey Kurtzman
March 6 through May 11, 2013
The Society of Illustrators, NY

Maurice Sendak—A Celebration of the Artist and His Work
June 11 through August 17, 2013
The Society of Illustrators, NY

The Art of Henry Patrick Raleigh
May 7 through June 29, 2013
The Society of Illustrators–Hall of Fame Gallery (Dining Room)

The show focuses on the decades he spent painting society pictures and living the good life, and as a member of the Society of Illustrators. The show will include rarely-exhibited works on loan from his grandchildren.

The Comic Illustration of Arnold Roth
January 4 through March 2, 2013
The Society of Illustrators, NY MoCCA Gallery, 2nd Floor

For more information, visit: www.societyillustrators.org

The Magic Pencil of the Amazing F.O.C. Darley
January 19 through March 10, 2013
Brandywine River Museum, PA

Before Howard Pyle and N. C. Wyeth rose to the height of their profession as illustrators, there was Felix Octavius Carr Darley (1822–1888), a Philadelphia-born artist who spent much of his career in Claymont, Delaware, and whose skill in book and magazine illustration made him one of the most popular illustrators of his time. Critics of the day praised Darley for his "magic pencil," a tool that immortalized the fictional characters created by Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Fenimore Cooper, Charles Dickens, and William Shakespeare. Darley also gained enormous acclaim for his drawings and prints relating to the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and Westward expansion. This exhibition will feature a range of original works drawn from the Brandywine River Museum's rich permanent collection, as well as pieces on loan from the Darley Society of Claymont, Delaware, and several private collectors. Among the objects to be included are illustrations for Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Irving's *Life of George Washington*, and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, as well as the artist's sketch book from his European tour, handsome engravings, and numerous illustrated books.

For more information, visit: brandywinemuseum.org

Know of any upcoming exhibitions or events related to the world of classic illustration? Email: [illegible]

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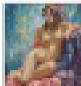

NORMAN LINDSAY

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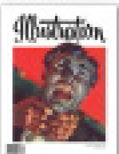
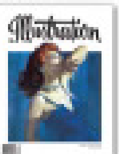

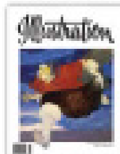
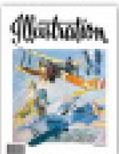

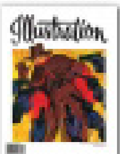
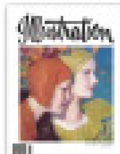
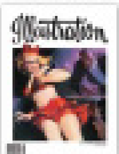
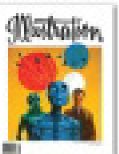

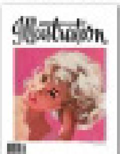

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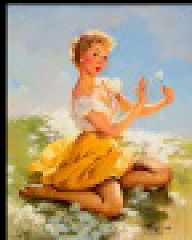

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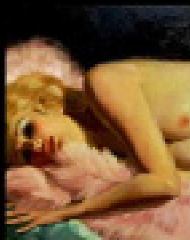

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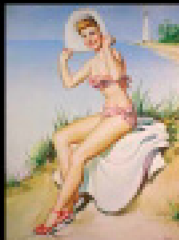

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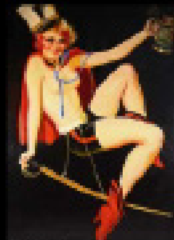

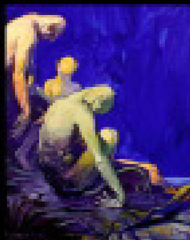

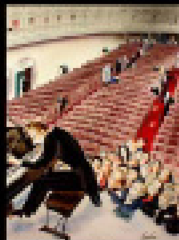

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