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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY

John La Gatta

(1896–1977)

Advertising illustration for

TATTOO (1934), 1935

Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Houston

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Illustration

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Contents

From the Editor...

For those of you who may not be on my email list, I wanted to announce that we are reprinting the book *Masters of American Illustration & Illustrators and How They Worked* by Fred Taraba. Originally issued in 2001, the book sold out almost immediately upon publication. Now, over years later, Fred and I recently conducted a successful Kickstarter funding campaign, and with your generous support we are able to print the book again. The book is at the printer now, and will be released in August 2018. For those of you who may not know much about this book, it is a monumental tome. 432 pages presenting 18 chapters on the life and working methods of some of the greatest illustrators of the Golden Age. The price is $60 U.S. plus postage. Visit the website to learn more, and preview all of the pages.

The current issue presents a detailed look at the life and work of illustrator John La Gatta, one of the finest delineators of the female form. During his day, he was one of the top illustrators in the country and he found the high life of a celebrity. We feature many stunning examples of his original artwork in this issue.

Next up, we feature the work of Harry Beckhoff. I have always admired his clean lines, and brilliant draftsmanship, and while we don't know a lot about his personal life, his incredible work speaks for itself. I've even added extra pages this issue to showcase his illustrations.

Our final feature uncovers the Artists for Victory posters produced during WWII. John Witek returns with a fascinating feature on these powerful images.

Daniel Zimmer, Publisher

the illustrated gallery

LESLIE THRASHER (1889-1936)

Liberty Magazine Cover July 24, 1926
Oil on Canvas
28" x 16"

Liberty Magazine Cover February 18, 1928
Oil on Canvas
28" x 16"

Liberty Magazine Cover November 5, 1927
Oil on Canvas
28" x 16"

Liberty Magazine Cover August 17, 1929
Oil on Canvas
28" x 16"

We are so proud to show just a few of the 35
Leslie Thrasher paintings we recently acquired.

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the illustrated gallery

LESLIE THRASHER (1889-1936)

Liberty Magazine Cover, February 16, 1929
Oil on Canvas
20" x 16"

Liberty Magazine Cover, December 28, 1924
Oil on Canvas
28" x 16"

Liberty Magazine Cover, October 17, 1931
Oil on Canvas
20" x 16"

Saturday Evening Post Cover, January 16, 1937
Oil on Canvas
36" x 32"

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Editorial illustration for Redbook, August 1958. Mixed media on board. Photo courtesy of The Society of Illustrators, NY

John La Gatta, 1938

JOHN LAGATTA

by Daniel Zimmer

John La Gatta was a man who loved women. His beautiful figural illustrations appeared in most of the popular magazines of the day—the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and he regularly illustrated ads for Lucky Strike, Ivory Soap, Lux, Lifebuoy, Woodbury Soap, and many others. His career blossomed in the 1910s and '20s, during a period when magazines were the dominant medium for romantic fiction, in the story and advertising pictures, it was always the women who were at the center of attention—the men were mainly props decorating the background. His glamorous characters looked as though they belonged in a Broadway musical or a Hollywood drama, as much as in the pages of a slick magazine.

During the 1920s, when his career was at its peak, he often produced an illustration in a day, receiving a fee of $1000 per picture. He easily earned over $100,000 a year at a time when the average worker's annual income was $2,000 to $4,000. La Gatta lived lavishly, with an apartment and studio in New York, an estate on Long Island, a power boat and all the other amenities, as well as a summer residence in Woodstock, New York. He had a long and successful career in a field that he dominated well into the 1940s.

After moving to California at the start of World War II, La Gatta found a new career as a teacher while he continued to paint for himself. His enthusiastic understudied, he was a demanding teacher who passed a lifetime of knowledge on to a new generation of artists. His work left an indelible mark on the history of advertising and illustration, and his stylish glamorous girls joined sailor in posterity with the Gibson Girl, the Christy Girl, Coles Phillips' Fade-away Girl, and the ballet of Harrison Fisher.

THE BEGINNING

John La Gatta was born in Naples, Italy on May 26, 1894. His father Louis was a sophisticated man, interested in art and beautiful things. His mother, Concettina deVivo, was from an established family. Her father was a businessman who traveled internationally, and her brother was in the church. The family traced its lineage to the entourage of Charles, count of Anjou, the founder of the second Angevin Dynasty and brother of King Louis IX of France.

A sickly child, La Gatta had difficulties early on. "I was not well, and instead of using oxygen tanks as they do today to keep a newborn baby alive, I was put into a basket in an open

Editorial illustration for Associated Sunday Magazine, March 16, 1941

Advertising illustration for Resinol Soap, 1947

carriage and placed alongside a driver who whipped his horses to go three fastest. Hold pixels up: lords trumps resulting at intervals along the Bay of Naples."

Despite this, La Gatta spent his earliest years in genteel surroundings. His parents' apartment had marble floors, crystal chandeliers, festooned draperies flowing from tall windows, and an outdoor piazza with a Mediterranean red floor and stone balustrade. The grand manner in which John La Gatta would live during his successful days as an illustrator had their roots in those early days of splendor.

It was in Naples that La Gatta attempted his first drawings, depicting soldiers on the backs of discarded business cards.

When he was three or four years old, his mother died in childbirth. Following her death, his father pursued a number of largely unsuccessful business ventures in Brazil. He then returned to New York to work as a jewelry designer. He achieved a modicum of success, and soon sent for his son to join him in the big city.

In later years, La Gatta could only recall vague memories of his new life in turn-of-the-century New York. He and his father were joined by his sister Rosalia, and then by his new stepmother, Claudia Maria Fatorusso, a New Yorker of Neapolitan ancestry. Other than at home, the only place where young La Gatta could find refuge from the mean streets of the Lower East Side was in church. There he became an altar boy and a member of the choir.

Young John La Gatta

By contrast, life in the real world was a challenge. La Gatta's heavy accent made him a target for the neighborhood children, and he was forced to stand up for himself and fight on a regular basis. Due to frequent misunderstanding of the language, he broke rules and was punished without understanding his crimes. He was often miserable and frustrated as a child.

Four years after arriving in America, Louis La Gatta bought a piece of land on Long Island in Corona, New York. With its fields, woods, and wild animals, life in Corona held great charm for John La Gatta. But he was again faced with discrimination, as he spoke with an accent that he could not seem to correct. Taunted by classmates and teachers alike, he was isolated again.

As he grew a little older, La Gatta realized that his father's business efforts were not particularly successful. He knew that he needed to begin earning money for himself, so after school he distributed handbills for the Atlantic & Pacific grocery store, and ran errands for other local businesses. He was as industrious as he could be, but remained troubled with health problems during this period, with colds, influenzas, and a bellyache that he recalled as a kind of anorexia.

Because La Gatta was earning his own money, he could now afford to buy drawing pencils and paper. Louis La Gatta rented a space on Nassau Lane in Manhattan to charge jewelry, but for John, "the real value in being there was that the walls

Advertising illustration. Photo courtesy of Manhattan House, NY

were lined with superbly drawn charcoal figures" which inspired him to become an artist. He made many copies of these figures, some of which were seen by his father's friend Harry McManus, a shareholder dealer and amateur artist who worked with a hand mirror every Sunday. McManus not only invited La Gatta to sit in on his life drawing sessions, but took him to see exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Only a few months earlier, La Gatta had not known such worlds existed.

Soon Louis La Gatta fell ill. His son thought he might become a jeweler like his father, but Harry McManus had other ideas. McManus helped La Gatta enroll in the New York School of Fine and Applied Arts, which had just been taken over by Frank Alvah Parsons, the former head of The Chase School of Art. There he would study with Parsons, Kenneth Hayes Miller, and Harvard Giles.

In the fall of 1919, at 15 years of age, La Gatta began classes with students five or more years older than himself. Finally he was with by mature adults who didn't ridicule his talent. After a period of making studies from plaster casts, La Gatta was transferred to the life classes where the students drew from nude models. At first he was ashamed to see naked bodies, but he quickly fell into the routine of working from the nude.

Life, August 1, 1918

always short on funds, and afraid that he might have to leave school for lack of tuition. La Gatta was thrilled when he won a scholarship for life drawing class, and a first prize for a window display he created for the popular lingerie emporium.

La Gatta's second term (1910–1911) was a successful continuation of the first, with the school's head, Frank Parsons, addressing him as "My young Raphael!" At this time La Gatta met Frank Andrews, a bit part actor with the Vitagraph Company. He was older, handsome, and magnificently tailored, and Andrews's family took young La Gatta under their wing. One day he went with Frank to the Vitagraph studios in Flatbush, where they were making a three-reel thriller called *A Million Dollar Theft*. Pulled out from the crowd of observers, the actors gave La Gatta a gendarme's costume and pressed him into service as an extra in a few scenes.

Back home in Corona, his new-found fame landed him the lead role in a local church production, for which he was asked to grow a mustache. His stage debut was a great success and he found himself "surrounded proudly by girls who shook my hand and embraced me, saying how good the play was and how nice I looked with my new mustache." La Gatta did not shave his upper lip from that point on.

At home, Louis La Gatta was unwell, and because his failing eyesight interfered with business, money was scarce. Young John prepared a portfolio of samples and went out to find work. He was immediately hired on at Bloomingdale's, where his overwhelming interest far exceeded money but with an ever growing frustration. His employers did not encourage originality, so he did what he considered hack work for over a year, juggling school lovers with his scholarship for the sake of his family.

MOVING UP

Eventually La Gatta got in touch with Josh Brady, a friend from his early days at art school. La Gatta explained how he was wasting his talents at Bloomingdale's, and Brady put his friend in touch with noted cover artist Hubert Wildhack, who not only let both young artists share his large studio space, he also introduced La Gatta to a few editors and art directors he knew, one being John Armes Mitchell, art editor and one of the founders of *Life* magazine. At his suggestion, La Gatta submitted a sketch for his first magazine cover—a picture of a girl playing tennis produced in a Gellot Hallpé–like style. To his amazement, Mitchell bought the cover—and eight more—for $150 each, a sum that made La Gatta's head swim.

Amazingly La Gatta didn't know what to do with the checks. "As the checks came in, I folded them and put them in my hip pocket, where they stayed. All never been on a bank. I was shy, and ashamed that I didn't know what to do with checks." Soon his rear checks showed signs of wear. Dressed in his only wrinkled suit, he presented himself to the teller at the National City Bank on Fifth Avenue. After being directed to a bank officer, who verified the validity of his checks, La Gatta was taught how to use a checking account and given his first checkbook. He stayed with the bank for 25 years.

Exposure in a national magazine instantly boosted La Gatta's profile. He illustrated a few jokes written by Arthur Crawford for *Life*, and then he landed a job with the Hoover Vacuum Cleaner Company. Nelson Saunders, the ad buyer for Hoover, had come from Cleveland to induce Bob Wildhack to do some work for him. Wildhack was too busy with other assignments, so La Gatta was given a shot and his work was a success. Saunders soon wrote from Cleveland, inviting La Gatta out to work for him, but Wildhack discouraged it, saying New York was the center of the illustration universe. For the moment La Gatta politely declined the offer, never suspecting how his future would become entwined with Saunders.

In November of 1916, a 22-year-old La Gatta decided to head out to Chicago to meet with a few of the large Midwest advertising agencies. He had been fighting his restless to leave the big city for months, but recently some successful out-of-town art services were luring artists away with promises of more work and higher pay. He thought he owed it to himself to check out the opportunities.

While en route to Illinois, La Gatta got a sudden impulse to get off the train in Cleveland instead. This was the home of the Saunders Studios the outfit he had turned down a few years before. Though his ticket was to Chicago, he could get off in Cleveland, have some breakfast, and then call up Nelson Saunders for an impromptu appointment.

SWANN
AUCTION GALLERIES

Charles Addams, Mickey Mouse and cartoon bandit in Tex Avery short (MGM, Entrapment, 1939). Illustration for September 29.

Illustration Art

September 29

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Advertising illustration for Procter and Gamble, 1920s

Advertising illustration for Blue Bonnet margarine, 1920s

La Gatta found Nelson Amadeo to be an affable and agreeable man, and after three meetings, during which they came to mutually acceptable terms of employment, he invited the artist back to his home to celebrate election night.

As fate would have it, the Amadeos had also invited Nelson's cousin, Florence Baptista Olds, who was a student at the Cleveland Schools of Art. Florence recalled, "Soon the door opened and Nelson entered, followed by a very handsome young man in a trench coat. When I caught the name, I realized he was the one who had won an Honorable Mention at a local art show and was on the cover of Life!" La Gatta, too, remembered the moment: "She stopped playing the piano when we were introduced and, being an art student, she recognized my name. She seemed pleased at the introduction, but remained poised, feminine reserve, which I liked very much."

Florence Baptista Olds, ca. 1918

Winning Florence Olds would not be easy. What La Gatta discovered that night, Amadeo's cousin, he was determined—he didn't want to get involved with someone from the host's family. Another obstacle was the existence of Florence's fiancé from Pittsburgh, though at the time La Gatta knew nothing about him.

In 1917, after the United States declared war on Germany, La Gatta registered with the draft and was classified 4A, as principal supporter of his father and stepmother. That summer, he went for ten days to a summer retreat on Fishers Island in Lake Erie as the guest of the Olds. Spending more time with Florence, La Gatta's attachment deepened and he "felt that my life had to be with her from then on; nothing else was more important!" Though Florence had already planned a wedding with her previous beau, with a date set and invitations already mailed, she broke her existing engagement and planned a future union with John La Gatta.

The new couple's engagement was announced shortly thereafter, and they were married on January 3, 1918, at the Olds' home in Villa Beach. The marriage was a true working partnership. An art school student herself, Florence would grow to become her husband's best critic.

Preparing to embark on his honeymoon to Chicago, La Gatta received word that the Amadeo Studio had gone out of business. A savings account he had left in the company's care disappeared overnight, and he was left virtually penniless.

In a gesture of generosity, the Olds's turned over their Villa Beach home to the newlyweds. While the couple was struggling to make ends meet, La Gatta got a break from Arthur Sullivan, art director of the advertising firm of N.W. Ayer in Philadelphia. The assignment was for a weekly ad in the *Saturday Evening Post* for the U.S. Rubber Company.

In March 1918, the couple made a trip to Philadelphia. Upon his arrival, La Gatta was informed that Sullivan had joined the service and was no longer with the agency. An assistant art director explained that the U.S. Rubber campaign had been canceled, but not to worry, as there was still plenty of work. La Gatta set up a studio in their hotel room, using a broken piece of marble from the fireplace as a palette, the underside of a drawer for a chewing board, a large house spittoon for a water jar, and an upside-down chair for a drawing table. He produced his first illustration and was paid immediately, which allowed him to settle the hotel bill.

With La Gatta's work for N.W. Ayer appearing in national magazines, he began to land a number of plum assignments, one of them a billboard poster for Society Brand men's clothes. In another turn of events, illustrator N.C. Wyeth, who had been working on a campaign for Blue Bonnet margarine, became ill and La Gatta was called upon to do the last painting of the campaign, a double-page spread for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Unsure of his ability to produce the job on cue, a moment he clearly used, La Gatta at first turned down the assignment. Knowing that they needed the money, Florence convinced John to reconsider, and soon La Gatta told the art director he would take the job after all—three years to the month after setting up a huge easel at Pennsylvania Station. His painting was favorably received.

Soon after, La Gatta entered a competition held by General Motors. He won $1,000 for both the first and second prizes.

Editorial illustration for the Saturday Evening Post, 1930. Mixed media on board, 24" x 21.5". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Dallas.

Advertising illustration for Ivory Soap, *Pictorial Review*, September 1920

Editorial illustration, circa 1920s

Determined to make New York his home base, the following month La Gatta signed a generous one-year contract with the Etheridge Company art service. He relocated to Baldwin Harbor, Long Island, and began commuting daily to a small studio in Greenwich Village. In their new town, the La Gattas played bridge and golf and went fishing and on picnics. John even learned how to play golf.

A NEW DIRECTION

Life was good, but La Gatta learned that he was being typecast as an illustrator of blue-collar workers. He wanted to paint beautiful women, but he wasn't sure how to change direction. He spoke to Francis Johnson, art director of the J.W. Thompson advertising agency, and Johnson's response was a hearty belly laugh. Johnson considered himself an authority on beauty and he predicted La Gatta's woman would probably "resemble a long-haired workingman with a skirt on." Though Johnson would be proven wrong, at the time La Gatta felt that it had "had a rail, it would have been between my legs."

In 1920, convinced that he was ready for a change, La Gatta decided not to renew his contract with Etheridge. The contract was for $10,400 a year, at a time when the average pay for a factory worker on the Ford assembly line was $1,500, but he wanted to try for bigger and better things. He and Florence rented out the Baldwin Harbor house, packed the car with art materials, and headed to Woodstock, New York.

Roughing it for six months in the woods, with no running water, La Gatta drew and painted his wife Florence and created a new portfolio that would change his life. When he returned to New York in October, he made the rounds and presented his samples. It took some doing to convince the art directors that he was able to switch from making pictures of workingmen in overalls to painting glamorous women, but his first published efforts were thoroughly convincing, and his sophisticated vision of femininity gave his older rivals a shock. Frederic R. Gruger referred to La Gatta's "chromium-plated women" and professed his inability to compete with them.

In short order, La Gatta sold everything in his portfolio and his days of drawing workmen in overalls were over. As soon as his new work began to appear in print, jobs poured in. He was now working around the clock, seven days a week.

La Gatta's studio on Bank Street in Greenwich Village was an easy commute from Baldwin and soon became a home away from home for the couple. By 1922, La Gatta's client list included Ivory Soap, International Silver Company, Rastad Soap, Ajax Rubber Company, and Fleischmann's Yeast. That year he was also commissioned to illustrate several fashion pages a month for *Woman's Home Companion*. He began to import gowns from internationally-known French and American designers to keep him abreast of current styles.

EDITORIAL ILLUSTRATION

In 1923, art director Arthur McGough of the Saturday Evening Post brought a manuscript to La Gatta. Though the artist had never illustrated a story in his life, McGough pointed out that the dramatic quality in La Gatta's advertising work could lead to being a top illustrator of fiction. The illustrations appeared in April 1923, just before the La Gattas embarked on a three-month trip to Paris.

Woman's Home Companion assigned La Gatta work at the Parisian couturiers Paton, Worth, Lanvin, Molineux and others. Bamberger's department store also asked him to work on a series, using fashionable Parisian settings such as Longchamps race track, and chic restaurants as backdrops. Another client, Djer-Kiss perfumes, had him produce a French scene as well.

Upon his return to New York, La Gatta was eager to pick up

where he'd left off. He was forced to turn away work, as he was overwhelmed with top-paying advertising jobs from companies including The French Line, Raines, Cram & Pike Stationery Company, Allen A. Company hosiery, Princess clothing, and Rinaldi's Dress Shields.

Following the publication of his story illustration in the Saturday *Evening Post*, La Gatta began doing editorial work for the other top magazines—but strangely he did not hear from the *Post* again. La Gatta ran into McKeogh at a cocktail party and soon discovered that George Horace Lorimer, the editor of the *Post*, was not a fan of his illustrations. Even though McKeogh liked them very much, his hands were tied.

In what must have been a satisfying moment, La Gatta got a call from Pierce Johnston, the art director who had laughed in his face and sent him out of his office with his tail between his legs. Now the art director for Woodbury's soap advertising, he desperately wanted the "La Gatta look" for his campaign—a look which emphasized sophisticated feminine elegance.

Meanwhile, a new art director at the *Saturday Evening Post* asked La Gatta to illustrate a story. Not eager to be rejected by Lorimer, he turned it down. The art director insisted, stating that Lorimer had changed his tune…his sons were ardent admirers of La Gatta's beautiful women. Proven them are, La Gatta became a regular contributor to the *Post*. He even became good friends with Lorimer.

Editorial illustration for Pioneer's Home Companion, July 1932

Editorial illustration, Cassell weapon, ink, and watercolor on board, 20.5" x 31.5". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

From 1925 to the early 1940s, La Gatta's work appeared regularly in *McCall's*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *American Magazine*, *Liberty*, *Pictorial Review*, *The Delineator*, *Collier's*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and more. He illustrated stories for such authors as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Somerset Maugham, Edith Wharton, Agatha Christie, and countless others.

A HOME TO SANDS POINT

The Bank Street studio soon became too small, as La Gatta needed more space to pose his models on furniture, and his scenes required more elaborate lighting conditions. His status was growing, as was his income, and it was time to create a more refined living and working environment. He found a house in the midst of being constructed on Barkers Point Road in Sands Point. As it was only two-thirds finished, there was an opportunity for the La Gattas to make custom alterations. For the next 12 years, the couple happily "built and rebuilt, added to, insulated and terrazzo-proofed" the place, a Norman-style house situated on a wooded lot.

As La Gatta's commute into New York was now too time-consuming, he decided to construct a studio on his property. He designed the studio with the same attention to detail he brought to everything. He imagined "thick walls, slate roof borne on heavy, aged wooden beams and rafters, a hanging corner window with small leaded glass panes. On the inside: wide, hardwood boards, and a small section upstairs with a balcony and small dressing room and bathroom for models." So that the luxury beams would look authentically old, he dismantled a barn in Long Island and harvested the original beams. The enormous fireplace would accept six foot logs, and the balcony housed heavy etching equipment—though La Gatta rarely had time to experiment with print-making.

When *Cosmopolitan* writer Emily Carter came out to Sands Point, she described the studio fireplace as big enough to "roast an ox," and that La Gatta was living a life that exploded the myth of the starving artist who must endure "hardship, poverty ... frayed edges ... shaky careers ... spiritual conflict."

This was a period of intense activity but La Gatta wanted to observe such cultural rituals. One of the few things that pulled him away from his drawing board or work on the house was

La Gatta's studio in Sands Point

Editorial illustration, Mixed media on paper, 24" x 22". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for The Saturday Evening Post, November 30, 1929. Oil on canvas, 40" x 32". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, ha.com

to have lunch with editors such as Mr. Lorimer of the Post, or Eric Schaler of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. He would also meet with art directors to develop new advertising campaigns for such clients as McCallum Silk Hosiery, Vivaldi Motor Oil, Bulldog's Pep cereal, Spalding bathing suits, Ivory Soap, Postum, Grape Nuts, Holeproof Hosiery, the Sterling Silversmiths Guild of America, and Johnson & Johnson's Modess sanitary napkins.

John La Gatta had now become a celebrity. There were print and radio interviews, invitations to judge beauty contests, play openings and nightclubs, and occasional personal appearances. According to a *Redbook* poll, La Gatta was the top illustrator in the country (in other such popularity contests he usually landed in the top five). He was asked to lecture and teach at Pratt Institute, and the Art Students League. Lacking confidence, he refused offers to lecture and, with regret, felt he didn't have the time to teach. Once, he agreed to speak at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, imagining he would speak to a small group of high school students. Upon his arrival, he found a huge crowd of over 600 people overflowing into the halls.

This was a busy time for the La Gattas. In addition to a furious work schedule, there was a non-stop flow of visits of builders, gardeners, and housecleaners to contend with, as well as luncheons, dinners, and trips to the theater. For exercise, La Gatta played golf at the North Hempstead Golf Club. He also acquired a 34-foot cruiser and joined the Manhasset Bay Yacht Club.

La Gatta's yacht, the *Gemini III*

In 1931, La Gatta bought a Packard, a Convertible Phaeton with a special body by Dietrich with a 146-inch wheelbase. Upon leaving New York to take delivery of the car in Los Angeles, La Gatta was commissioned by *Photoplay* magazine to produce a series of drawings of the most glamorous movie stars of the day. He completed a feature on Joan Crawford but found it too stressful to continue on the project because of the stars' erratic schedules and (more likely) their egos.

When the stock market crashed in October 1929, La Gatta did not suffer the crushing losses experienced by so many others. While he had invested $25,000 in the market some years earlier—shielding his money—he had found the stock market boring and got out. With goods and labor so cheap, the

Life, October 21, 1927

The American Magazine, February 1930

La Gatta found their lifestyle was actually enhanced during the Depression years. At this time the artist was earning about $100,000 a year—more than the President of the United States—something that gave him a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

LIFE IN THE STUDIO

La Gatta's studio, connected by a covered walkway and located about 30 feet from the house, was finally complete. The space featured a large window, 14 feet wide and full length, from floor to ceiling, as well as a model stand that could be raised and lowered with enough artificial lighting to achieve any effect he desired. The only furniture in the studio was designed to serve the model's poses.

Having gained two hours previously lost to his commute, La Gatta fell into a new routine. He began work just before dawn by studying on the progress of the paintings before him. "I learned that in total darkness, the movement of the composition and its tonality would be more evident than in regular painting light. In complete silence and alone, my mind was able to roam into ambitious fields of exploration and concepts for unstarted works." Before any models arrived, he would read the new manuscripts and visualize scenes and characters, drawing small thumbnail sketches to work out possible compositions.

Joseph Ralph Siegel poses for La Gatta, 1930

La Gatta generally hired his models from professional agencies, and he was very specific in his choices. A model who clicked might work for a long time, perhaps years. The professional beauties of the day were eager to work for the illustrator, as he could help make them into stars. One model to find fame was Susan Hayward, who posed for a *Saturday Evening Post* article in 1937 and revealed what it takes to be a professional model. In her biography, she claimed that working for La Gatta was the first step in her Hollywood career.

The artist was partial to tall brunettes, though he did use blonds and redheads—especially when these girls were pictured together. In an interview about how he discovered his models,

Pictorial work that appeared for "The Merchant of Venice," an article about La Gatta in the Saturday Evening Post, October 30, 1948

La Gatta said that in addition to the many girls he would see every week, he also canvassed the college shows, dramatic society performances, and the theater. Often it would be so hard to find exactly what he was looking for that he would exclaim, "There simply are no pretty girls!" But then he'd come upon a girl who he thought would be a successful model for years. He also found male models in unlikely places: a fisherman who had escorted his niece to the studio, a courtly old gentleman who came to collect a bill, and an insurance clerk, all of whom continued modeling after La Gatta discovered them.

After carefully reading over the manuscript and selecting just the right models, he would throw himself into his work. His prodigious output was remarked upon by art editor Peter Martin of the *Post*, who wrote, "I don't see how it is humanly possible for you to deliver six pictures at once and still keep the quality of your work at its consistently La Gatta high, but it is a great trick if you can do it." To keep up with the pace of his assignments, La Gatta would have up to three "set-ups" going at once in the studio—while one remained rented, he moved on to another.

At the start of his career, when much of his work was reproduced in black and white, charcoal was his principal medium. It suited his practice of drawing directly from the model—the medium was fast and flexible so he could work spontaneously

The American Magazine, June 1916

Ladies' Home Journal, July 1916

The American Magazine, April 1916

McCall's Style and Beauty, November 1932

Editorial illustration, Mixed media on board, 24.5 x 23". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Houston

Editorial illustration. Pastel on board, 22" × 28". Photo courtesy of Rhodesbilt Studios, NY.

Mike Hodgdon. Photo courtesy of Rhodesbilt Studios, NY.

He soon had a score of imitators, as the look of charcoal displaced the popularity of pen-and-ink and black-and-white oils. Illustrators such as John Falgoust, Robert Crowther, Richie Cooper, George Stefen, and others began to use charcoal, but none of them could match La Gatta's flair.

La Gatta worked almost exclusively on illustration board, which took less time to prepare than stretched canvas. He usually worked in oils, painting on an illustration board with enough tooth to hold his charcoal drawing. When a full-color rendering was required, he would apply fixative to the surface to protect the drawing. He could then work over this drawing with thin layers of oil, letting the charcoal drawing show through. If he needed to make a revision, he could simply wipe off the wet paint and start over, leaving the underlying drawing intact.

As a component of his technique, La Gatta would go back into the painting with turpentine and a rag and wipe away paint to reveal the shadows previously laid down in charcoal. This would add weight and volume to his figures. While the paint was still wet, he would add more charcoal drawing to strengthen his rendering.

To build texture in his figures, he would judiciously apply a palette knife loaded with color. More often, he would use the knife to lay in passages in the background to frame the more delicate foreground characters.

Once in awhile, La Gatta added pastel to his oil paintings. He occasionally produced complete illustrations in pastel alone, but he usually liked to employ the medium to create specific effects. For most of his pictures, he preferred the oil-over-charcoal technique.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

As a celebrity and a man held in high regard, it was expected that John La Gatta would join a number of professional associations and clubs. He was a member of The Dutch Treat Club, The Players Club, Artists and Writers, and The Guild of Freelance Artists. The Guild became an affiliate of the Authors League of America and worked to protect individual artists' rights. Its membership boasted many of the top illustrators of the day, including Norman Rockwell, Charles Dana Gibson, Henry Raleigh, Frank Cuneo, Wallace Morgan and Neysa McMein—all of whom were later inducted into the Society of

Ladies' Home Journal, October 1934

Ladies' Home Journal, March 1934

The Saturday Evening Post, January 6, 1934

Ladies' Home Journal, February 1934

Cover illustration for The Saturday Evening Post, July 8, 1933. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Illustrators Hall of Fame. By 1924, La Gatta was the elected president of the Guild.

A member of the Society of Illustrators from 1922 to 1938, La Gatta was saddened by the lack of public interest in their works and by the fact that many of the great illustrators were being forgotten.

The Society's annual variety show *Artists and Models* was a wildly popular stag benefit event, with tickets sold by invitation only. Written and produced by the members, it was a bawdy show that included nudity and much sexual innuendo. The show attracted not only artists, publishers, and advertising execs, but anyone who could manage to score a seat. Ticket prices soared. Following the shows was an annual, all-night party hosted by illustrator Lejaren Hiller.

For a percentage based on gross receipts, J.J. Shubert, the Broadway producer, bought the rights to use all sketches, scenery, and titles in future productions of *The Illustrators Show* (which would come to be known as *Girlie Shows*). In August 1923, the Shubert organization produced *Artists and Models*, which caused something of a scandal. Only a small percentage of the original sketches from the Society show appeared in the revue, but the names of 30 of the most famous artists of New York were used in the publicity. Partial nudity, racy language, and references to prostitution had civic and church groups up in arms, but this was great for ticket sales.

In 1927, La Gatta was vice president of the Society of Illustrators when its standing president George Wright suddenly passed away. As interim president, La Gatta was troubled by the way the Society was allocating the funds derived from the Shubert royalties. He felt that the main purpose of the Society was to one day own its own clubhouse, and to raise funds for charity for unfortunate former members. Though nothing definitive was decided while he was vice president, the money continued to earn interest. The Society eventually bought a townhouse on East 63rd Street in August of 1939; the building that houses the Society of Illustrators to this day.

DESIGNATIONS ON WOMEN

Over lunch one day in 1930, La Gatta got to talking about femininity with Eric Schuler, the editor of *Ladies' Home Journal*. Interested in La Gatta's take on the subject, Schuler invited the artist to produce a double-page spread in the magazine to showcase his vision of contemporary feminine beauty. La Gatta created an illustration depicting seven figures in floor-length gowns. The painting was so well received that Schuler asked him to write a 500-word piece to accompany it. The article, "John La Gatta, With Brush and Pen, Pictures the Return of Feminine Charms" ran in May 1930. The large painting was hung in the Lord & Taylor department store window next to beautiful mannequins in flowing gowns. La Gatta was pleased to notice that he'd anticipated the full fashion shows which featured a graceful, long look, the first hint of the change from flapper to glamour girl.

Editorial illustration. Oil on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Gilbert Hudrelius, Pastel on board. Photo courtesy of Hudrelius House, NY

Editorial Illustration. Oil on board, 24" x 32". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

In August 1946, following the success of La Gatta's collections on fashionable Ladies' Home Journal ran another spread, "John La Gatta, in Picture and Prose, Catches the Spirit of the New Decade," which depicted seven beautiful women in beach costumes. These followed "John La Gatta and Grantland Rice Portray Our Glorious Sports Girls."

A frequent judge for the Miss America Pageant, La Gatta was also called upon to select the most lovely women in a variety of venues. In 1951, he and other illustrators chose the 16 most beautiful redheads for *Hit and Run*, a Broadway revue. In 1953, he judged the 100 top models for the Arnold Constable fashion show with Rudy Vallee as the M.C. He also helped to pick the 50 most perfect Broadway showgirls for the 1950 movie *Moonlight and Pretzels*.

At age 73, John La Gatta had this to say regarding the feminine sex:

"I have always had a high regard and admiration for the feminine world. Visually, women strike me as being beautiful, graceful, magnificently proportioned. They are exciting in the subtle blending of the many curves of their bodies. Even better, however, than their physical attributes is their psychological elegance, manner of charm, poise and gracefulness. The simple tilt of the head is so charmingly expressive and the use of their hands exquisitely sensitive, as it expresses their thoughts.

"Naturally, there are many degrees of differences in women, but about ten percent of them have much of what I admire, and when they do have it, it is so devastatingly exciting. It is electrifying and numbing at the same time."

La Gatta put the fundamental appeal that women have for men this way: "Women are aware of the psychological effect they possess over men, and regardless of the degree of modesty they pursue, they play it up to suit the occasion, often with charming and ingenious bits of unnecessary and purring, subtle ways of flirtation. Often, women dramatically reveal fragments of their anatomy. It is their strength and surely one of man's incorrigible weaknesses. In most cases I believe it is simply destiny for the sake of identity."

LUCKY STRIKE

In the early 1930s, La Gatta found it physically impossible to do more work than he was doing: magazine covers, story illustrations, and drawings for national advertising campaigns took up his every waking moment. At this point, he was contacted by the agency handling the Lucky Strike cigarette account. Though La Gatta protested that he was too busy to ac-

Editorial illustration. Charcoal on paper, 22" x 30". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

cept any more work, the fee offered became so large that the artist "thought it pure insanity not to accept." He agreed to create a series of 40 charcoal drawings.

At the time, cigarette advertisements did not feature women smoking. The Lennen and Mitchell advertising agency thought it was time to take things a step further. At their initial meeting, La Gatta found nervous representatives of the American Tobacco Company. Fearful of protests from the public, and church groups, they stressed the need for the ad to be in impeccably good taste. Their requirements for the model to be depicted in the ad were many. She should not be "too homely or beauty, but wholesome as a sex symbol, not flaunting sex... conservative ... of neither extreme."

Though nervous about the assignment, La Gatta contacted the runner-up of the Miss America Pageant he had recently judged in Atlantic City. She was looking for modeling work, and he thought she would be the perfect "type" for the campaign. He produced a back view pose of the model in a beautiful dress, seated on the arm of a couch, poised gracefully with a cigarette holder in her left hand. The client was thrilled with the resulting image, and the ad ran without a single correction. In 1931, The Advertising Council of Chicago presented La Gatta with an award for one of his Lucky Strike billboards.

Following this intense period of advertising work, the artist caught up on his editorial assignments. Though he focused primarily on magazine illustration throughout the '30s, he would occasionally accept other advertising jobs for clients such as Texaco, Chase and Sanborn Coffee, Tattoo lipstick and Campbell's Tomato Juice. In the 1940s, he also worked on the Lane Linger ie campaign and revisited Woodbury Soap as a client.

Advertisement for Lucky Strike cigarettes

Editorial illustration, Oil on board, 24" x 28.75". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Grace Hartigan, Oil on board. Photo courtesy of Hartigan Estate, NY

Editorial illustration, oil on canvas, 40" x 80.5". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

CHANGING TIMES

In 1933, during a visit to the Oldest in Cleveland, Florence went to visit her family doctor. When she returned to the car, she whispered to her husband of nearly 20 years, "I am with child." On June 18, 1934, a son, John Dirk La Gatta, was born. The press covered the birth, including an item in Walter Winchell's "On Broadway" column, and congratulations poured in.

To add to the family's happiness, the La Gattas produced a little girl, Joanne Marie, on May 18, 1936.

Around this time, national magazines began to change their formats. The magazines had already reduced their dozen or so fiction stories to just one or two per issue, and filled the editorial pages with articles and large photographs. Even the covers were beginning to showcase color photography. Furthermore, the budgets for national advertising were being transferred to the radio stations, while magazines were becoming thinner. Life magazine, with its pages filled with photos, was incredibly popular and led to a greater interest in photojournalism. The development of television revealed further spheres the big advertising dollars away from print media. Soap operas and dramatic teleplays quickly overshadowed the magazine short stories and their accompanying illustrations.

Florence with John La Gatta, Jr.

La Gatta wasn't fully prepared for these changes, but he was still comfortable. Though he'd spent much of his savings and a $3000 tax bill remained outstanding, his properties were all paid for in full. In 1939, the La Gattas decided to rent their Beach Point house and move to Woodstock, where they lived for about 20 months.

The commute from Woodstock to his studio in New York, where he was still doing some commercial work, meant even less time for painting. A solution seemed to present itself in the form of a syndicated daily comic strip. Florence came up with the name "Sailor Forth." A few hundred words by his friend, writer Borden Chase, would accompany the art. La Gatta imagined he could turn out a week's worth of drawings in three days and have the rest of the week for serious paintings.

As it approached, Florence and John decided upon a true sabbatical, as a way to distance themselves from New York. They drove to Phoenix, where Florence stayed with the children at a dude ranch, while her husband continued on to Santa Monica, where he rented a house on Adelaide Drive. During his stay in 1940, La Gatta started work on *Sailor Forth*, and within six months he and Chase had enough panels to show. It was quickly bought by a number of newspapers and looked like a success.

Ladies' Home Journal, November 1935

Ladies' Home Journal, September 1936

The Saturday Evening Post, April 10, 1937

The Saturday Evening Post, May 29, 1943

Editorial illustration for Ladies' Home Journal, April 1935

Editorial illustration for *American Magazine*, February 1949. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Advertising illustration for Yardley Lipstick, published in Cosmopolitan, [1939]. Oil on board, [30.5" x 27.5". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, ha.com

Advertising illustration for Yellow Spatlick, published in Incorporated, 1938 / 39 as found, 23" x 28" / Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Dallas

Editorial illustration for Redbook, April 1931. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Unfortunately, La Gatta found it took far more expense and effort than he had anticipated, and the project had to be dropped. His work, the disappointment philosophically putting/painting first, and he was certain he would continue to be used on the better national advertising campaigns.

On December 7th, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked and war was declared. The La Gattas bought a large Mediterranean-type house on La Mesa Drive in Santa Monica, where they lived for over 11 years. During this time, La Gatta did two national advertising campaigns. One for Woodbury Soap, featuring men in the various branches of military service kissing beautiful women. The other campaign was a long series of paintings for Lovex Silk Lingerie, one of which was honored by the Art Directors Club National Exhibition of Advertising Art in 1945.

Unfortunately, the two campaigns were not lucrative enough to fully support his family. Not only did La Gatta have to sell the yacht and his various properties, but he had to borrow against his annuity. Adding to his worries, illness in the form of increasing stomach pain had begun to affect him by 1950.

In January 1951, he decided it was time to get back to comic art—one of the editors he had known earlier in his career. Before leaving, it was decided that the La Mesa house should be sold, as the La Gattas were down to the last of their capital. The house, which they had bought from the legendary film director Fritz Lang, was sold to Maurice Dekker, a partner at Price Waterhouse, the accounting firm for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Upon hearing about the prospective buyer, La Gatta wondered how a "bookkeeper" could afford the house.

Back East, La Gatta's friend and fellow artist John Gunnis arranged for a meeting between La Gatta and the art director of *Good Housekeeping*, Aaron Ermeyan. Ermeyan immediately offered La Gatta an assignment. A second assignment for *Good Housekeeping* and one for *Ladies' Home Journal* followed shortly thereafter.

Self-portrait from *Famous and Rare Art by and About 24 Contemporary Artists*, 1951

Editorial illustration, August 1951. Oil and charcoal on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Calendar illustration, unpublished

While working on the commissions, La Gatta's stomach pains increased in severity, and he found himself at Doctors Hospital having surgery for an ulcer.

The closing on the La Mesa house took place more quickly than expected, giving Florence the opportunity to head East to care for her husband. They stayed in Harbor Acres (near Santa Paula), in a house lent to them by a daughter of musician John Philip Sousa. The move was hard on their 17-year-old daughter Jeanne, who would not be able to graduate with her friends in Santa Monica. As La Gatta recalled, "every decision at that time was made not by choice but by necessity." Necessity also dictated a second surgery for the artist, following an emergency ambulance ride to Doctors Hospital one night.

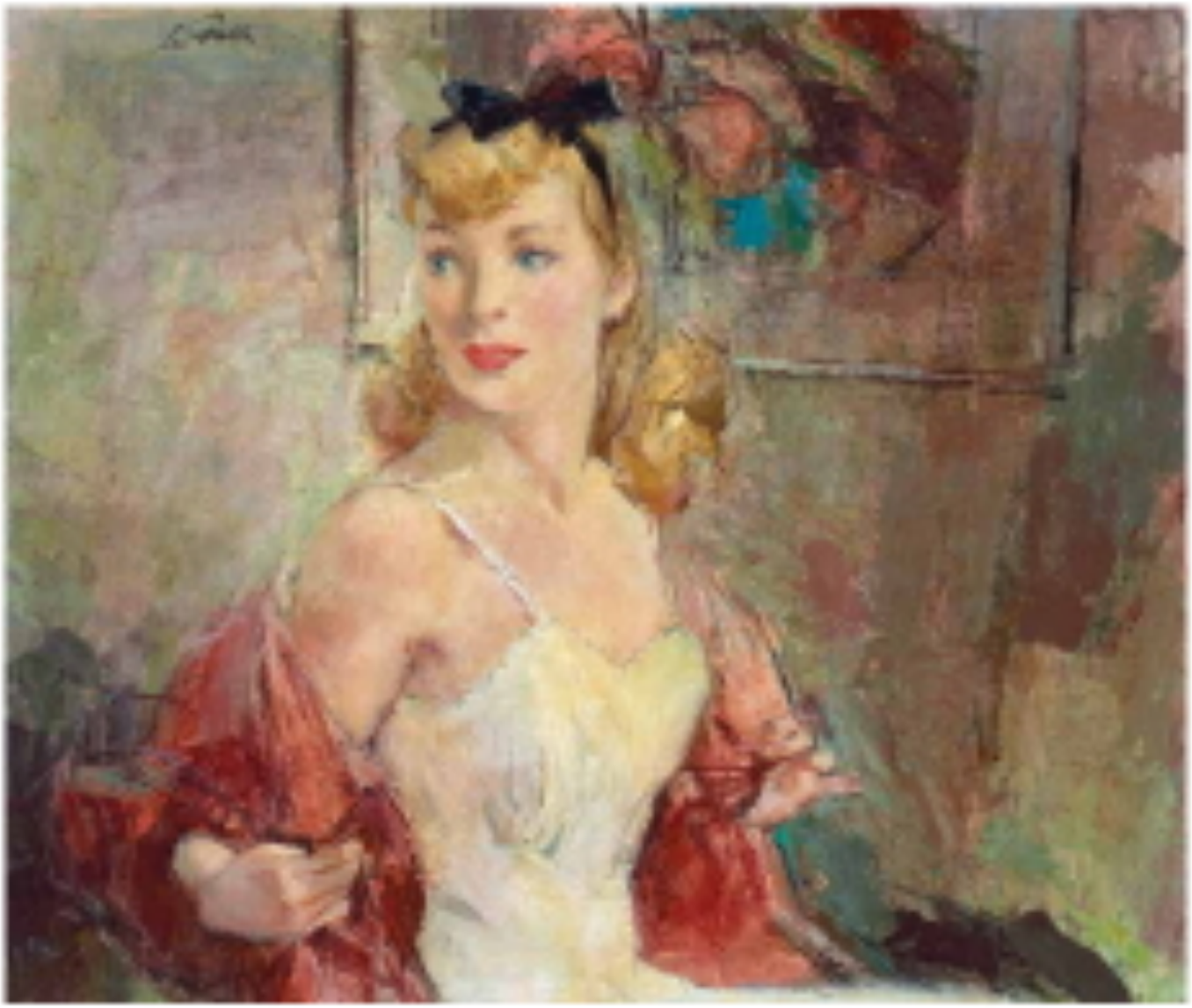
Prior to his second hospitalization, there were several interviews with the art director of Brown & Bigelow, one of the world's largest manufacturers and distributors of promotional products. The meetings resulted in an assignment to produce four paintings of pretty girls in bathing suits, with a royalty arrangement based on sales. La Gatta wanted to elevate the aesthetics of the calendar pin-up genre, but ultimately his paintings were rejected by the client for not being "realistic enough." It was a disappointing blow.

TEACHING

Low on funds and with increasingly limited prospects, La Gatta received a fortuitous call from Edward A. "Tad" Adams, the founder of Art Center School (now Art Center College of Design). La Gatta was offered the opportunity to become an instructor for the summer session in 1956. He was excited to begin a new and rewarding phase in his career.

Editorial illustration, 1935. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration for Cosmopolitan, August 1941. Photo courtesy of Rockwell Kent, NY



Editorial illustration. Oil on canvas, 20" x 24". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

In 1957, a welcome advertising job came from J. Walter Thompson—a love-painting series for a soft-drink company. Although his sketch was approved by the chief art director, the copywriter, and the advertiser, La Gatta was left to deal with a troublesome assistant who proceeded to demand 22 corrections on his first painting. Throughout his distinguished career, La Gatta was accustomed to having the respect of the best editors and art directors in the country, and had seldom been asked to do any corrections whatsoever. It was a demoralizing experience.

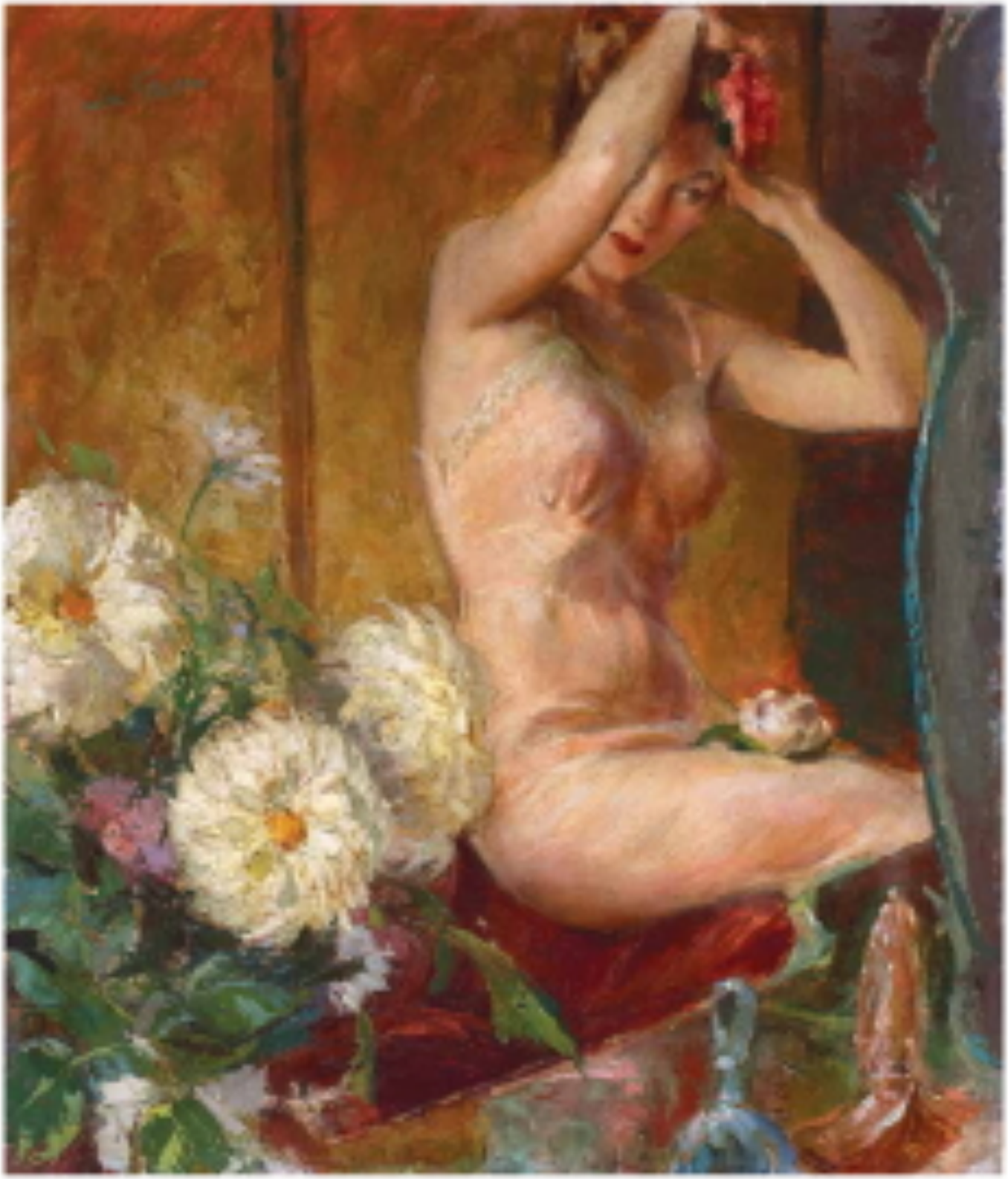
One day, while La Gatta was still working on the soft-drink assignment, Florence came by the studio to find her husband unconscious on the floor. He was rushed to Santa Monica Hospital and had emergency surgery for a perforated ulcer.

His illness and recovery resulted in the loss of the soda job, but outside of his hospitalization, La Gatta never missed a day of teaching. He was a demanding and critical instructor who expected his students to give 100% of themselves at all times. Many of his pupils would go on to become top illustrators, including artists such as Bob Peak, Burt Forbes, Mark English, Shannon Stirnweis, Charles McVicker, Jim Sharpe, Hal Aschman, and David McCall Johnson.

Because Art Center was an accredited institution and under the authority of California laws, La Gatta was forced into mandatory retirement in 1966 at the age of 72. After 36 semesters at the school, he taught his last class in May 1968. On the 30th of that month, he received a letter from President Adams informing him that Art Center College would like to award him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Fine Arts at graduation.

THE FINE ART WORLD

La Gatta was now faced with an uncertain future, but a lack of employment, continued health problems, and advancing age did not dampen his excitement for creating art. He put all of his energy into working on a collection of paintings for what he hoped would result in a one-man show.

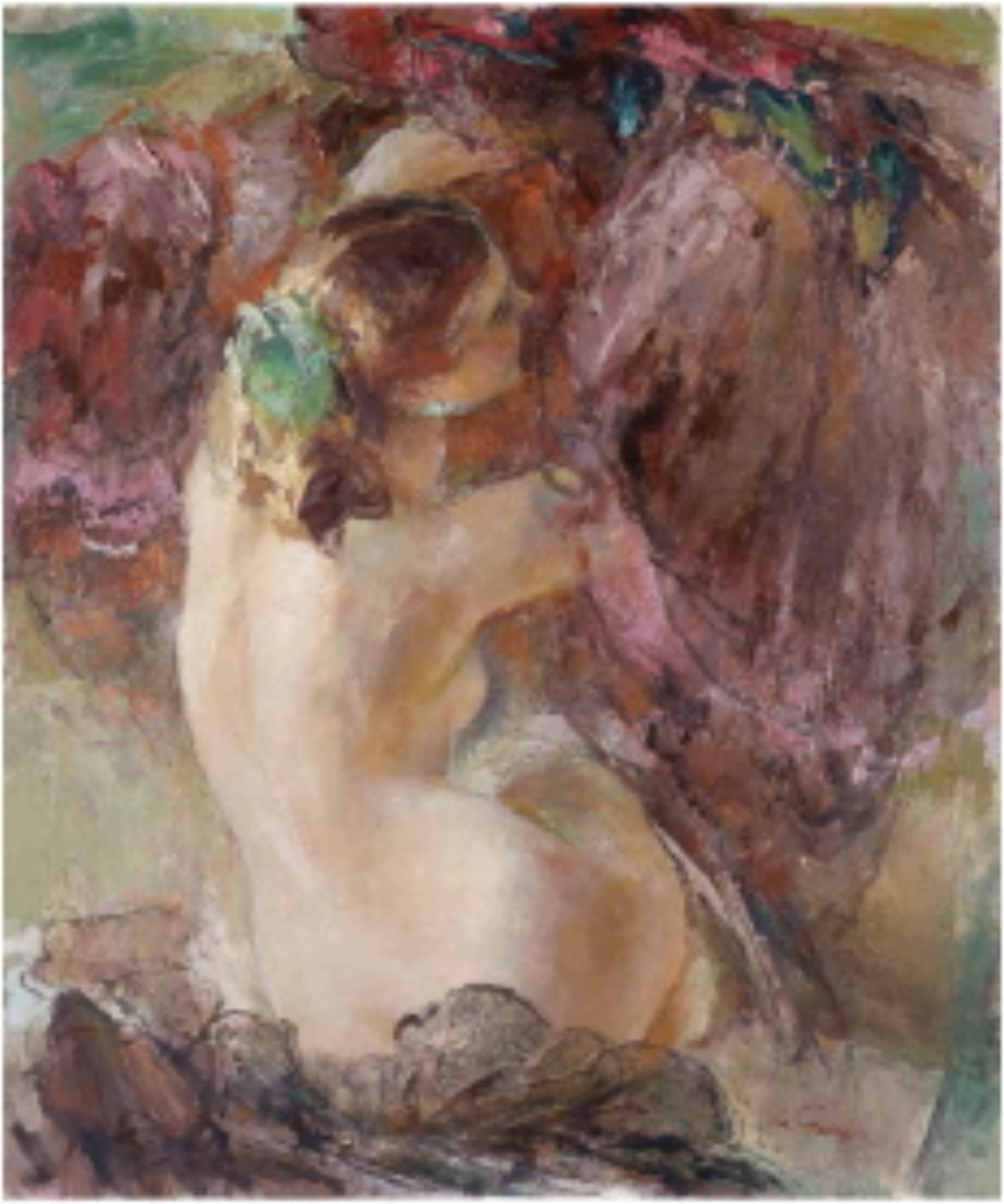


Advertising illustration for Lanvin daytime. Oil on canvas, 40" x 41". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Houston

Advertising illustration for Lanvin Liégeois. Oil on canvas board, 33" x 23". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Advertising illustration for Lanes lingerie, 88 oil canvas, 84" x 84". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Illinois

Advertising illustration for Lanes lingerie, 36-in canvas, 30" x 23". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com



Untitled. Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration, ink on board. Photo courtesy of the Society of Illustrators, NY

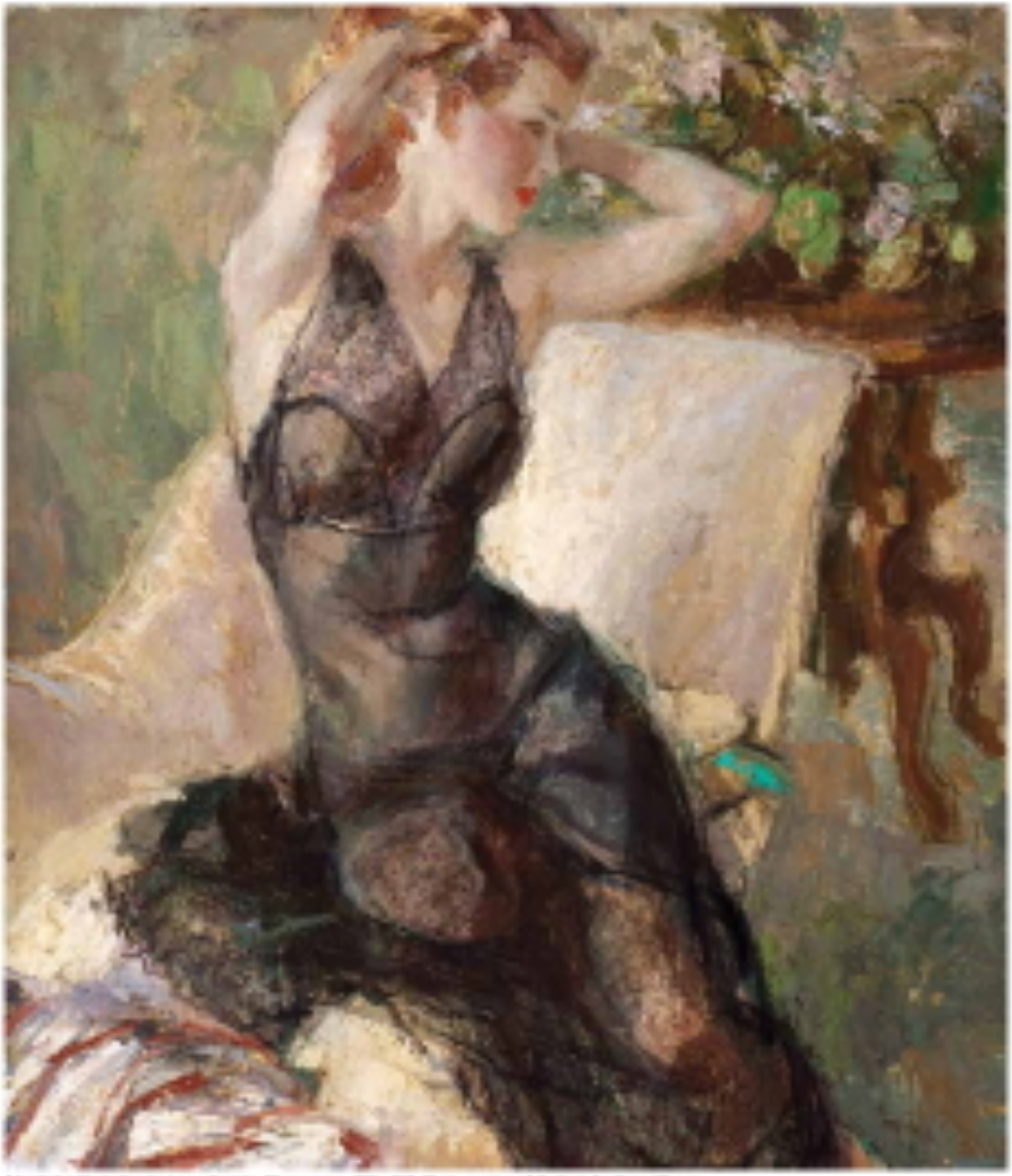
While working on that end, La Gatta sent entries to various local exhibitions. The first, titled "Rhoda," was exhibited at the Los Angeles Art Association. It was chosen by Arthur Millier, art critic of the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, and was reproduced above his column. "Rhoda" was also entered in an art exhibit at the California State Fair. Though rejected, it failed to receive first prize—a purchase prize—because La Gatta had marked it "not for sale."

Despite this early success, La Gatta subsequent five entries (including "Rhoda") were rejected. In the artist's autobiography, he admitted that the five rejections "were the most unbearable of all the disappointments I have suffered so far."

A second perforated ulcer sent La Gatta to Saint John's Hospital on November 10, 1948. He was close to death, and was given last rites in the operating room, but he eventually recovered.

For a period of weeks after this last surgery, La Gatta was ordered not to work in the studio. Nevertheless, when he was strong enough he went about the apartment repairing, cleaning, and waxing everything, which improved his physical condition. He soon developed an interest in painting again and returned to the easel.

Illustration for Woodbury Soap. Oil on canvas, 28" x 20" Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com



Advertising illustration for Lanvin fragrance. Oil on canvas, 30" x 25". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Houston

In early 1969, La Gatta sent his painting "Backstage" to the Los Angeles Annual Art Exhibit. To his disappointment, the piece was rejected. He was finally forced to acknowledge that drastic changes had taken place in the art world. At Florence's suggestion, he went to see the exhibition at the Barnsdall Park Gallleries where the reason for his rejection was made clear. Current styles favored abstraction, not representation. La Gatta was not impressed. The mainstays of art instruction, such as drawing, color, and composition, were being shamefully forsaken. He felt that prizes, awards, praise, and honor should be

Backstage, 1948. Oil on canvas

given to works with "certain elements of dignity, charm, craftsmanship, good taste ... works that have endearing qualities." The work he now on display exhibited some of these characteristics.

In 1973, at the age of 70, La Gatta judged the Central South's Art exhibition in Nashville, Tennessee. Reviewer Clara Hieronymus announced that there was little, if any, pop art, Op art, or pure abstraction in the show. The La Gattas' visit to Nashville was a special way of celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. "She's a New England Protestant," he said. "I'm an Italian-born Catholic. There couldn't be two more different backgrounds. But it has been a very good marriage, and we're both the same individualists we were when we met."

The birth of his granddaughter Alessandra Bronwyn La Gatta on June 6, 1968, and the arrival of his namesake John La Gatta II on January 4, 1974, brought him a lot of joy during this otherwise bleak time. At age 75, La Gatta frowned at the state of the art world and his place in it prompted him to abandon painting for a while. It was at this point that he began to jot down his memoirs. The act of writing helped to lift his depression.

He eventually took up painting again and in his later works, he attempted to embrace abstraction and modern styles. Though the paintings remained representational, they now featured solid shapes and the use of bold color laid on with a palette knife in broad strokes.

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

To the end, and after the effect of several of his stomach operations, La Gatta would still paint every day. He said, "Whether my work was going well or badly, I anticipated the next day with fervor. I do not believe that anyone but an artist is so richly rewarded and challenged with each painting, from start to completion. The very odors of a studio ... turpentine, varnish, fixative, and so on — are delightful." La Gatta ended his memoirs with this statement: "Deep within me, I know that I have not accomplished that one painting for which I have constantly searched and striven for always."

John La Gatta died on January 21, 1977, in Santa Monica, California. When he was inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame in 1984, John Hamilton, the Chairman of the Permanent Collections, said of the artist, "La Gatta masterfully depicted the country club set as art forms, as John O'Hara did in word form. ...His artwork was admired by the public and applauded by his fellow illustrators. The Society of Illustrators is honored to include his name with the other greats of its Hall of Fame."

On New Year's Eve the year after John died, Florence La Gatta remembered their first meeting, when the very handsome young artist arrived in his French coat at her cousin's home. "Well, we had our 50th anniversary just last year and I cannot remember any time when we were bored."

John La Gatta once said of his wife, "My greatest admiration and sympathies go to Florence, who from the very beginning has taken the brunt of it all, with courage, constant faith and the hardest kind of work. ...She is indeed the most remarkable person I have ever known. God bless her always."

Florence died in September 1982.

— *by Dan Zimmer, Jr.*

To learn more about the artist's life, read *John La Gatta* by Bill Russell, published by Madison Square Press in 2000.

Advertising illustration for Lucca Lingerie

Editorial illustration for Cellaris, 1937. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Harry Beckhoff

The Clear Line of HARRY BECKHOFF

by Daniel Zimmer

Harry Beckhoff was born November 2, 1891 in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. His parents, Abraham Beckhoff and Annie Zuckerman, both of Russian Jewish heritage, married in 1890 and had four children: Esther Beckhoff (b.1898), Harry Beckhoff (b.1891), Cecelia Beckhoff (b.1894), and Benjamin Beckhoff (b.1896). The family lived at 223 State Street in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and the father owned and operated a hardware store at 311 Maple Street.

The children attended public school and all of them went on to receive higher education.

In 1910, Harry Beckhoff was a student at Perth Amboy High School. During his high school days he studied stenography and, upon graduation in June of 1910, he entered a large meat-packing company in Jersey City as a clerk. He stayed at this job for two years, but as he longed for bigger and better things, he left that job to enter New York University and study accounting. As soon as he received his diploma he knew he didn't want to be an accountant.

His mind wanted back to his days in high school, when a desire to draw cartoons had caused him to call on the artist and designer F.G. Cooper. Cooper told him quite frankly that he showed no particular flair for humorous drawing, but he offered to give him monthly criticisms of his work. "Perhaps," Harry mused, "I just didn't give this art idea enough chance. Maybe art school is really where I belong."

To pay for his evening art classes, Harry had to work during the day. He found a job at the Louis Pedlar Art Studio doing the rudimentary tasks usually required of apprentices. For the first six months he received no salary. After a probationary period, he began receiving $5 a week, he had advanced from the first stage of cleaning up shortages and running errands to the next step of learning to do lettering. This apprenticeship continued for a year and a half, until he was eventually advanced to $40 dollars a week. "They were all nice guys," he said, "and I interrupted them on everything." He kept asking questions until he had mastered all of the skills he needed to freelance.

Editorial illustration, circa 1920s. Watercolor on board, 13" x 11". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Poster for *Her Wild Oat*, 1927. Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Poster for *Her Wild Oat*, 1927. Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Rockwell's daily schedule was grueling. He woke at 6 a.m. and took the train into New York from his home in New Jersey. After working all day at the studio, he attended George Bridgman's drawing classes at the Art Students League two nights a week. After school, he would make sketches of his fellow travelers while waiting for the mid-night train. He would finally reach home at 1:00 a.m. After five hours of sleep, he would get up and start all over again.

After three years at the League, he entered Dean Cornwell's class at Grand Central School of Art, and when Harvey Dunn took over the Cornwell class three months later, Rockwell stayed on with this influential teacher for another two years. Some of Rockwell's fellow students during these years included Neal Tapper, Dan Content, and Hazel Schaeffer. Another well-known illustrator who became a close friend at this time was James Montgomery Flagg.

While studying at Grand Central, he met and fell in love with Jessica C. Pelham, another young commercial art student. She was born November 26, 1899 in Mount Vernon, NY, of Australian ancestry. She had studied art at Cooper Union, and portraiture at the Art Students League with Samuel J. Brown. She began her career in 1920, drawing fashion illustrations for Macy's Department Store, and then worked for *Good Housekeeping* and other magazines. She lived with her mother and two brothers in North Pelham, NY, where her parents operated a popular millinery store. Her older brother, Ernest Leslie Pelham, was the art director at the La France Publishing Company.

Having gained a certain level of proficiency in lettering and decorative design, he began his career as an independent professional in those fields, as opposed to illustration. A contact named Orrington McGregor, with the Federal Advertising

Editorial Illustration Watercolor on board, 15.75" x 18.75". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration, Watercolor on board, 21.75" x 13". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Agency, gave him numerous small jobs which helped him get his career off the ground.

He soon rented an art studio at 939 Eighth Avenue at West 56th Street, which is one block south of the Art Students League where he had studied. That year the Forth Auxbery Business Directory listed his occupation as "Artist."

The first time he was listed in *Advertising Arts & Crafts*, a national directory of artists published by Lee & Kirby, was in 1926. He described his services only as "Decorative Borders, Lettering, Design, and Layout." The same listing was again reprinted in the 1927 annual directory.

All along, Beckhoff continued to study figure drawing at night.

His first published figure work was done for *Life* magazine in 1928, where his old friend F.G. Cooper was serving as an associate editor. Beckhoff had offered to clean brushes for the successful designer if, in exchange, Cooper "would, once and a while, give me an illustration job to do." He did, and Beckhoff's first important advertising commission was a series of line drawings for Van Heusen shirts.

By this time, he was ready to do magazine illustration full time. Taking four of his Van Heusen pictures, he redrew them in line and wash, marked them carefully, and set out to see some art directors. His first call on the art editor of *Country Gentleman* resulted in a commission, his first magazine illustration, published in August 1929. Other visits made at *Collier's*, *McCall's*, and *Pictorial Review*, also resulted in commissions. His most memorable series of illustrations were for stories by Damon Runyon, depicting colorful Broadway characters for *Collier's* magazine. He would go on to produce work for *The Hive*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Pictorial Review*, *American Magazine*, and more.

Editorial illustration for *Collier's*, September 9, 1916. Watercolor on board, 19" x 15". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Dallas.

Editorial illustration for Weaver's Room Composition. Watercolor on board. 17" x 17". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration. Watercolor on board. 14" x 21.25". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for Mirfield's. Watercolor on board, 18" x 18.5". Photo: courtesy of Heritage Auctions, ha.com

Collier's, December 8, 1928

As an advertising illustrator, his clients eventually grew to include Ivory Bert-A-Cut, General Foods, Gillette, Hudson, S.C. Johnson and Son, Peter Paul, Inc., Procter and Gamble, Texaco and many more.

It's interesting to note that while Beckhoff studied with Cornwell and Dunn, and was close friends with Topper, Cousins, and Schaeffer, some of these painters rubbed off on him. Instead of heavily impasto-ed, brush stroke-heavy canvases, Beckhoff produced work that was flat and graphic—greatly influenced by the French illustrators Charles Martin (1848-1934), Pierre Brissaud (1885-1964), and André Marty (1882-1974), all of whose work was frequently included in Vogue, Harper's Bazar and House and Garden during the '20s. It was this graphic, clean line style of work that would prove to be an inspiration throughout his career.

In 1910, the U.S. Census recorded Harry Beckhoff living at home in Perth Amboy with his parents and three siblings. His older sister, Esther Beckhoff, had become a lawyer and was involved in city government, while his younger sister and brother were both public school teachers.

In 1914, his father Abraham Beckhoff, who had become a prosperous manufacturer of window shades, died at the age of 61.

On March 12, 1936, Harry Beckhoff married Jessie G. Walker, who had her own thriving art career as an illustrator with many New York publishers. She had illustrated a series of articles, "To the Ladies" by Princess Alexandra

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MASTERS OF AMERICAN ILLUSTRATION – 41 ILLUSTRATORS & HOW THEY WORKED

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Editorial illustration for Collier's. Watercolor on board, 19" x 15.75". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Billboard illustration. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Rockwell's, for *Liberty* magazine, and her work appeared in McCall's, Woman's Home Companion, Collier's, and American Weekly.

After their wedding, the Beckhoff family moved to 200 Cabrini Boulevard at 179th Street in Upper Manhattan. Their apartment faced the Hudson River and the spectacular entrance of the George Washington Bridge. They rented an studio at 30 West 67th Street, whose their neighbors included such luminaries as James Montgomery Flagg, Robert Ripley, Austin Briggs, and Frank Godwin.

On October 3, 1916, their daughter Marian "Becky" Beckhoff was born. She was their only child. The widowed mother-in-law, Louise Gillette Walton (age 68), came to live with the family.

During the hot summer months the family rented a cottage on Main Street in East Hampton, NY, on Long Island.

During WWII, Janice Walton Beckhoff made portrait sketches of wounded servicemen through a popular USO program organized by the New York Society of Illustrators.

As the magazine industry began to change after WWII, and editorial illustration began to dry up, Harry Beckhoff focused on his advertising work. Realizing that he might need to sup-

Ad for Knobset Golf Balls, 1940. Watercolor on board, 14.5" x 11½". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Fine art piece, circa 1950s. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

plan set his income even further, he took his first teaching job at Vesmain School in 1944.

In 1951, the Beckhoffs moved to 36 Woods Grove Road in Westport, Connecticut. They rented art studios at 113 Main Street. The community had become the most popular area for commuting NYC illustrators, including the headquarters of the famous Artists School, which employed hundreds of local artists as instructors for the successful correspondence school. Beckhoff and several of his artist-neighbors got together regularly to evaluate and criticize each others work. Every week they went to one family's or another's for sketch groups.

On October 16, 1955 heavy rains caused disastrous flooding along the Saugatuck River in Westport, CT, which forced the National Guard to evacuate many of the residents in the area. The Beckhoff home was left in a shambles. According to Janice Vitalius Beckhoff, "It was a terrific experience. We're happy to be alive. I haven't even thought about the costs, but most of the stuff will have to be thrown out. Everybody is trying to be a good sport about it, but when I look at the ruins..."

In 1970, the Beckhoffs moved to 100 Brookside Drive in Bridgeport, CT. In his final years, Harry concentrated on scenes of marinas and piers, boats and seascapes primarily in Martha's Vineyard, where he spent the summer months.

Harry Beckhoff died in Bridgeport, Connecticut, on January 3, 1975, at the age of 77. His wife lived another four years, and died at the age of 83 on October 31, 1983.

Their only child, Marian "Becky" Beckhoff, never married. She died at the age of 44 in Edgartown, Massachusetts, on January 27, 1988.

— *by Daniel Zimmer, 2016*

Thanks to Brad Guenther, Matt Fields, and Richard Swanson for valuable assistance. Thanks to The Society of Illustrators Heritage Archives, Illustration House, NY, Fields Illustration, NY, Manuel Askoff, and Brad Agnew for providing photographs and scans of their artwork and original artwork used in this article.

BOCKHOFF'S TECHNIQUE

Bockhoff's illustrations were so simply rendered, with confident linework and clean washes of watercolor, they often appeared spontaneous. But these were not sketches summoned from his imagination. They were carefully composed and executed renderings, based upon photographic reference and numerous sketches and studies. The final results might appear almost effortless, but tremendous work went into creating each picture.

One of the most interesting aspects of Bockhoff's method was the scale of his working drawings and sketches. These were often tiny, only a few inches in size. (See the reproductions on this page.) Many artists make "thumbnails," but in this case all of Bockhoff's sketches and compositional drawings were unusually small. His friend James Montgomery Flagg was consistently amazed at these "tiny drawings." The artist himself could not explain how he got started making such miniature and exact studies.

In a profile of Bockhoff published in *American Artist*, January 1947, he described his process. He stated that he never submitted sketches to art editors, but mainly outlined his concept in conversation, explaining the situation he intended to illustrate. After getting an O.K. on his idea, he proceeded to gather his props and models. He would photograph them in the studio, until after he had all of the visual reference material he needed. He would craft his finished compositions—tiny little working drawings that were complete in every detail, even down to facial expressions.

If a picture required a large number of figures, he would draw each character on a small sheet of tracing paper and then reposition each piece on an illustration board with tape until they were just right.

In his final step, he would enlarge the working drawing five or six times to pencil by use of a pantograph, and then ink-in the lines with a fine brush and pen. While he corrected the drawing when necessary, he seldom added any detail of line or pattern that was not already present in his miniature study.

If his illustration required color, he would create a series of color studies on tracing paper placed directly over his pencil drawing. He often used colored pencils at this stage, but he occasionally used watercolors. When he arrived at a satisfactory color arrangement, he would complete his illustration in color and, "from there on, it is just a matter of laying on flat watercolor washes into the boundaries of patterns I have previously set down."

Although he used photography to create his pictures, the final humorous result was anything but photographic.

ABOVE: Working drawings (shown actual size). Photos courtesy of Gould Lipskolf

Editorial illustration for Vallarta, September 29, 1939. Watercolor on board, 18" x 13". Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

ABOVE: Reference photographs

Working drawing (shown without dog)

Editorial illustration for Collier's, July 31, 1943. Watercolor on board, 18" x 18". Photo courtesy of Manuel Gast

1943: Advance photograph

Working drawing (shown actual size)

Color study. Watercolor on tracing paper. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Working drawing (shown actual size)

Editorial illustration for Collier's, June 11, 1910. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Working drawing (Artwork unrelated: Artist)

Editorial illustration for Collier's. Photo courtesy of Museum Asset

ABOVE: Thumbnail sketches. Photos courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Color sketch. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

ABOVE: Reference photos.

Working drawing

Working drawing

Editorial illustration

Working drawing for abundant entertainment

Reference photo for Abundant entertainment

Reference photo for Abundant entertainment

Color sketch for Saturday Evening Post advertisement. Watercolor on drawing paper

"Well, play it, Horace — what are you waiting for, a map?"

A ball in the hand is worth . . . well, that depends on the ball. Want to make sure you're using the best? . . . just ask your Pro which ball he recommends. Ask his advice on all your golf equipment — and buy only what he suggests.

Advertising illustration for Acushnet Golf Balls, 1941

Advertising illustration for Anaheim Golf Balls in *Collier's*, June 13, 1942. Watercolor on board, 13.25" x 11"
Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Advertising illustration for Arrowhort Golf Balls in the Saturday Evening Post, June 1951. Watercolor on board, 16.25" x 13"
Photo courtesy of Northlight Auctions, Malvern

Editorial illustration for Esquire, December 4, 1937. Photo courtesy of Rhonard Kuest

Editorial illustration for Esquire, April 13, 1940. Photo courtesy of Rhonard Kuest

Editorial illustration for Collier's, June 11, 1949. Photo courtesy of Walsh Art

Editorial illustration for Collier's, October 31, 1936. Photo courtesy of Nanna Jost

Editorial illustration for Gallo's, December 26, 1953. Watercolor on board, 14.5" x 11.75". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Gilbert Rodriguez. Photo courtesy of RenoWest

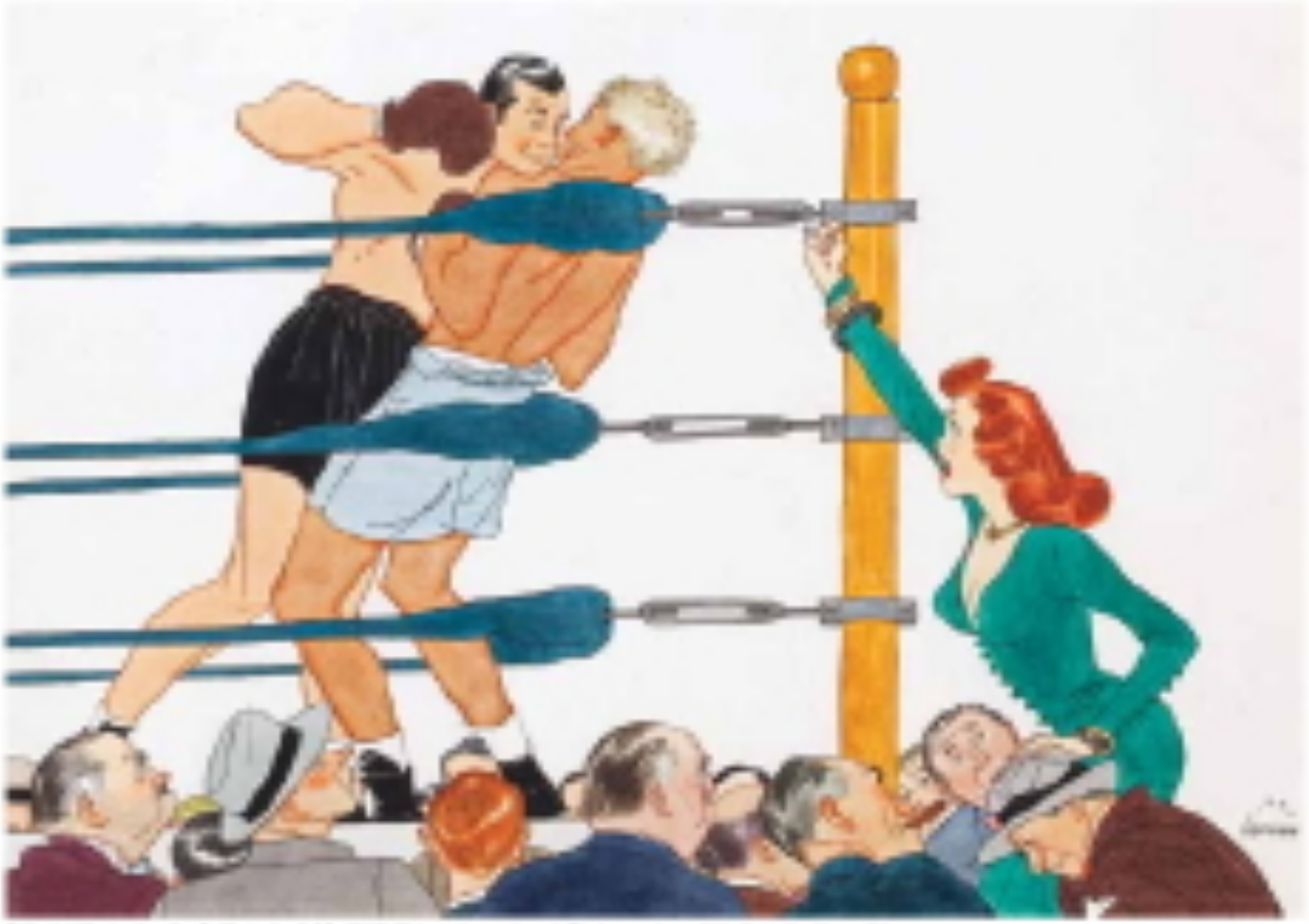
Editorial illustration for Collier's, November 29, 1941. Watercolor on board, 18.219" x 24.207". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for Collier's, December 30, 1944. Watercolor on board, 15.5" x 21.5". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for Collier's, October 21, 1944. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Museum Asset

Editorial illustration for Atelier's Watercolor carousel, 30" x 40". Photo courtesy of Bullfrogs Institute, Illinois.

Editorial illustrations. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Kraft



Editorial illustration for Collier's, April 1 |, 1944. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Ethereal illustration for Collier's, November 13, 1953. Watercolor on board. Photo: courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for Collier's, Watercolor on board, 24.125" x 18". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for Collier's, February 25, 1950. Watercolor on board, 17" x 22". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for Collier's. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Working drawing

Editorial illustration for Collier's. Photo courtesy of Manoni Ascoli

Editorial illustration for Collier's, 1948. Photo courtesy of Illustrationhouse

Editorial illustration for Collier's, December 22, 1947. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration for Collier's, September 7, 1946. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY.

Editorial illustration for Collier's, Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration for Collier's, Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration for *Collier's*, December 30, 1911. Watercolor on board. Photo: courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration for *Collier's*. Watercolor on board. Photo: courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration. Watercolor on board. 24" x 20". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Allo.com

Editorial illustration. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration. Watercolor on board, 24" x 22". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Dallas.

Editorial illustration. Watercolor on board, 14.5" x 19.5". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Dallas.

Editorial illustration. Watercolor on board, 15.75" × 13.88". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for Collier's, May 22, 1915. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration for Collier's. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration for Collier's, February 23, 1935. Watercolor on board, 18" x 24.5". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for Collier's, 1945. Watercolor on board, 17.5" x 24". Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Editorial illustration for Collier's. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY

Editorial illustration for Collier's. Watercolor on board. Photo courtesy of Illustration House, NY


THIS IS THE ENEMY

ARTISTS FOR VICTORY

by John Witek

August 14, 1942. The United States had been at war for nine months when the Museum of Modern Art in New York City announced that it had joined forces with The Council for Democracy and with Artists For Victory, Inc. to sponsor a National War Poster Competition. All artists living in the U.S. or its dependencies were invited to compete for nine $100 war bonds.

The sponsors were ambitious. They wanted a competition that would provide the government with graphics that expressed why we were fighting and what we hoped to achieve. The contest would be a new and simple way for artists to lend their talents to the war effort, and if it raised the standards of poster design to a higher level, that would be good, too.

Ultimately, artists from 48 states submitted 2,324 entries based on themes chosen from Franklin Roosevelt's first war message to Congress which the president delivered on January 6, 1942. The themes were: Production, War Bonds, The Nature of the Enemy, Loose Talk, Share Work or Free Work, The People Are on the March, Deliver Us From Evil, and Sacrifice. Each theme came with a required slogan such as "The Enemy Is Listening," or "Victory Starts Here."

The contestants were as varied as the posters they created.

Among them was a professor of industrial design from Alfred University, a sculptor who carved statues out of ice for wedding receptions, a freelance photographer whose designs for wooden tableware had gone national, and a 23-year-old Austrian émigré named Henry Koerner, who had witnessed fascist oppression first hand.

Koerner grew up in Vienna where he studied book jacket and poster design at the city's distinguished Graphic Academy of Applied Art. He also studied with some of Europe's most accomplished graphic designers, Viktor Theodor Slama. When the Nazis swept into Austria in 1938, Koerner fled to Italy and eventually made his way to the United States. His parents and brother were not as fortunate, however. They perished in a Nazi death camp before the war had run its course.

In New York, Koerner found work designing book jackets for detective and mystery novels. He submitted a number of entries in the Museum of Modern Art's war poster contest, and was rewarded with...not one, but two prizes. In the future, he would create posters for the Office of War Information and other government agencies.

After becoming a U.S. citizen, Koerner joined the army in 1944 and served in Washington, D.C. where he worked for the Office of Strategic Services. By the end of the war he had gained a reputation as an excellent draftsman and was interviewed for assignments in London and Germany. He had seen fat Hermann Goering years in triumph through the streets of Vienna in 1938. Now he would see the former Reichsmarschall face to face, having been selected by the army to sketch war criminals at the Nuremberg trials.

After the war, Koerner continued to work as a commercial artist and painted 48 covers for Time magazine. He also began to devote more and more time to his own paintings, fell in love with Pittsburgh, PA, and went increasingly internationalist socialist in a magical realist style. *Life* magazine called his artwork "the most important paintings to come out of the war."

Koerner's prize-winning poster for the Artists For Victory contest was stark and perspective for dramatic emphasis. In "Someone Talked!" a huge hand points an accusing finger

as the universal Hahbermensch—a seemingly harmless little man whose unguarded remarks have produced a tragedy at sea. Koehler's second winning entry illustrated the theme of Sacrifice with equal severeseverens.

The contest was judged by an interesting mix of celebrities and businessmen, including the artist Stuart Davis, mystery writer Rex Stout, and Francis H. Brennan, Chief of the Graphics Division of the Office of War Information, and former Art Director of *Fortune* magazine. Officials from the museum and its co-sponsors, The Council for Democracy and Artists For Victory, Inc., also took part in the judging.

Although largely forgotten today, The Council for Democracy was a formidable lobbying and public relations organization backed by Henry Luce of Time magazine. It challenged the isolationist philosophy of the widely popular America First Committee led by Charles Lindbergh and Sears, Roebuck and Co. tycoon Robert E. Wood. It sought simply to fight "every Nazi, fascist, communist, pacifist and anti-war movement in the United States."

Artists For Victory, Inc. was a nonprofit organization that helped the war effort by setting up war-themed exhibitions and bringing art instruction to military hospitals. Its membership numbered 15 000 contributors and over 10,000 individual artists and photographers, whom it encouraged to use their artistic talents to help win the war. One of its members was Brooklyn born and bred Seymour Fogel.

Fogel was a young American painter who had studied at the Art Students' League in New York, and at the National Academy of Design in Washington, D.C. under Leon Kroll and George Bridgman. After graduation he became a friend of the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, where he assisted on Rivera's controversial Rockefeller Center project.

SACRIFICE

THE PRIVILEGE OF FREE MEN

WINNER INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORP. AWARD — NATIONAL WAR POSTER COMPETITION

This is the Enemy

WINNER E. HOE & CO., INC. AWARD – NATIONAL WAR POSTER COMPETITION

Between 1934 and 1941, working for the Federal Art Project of the Works Project Administration, Fogel painted murals in New York, Minnesota, Arizona, and Washington, D.C. During the same period he created a memorable series of social realist drawings of ordinary Americans in the grip of the Great Depression.

Prior to entering Schiff's war poster competition he was commissioned to create the official poster for the New York World's Fair of 1939. His prize-winning war poster was submitted to illustrate the theme "Deliver Us From Evil." Its haunting image is of a tattered, hollow-eyed child surrounded by German warhead icons.

Fogel died in 1999 after a long life in art, which included exhibitions at The Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Metropolitan Museum Of Art in New York City.

Among the winning posters, Karl Kiedaisch and Victor Arcona's iconic portrait of an overbearing Nazi officer generated the most excitement, and controversy to do so today. Titled "Deliver Us From Evil," it is the best known poster to emerge out of the contest, and it has been reproduced countless times on everything from T-shirts to coffee mugs. An original print of this poster recently sold at auction for $4,950, which is ironic, because that's just about what its $100 war bond prize is worth in today's dollars.

The poster's impact has much to do with the size of the image it presents in the viewer. The grotesque head with its cruel lips and exaggerated blade of a nose almost fills the entire frame and puts the enemy literally in your face. The reflection of a hanged man in the officer's monocle brings the alien behind the picture into sharp focus. There's no mistaking the message that this enemy is an icy killer who is capable of committing any kind of atrocity.

We don't know if the poster's co-creator, Victor Arcona, made it to the award ceremony—he had been inducted into the army two weeks before the prize winners were announced. His partner, Karl Kiedaisch, had already signed up to serve in the photographic unit of the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics.

After the awards were presented, the museum invited the public to the opening of an exhibition of 200 posters selected from the competition as outstanding examples of anti-Axis propaganda. It ran from November 15, 1943, until January 9, 1944, after which it became a traveling art gallery visiting cities across the country. The Office of Civilian Defense was employed to assist businesses, public information groups, and individuals in obtaining the prize-winning posters for their own use.

Although copies of the winning posters were given away to anyone who requested them, it is in the form of poster stamps that Artists For Victory images are best known today. In 1943, Artists For Victory, Inc. selected 50 outstanding designs in hopes that the miniature poster format would "allow the stamps to carry their vital messages to every person throughout the country." Printing was handled by the Ever Ready Label Corp. of New York City. It produced a three

SHOT IF NOT CINDERELLAS

Among stamp collectors, poster stamps are recognized as advertising labels that resemble large postage stamps but are issued without denomination of value. They are sometimes called "cinderellas" recalling the pretty but overlooked girl in the fairy tale.

First appearing toward the end of the 19th century, poster stamps have enjoyed a long life promoting fairs and expositions, charities, products, politicians, causes and events—anything that one can communicate with a few choice words and a bit of graphic imagination.

Poster stamps were designed to be used on envelopes, bills, invoices, letters, postcards and the like by anyone with something to sell or announce. As *The Poster Stamp Bulletin* explained in its June, 1943 re-issue of Artists for Victory's stamps: "One cannot help but feel that these little messages are really a big thing. They can be used in various ways—on mail sacks, on packages, diaries and on employees via the payroll department, given to school children in various areas, etc."

The world's top illustrators have had their work reproduced as poster stamps. In Europe, Alfonse Mucha, Ludwig Hohlwein, and Tom Purvis come to mind. Three counterparts in the U.S. include Norman Rockwell, Rockwell Kent, Coles Phillips, the Walt Disney company and many others. The very first stamp in the Artists For Victory series of 50 was based on a poster designed by the legendary illustrator Archibald Barclay Randau, a navy Lt. Commander died on combat in waters off the Solomon Islands, the year his cinderella was printed.

Self-Portrait, Randau

color sheet of 50 perforated stamps measuring 12" x 20" and designated as a "FIRST SERIES." Regrettably, no second series followed.

Although many artists who created poster stamps are anonymous, Artists For Victory identifies its designers with biographical notes on the back of each stamp. Collectively, these mini-biographies are like a group portrait frozen in time—a true picture of what America's most prominent artists had accomplished or hoped to accomplish in 1942.

Hobart Nichols, president of Artists For Victory, was proud to endorse president Roosevelt of the tremendous response of artists all over the nation to the call for "fighting posters." Roosevelt answered back in a letter stating that the War Poster Competition was proof of what could be done by groups who's ordinary occupations might seem far removed from war.

When asked how his artists achieved the kind of solidarity that is sadly over-common politics today, Nichols answered:

"At Artists For Victory there is no room for political or art rivalry or jealously, either between individuals or groups. There is no such thing as a conservative, a modern, or an -ist. There is no right wing, no left wing, no middle of the road. There is one common cause, one cause, one effort. For this reason the organization flourished in unselfishness and dedication, has flourished, and for this reason it will continue to do so as long as the spirit which motivates it remains what it is."

— by John Black, 2006

John Black is an Emmy Award winning writer and producer of television documentaries. His papers on history and philosophy have appeared in various scholarly publications.

Illustration House

34 West 27 Street, 4th fl. New York, New York 10001

W. T. Benda (1873-1948) Watercolor, ink and colored pencil, 7 x 6 ½", remarque pair of *Zyb* magazine cover, March 8, 1920
This is a duplication of the first mask Benda made, which he called The Blue Demon in February 1914.

www.illustrationhouse.com ☎ 212/966-9444

New and Notable:

VIOLET DAUGHTY: AN ARTIST'S LIFE

BY [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE PRESS, 2020

Violet Dudley: An Artist's Life is the first full-length biography of Violet Oakley (1874–1961), the only major female artist of the historic arts mural movement in the United States, as well as an illustrator, stained glass artist, portraitist and author.

There is much human interest here: a pampered and spoiled young woman who suddenly finds herself in near poverty, forced to make a living as illustrators to support her parents, a sensitive and idealistic young woman who, in a desperate attempt to save her neurasthenic father, embraces Christian Science; a religion shrouded by her family and friends; a 28 year old woman who receives one of the plum commissions of the era, a mural cycle in the Pennsylvania State Capitol, in a field dominated by much older and predominantly male artists; a woman in her 40s who although professionally successful finds herself very much alone and friends with her student, Edith Emerson; a friend of artists like dancer Ruth St. Denis and violinist Albert Spalding who nevertheless was supremely conscious of social mores, the "Miss Oakley" of the Social Register who preferred the company of upper class to bohemian society, the modern self-possessed woman who traveled abroad to become the unofficial visual historian of the League of Nations yet who ironically was increasingly regarded as a local artist.

THE ILLUSTRATED LETTERS OF RICHARD DOYLE TO HIS FATHER, 1840–1843

BY [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
OHIO UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2019

Before he joined the staff of *Punch* and designed its iconic front cover, illustrator Richard "Dicky" Doyle was a young man whose father (political caricaturist John Doyle) charged him with sending a weekly letter, even though they lived under the same roof. This volume collects the 81 illustrated missives in their entirety for the first time and provides an uncensored peek into the intimate but expansive observations of a precocious social connoisseur and artist.

In a series of vivid manuscript caricatures, Doyle observes Victorian customs and society. He visits operas, plays, and parades. He watches the queen visiting the Houses of Commons and witnesses the state funeral of the Duke of Sussex. He is caught up in the Chartist riots of August 1842 and is robbed during one of the melees. And he provides countless illustrations of ordinary people strolling in the streets, parks, and picture galleries of the metropolis. The sketches offer a fresh perspective on social and cultural events of London during the early 1840s by a keen observer not yet 20 years old.

Doyle's epistles anticipate the modern comic strip and the graphic novel, especially in their experimentation with sequential narrative and their impressions of time and space. The letters are accompanied by a full biographical and critical introduction with new material about Doyle's life.

MANDRAKE THE MAGICIAN: THE SUNDAYS VOLUME ONE

BY LEE FALK AND PHIL DAVIS
180 PAGES, FULL COLOR
$39.99, HARDCOVER
TITAN COMICS, 2018

Mandrake the Magician was the world's first comic book superhero, predating Superman by almost four years. Created by the legendary Lee Falk (creator of the Phantom) and drawn by Phil Davis, Mandrake the Magician and his ever-trusty mute servant, Lothar, first appeared to battle crime in 1934. This collection reprints the first two-and-a-half years worth of full-color Sunday newspaper strips that debuted in 1935, from *The Hidden Kingdom of Aluradeen* to *Prince Pasak the Tyrant*.

PETER ARNO: THE MAD, MAD WORLD OF THE NEW YORKER'S GREATEST CARTOONIST

BY MICHAEL MASLIN
200 PAGES, BLACK AND WHITE
$20.00, HARDCOVER
ABRAMS BOOKS, 2018

The incredible, wild life of Peter Arno, the fabled cartoonist whose sexy satire and bold visuals became the unforgiving mirror of his times and the foundation of the *New Yorker* cartoon.

In the summer of 1925, *The New Yorker* was struggling to survive its first year in print. They took a chance on a young, irreverent cartoonist who was driven to give up his career as an artist. His name was Peter Arno and his witty social commentary, bold-inducing content, and compositional mastery brought a cosmopolitan edge to the magazine's pages—a vitality that would soon cement *The New Yorker* as one of the world's most celebrated publications.

Alongside *New Yorker* luminaries such as E.B. White, James Thurber, and founding editor Harold Ross, Arno is one of the select few who made the magazine the cultural touchstone it is today. In this intimate biography of one of *The New Yorker*'s first geniuses, Michael Maslin dives into Arno's rocky relationship with the magazine, his fiery marriage to the columnist Lois Long, and his tabloid-cover altercations involving pistols, fists, and barely-legal debutantes. Maslin invites us inside the Roaring Twenties' cultural world known as Café Society, in which Arno was an insider and observant

GREAT CHILDREN'S STORIES

ART BY FREDERICK RICHARDSON
WITH POEMS, ETC. INCLUDED
BOSTON: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
DALIA 2020

American illustrator Frederick Richardson (1862–1937) studied at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts as well as the Académie Julian in Paris, and he taught at Chicago's Art Institute. Richardson worked for several newspapers, including the *Chicago Daily News*, and he illustrated L. Frank Baum's *A Kidnapped Santa Claus*, *Queen Zixi of Ix*, and *Mother Goose: The Original Hillhurst Edition*. This deluxe hardcover volume presents two classic picture books of the 1920s and '30s in a new generation: *Frederick Richardson's Book for Children* and *Old Old Tales Retold*. Richardson was highly influenced by the Art Nouveau movement, and many Russian fairy tale artist Ivan Bilibin—as reflected in the exquisite and splendid illustrations for "The Three Bears," "The Bremen Town Musicians," "The Little Red Hen," "The Seven Ox," and other beloved tales.

This volume restores both books to the format of their initial publications, complete with all of the original artwork. The reproductions are entirely in full color, and are top notch.

THE ART OF ATARI

BY ROBERT E. COSTELLO AND TIM LAPETINO
352 PAGES, FULL COLOR
BOSTON: HARDCOVER
DYNAMITE ENTERTAINMENT, 2019

Since its formation in 1972, the Atari company has commissioned original artwork for hundreds of video games for arcades, home video systems, and computers. *The Art of Atari* is the first official collection of this artwork. Sourced from private collections worldwide, this book spans over 40 years of the company's unique illustrations used in packaging, advertisements, catalogs, and much more.

In addition to scores of reproductions of original packaging artwork, *The Art of Atari* also includes behind-the-scenes details on how dozens of games housed within were conceived of, illustrated, approved (or rejected), and brought to life.

EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

Campaigns and Caricatures:
The Political Cartoons of Thomas Nast
September 10, 2016 through December 4, 2016
The Norman Rockwell Museum, MA

The exhibition will feature over 30 editorial cartoons published by the provocative *Harper's Weekly* between 1864 and 1884. These vibrant, influential illustrations reflect Thomas Nast's pointed opinions on presidential campaigns during six different election years.

Nast's cartoons proved crucial in affecting the outcomes of presidential elections, which his favored candidates were known to win. Presidential hopefuls were held accountable for the issues of the day, from corruption to corporations, inflation, and civil rights. His well-crafted imagery included silent double caricatures, scathing satires and creative references to Shakespearean tales and Greek mythology. Nast's representations of the donkey and elephant as symbols for the Democratic and Republican parties, respectively, continues to endure more than a century later.

For more information, visit: www.nrm.org

Seymour Chwast on War
April 16, 2016 through June 4, 2016
The Society of Illustrators, NY

For almost seven decades, Seymour Chwast has fought brush and nail on the front lines of what is decidedly an endless war against war. Through his paintings, drawings, posters, and books, Chwast has consistently declared that war itself is the only victor. The lessons learned from one conflict return to fuel another. Out of one war another war expression even stronger. His frequent cohorts of another visual commentary against warfare are welcome characters to discuss with and subvert settings. His Vietnam era poster "War Is Good Business, Invest Your Son" was a potent movement mantra, and the assertive "Until Each Breath," with bombs being dropped on Haiti in Uncle Sam's open mouth, is an icon of anti-war graphics in the tradition of antiwarriors, including Frans Masereel, Georg Grosz, Franz Masereel, who have published anti-war bombshells.

This exhibition looks at some of Chwast's arsenal. It also marks the launch of a Kickstarter campaign to help finance his indictment of warfare. *Seymour Chwast on War with War: An Illustrated Timeline of 3000 Years of Conquests, Invasions, and Terrorist Attacks* is a illustrated record of world conflagrations that have taken their toll. It is also a testament to Chwast's continued deployment of art and design to protest mankind's worst scourge.

For more information, visit: www.societyillustrators.org

Edward Koren: The Capricious Line
June 25, 2016 through September 25, 2016
The Delaware Art Museum, DE

This exhibition celebrates the five decade career of renowned cartoonist and long-standing contributor to *The New Yorker*, Edward Koren (born 1935) and features approximately 50 original drawings, many on display for the first time.

Koren's cartoons encompass an eclectic set of themes which he tackles with his very, astute criticism. With over 1,000 cartoons published in *The New Yorker* since 1962, Koren's distinctive style and relatable characters deftly articulate the neuroses of contemporary society. Touching on a diverse set of issues ranging from parenting to man's relationship to nature, Koren creates brief moments that portray man's awkward rapport with the world around us. In contrast to other cartoonists' political caricatures, Koren's decidedly non-confrontational tone uses psychological acuteness and philosophical provocation to elicit laughs and stimulate thought.

For more information, visit: www.delart.org

Mac Conner: A New York Life
March 18, 2016 through June 19, 2016
The Norman Rockwell Museum, MA

This installation explores the life and career of illustrator McCauley "Mac" Conner (born 1913). The exhibition presents Conner's hand-painted illustrations for advertising campaigns and women's magazines like *Redbook* and *McCall's*, made during the years after World War II when commercial artists helped to embrace American style and culture.

For more information, visit: www.nrm.org

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