

**H**e called himself a reporter on present events and of contemporary America. The media gave him various labels: “the people’s painter,” “a contemporary Currier & Ives,” and “the Dickens of the paintbrush.” Norman Rockwell’s hopeful and admiring attitude about humanity was the hallmark of his work. Above all, he loved to paint pictures that conveyed stories about people, their attitude toward each other, and his feelings about them. In 1943, a *Time* reporter said, “He constantly achieves that compromise between a love of realism and the tendency to idealize, which is one of the most deeply ingrained characteristics of the American people.” The more famous he became, the more confident were his self-effacing responses to that fame, and in 1952, when *Newsweek* asked him how much he was paid for a *Post* cover, Rockwell replied, “Twice as much as it’s worth.” In 1977, Rockwell received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for having portrayed “the American scene with unrivalled freshness and clarity,” and with “insight, optimism and good humor.”

The paintings of this exhibition, many from the artist’s personal collection, chronicle Rockwell’s life and art. They span fifty-six years, from his 1914 interpretation of American folk hero Daniel Boone securing safe passage for settlers to the American West, to his 1970 report on American tourists and armed Israeli soldiers witnessing a Christmas Eve ceremony at the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. We invite viewers to compare their own twentieth-century American experience with the events portrayed by Rockwell and to consider how much Rockwell’s vision may have influenced theirs.