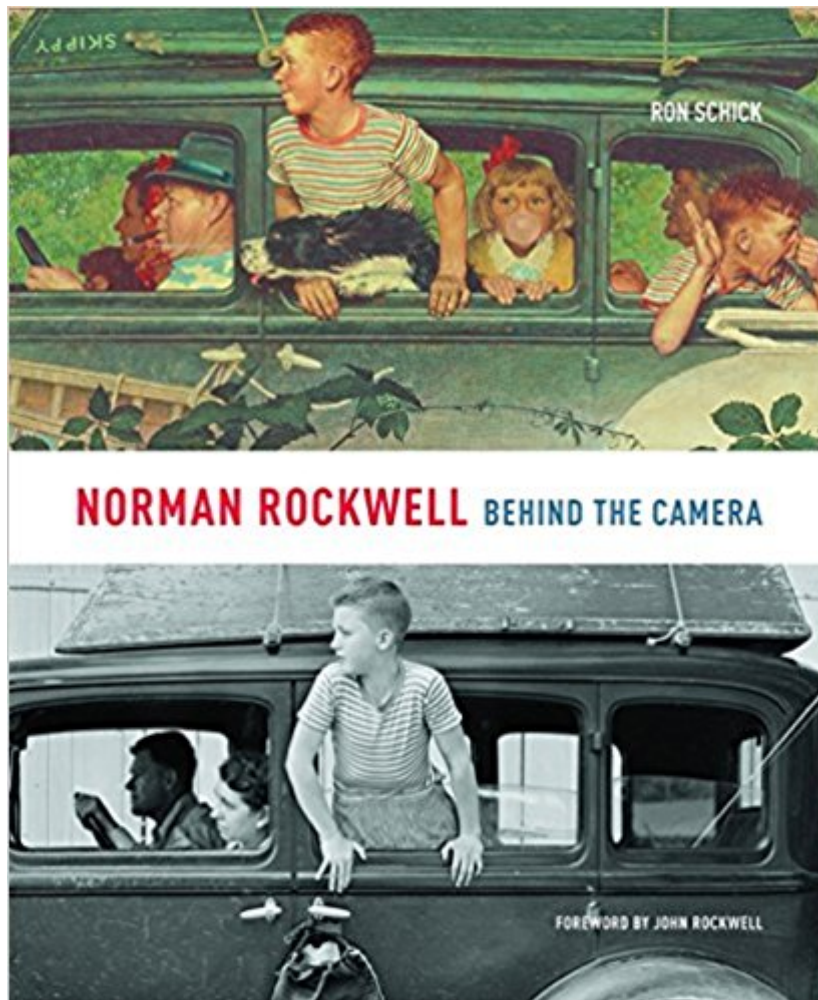




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# Norman Rockwell: Behind The Camera



## Synopsis

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

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

What a wonderful book this is--and what a rare behind-the-scenes look at the artistic process it provides. So many of the moments we see as impossibly idealized versions of us are in fact us. Rockwell's genius improves with this 'backstage' glance.~ ~ Ken Burns, Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmakerA wonderful new book by Ron Schick . . . that lifts the curtain on Rockwell's working methods, revealing how profoundly labor-intensive and thoughtfully imagined they

were. — David Kamp, Vanity Fair

Ron Schick is a writer and editor specializing in the history of photography. He is the author, with Julia Van Haaften, of *The View from Space: American Astronaut Photography*. Schick lives in New York City.

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

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

not a serious flaw. All in all, this was a thought-provoking and educational book that is sure to increase readers' understanding and appreciation both of Rockwell and of painting generally.

I've been a fan of Norman Rockwell's art for many years and collected quite a few books about him and his work. I knew Rockwell took advantage of photographs to prepare his paintings and illustrations, but not to the extent presented in this book. It's a fascinating look behind the scenes at Rockwell's creative process and efforts to be authentic. It's a welcome addition to my library.

I very much liked this book and thought it gave me a better appreciation for Norman Rockwell. I thought I would mention that, for those who like this book, that this TV series [https://www..com/Sherlock-Holmes-Complete-Ronald-Howard/dp/B000BBOUGI/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1471151777&sr=8-1&keywords=sherlock+holmes+ron+howard](https://www..com/Sherlock-Holmes-Complete-Ronald-Howard/dp/B000BBOUGI/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1471151777&sr=8-1&keywords=sherlock+holmes+ron+howard) portraying Sherlock Holmes is an interesting pairing, and I think adds more appreciation to both Norman Rockwell and Arthur Cannon Doyle's original Sherlock Holmes once you come to see the characters compared in this light. It would be hard to find a better candidate for an American Sherlock Holmes than Rockwell, or more Holmesian painter, character wise at least.

There have been many books on Norman Rockwell over the years, but *Norman Rockwell: Behind the Camera* is the first to shed light upon the reference photographs from which he often painted. Published in 2009 this book features a selection of images from among some 18,000 black and white negatives that are held by the Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Admirers of Rockwell's art should consider this book unmissable, given the fresh ground that it covers. It will also have some appeal to illustrators and portraitists, because of the description and examples provided on Rockwell's working methods. Why did someone with such a sharp drawing and drafting ability take such heavy recourse to use of photography? It should be understood that Norman Rockwell laboured under huge pressure to produce paintings at a rapid rate to meet deadlines of magazine editors and to satisfy other lucrative commercial commissions for his art. To spare time from doing dozens of preparatory drawings for each painting, Rockwell eventually began instead to use photographs and select among them before choosing a final composition. The photos did not displace the need for models, costumes, props or any of the rigour of painting preparation, like sketches and colour studies. But these snapshots did ensure great efficiencies: they saved re-sittings by models, avoided movements of sunlight; and made possible a far more phenomenal output in one man's career than otherwise could have been

conceivable. Author Ron Schick, an expert in photographic art, explains the considerable efforts that went into composing the photos and what Rockwell was aiming to conjure up. It is a tale of an artist scouting locations, assembling props, and amusingly positioning and directing the models like actors in a play. This book shows some of the tricks used by Rockwell for getting the best out of life models, including using stacks of books to support the feet of figures as they feigning leaps, running, or other exertions "in motion". We also see how folding screens in varying shades were used to help the artist accurately capture the tones and outline of a model, without distraction from background clutter. The book is well designed. The author and publishers juxtapose paintings opposite source photographs, sometimes showing how several separately photographed models might be assembled on canvas into one composition. It becomes apparent how the artist selectively modified and spliced poses, or added or varied details in clothing and props, to drive the narrative power of his final paintings. The visual extravaganza in this book is well supported by pithy and pertinent stories about the featured artworks, spiced up with quotes from Rockwell, his models and other associates (Rockwell was a little abashed at his use of photography, but he has written several accounts of his working methods for the benefit of fellow illustrators who have sought to learn his secrets). Schick threads the book together with writing of his own that is informative and perceptive. The book is a good length at over 200 pages, but Rockwell was such a prolific artist that it is hard not to wish for even more of his paintings in this enjoyable monograph. This is an abridged review from my Art Book News blog at blogspot.

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