

# REYNOLDA

Reynolda presents  
**‘Leyendecker and the Golden Age of American Illustration’**  
Aug. 31 – Dec. 31, 2019

**Exhibition showcases work by one of the preeminent American  
illustrators  
of the early 20th century**



WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (July 10, 2019) — Reynolda House Museum of American Art will present the work of Joseph Christian (J.C.) Leyendecker, one of the most prolific and sought-after artists of the Golden Age of American Illustration, from Aug. 31 through Dec. 31, 2019. Leyendecker (1894–1951) captivated the public with his striking images and fashionable depictions of handsome men and glamorous women. This will be the museum’s first exhibition focused on illustration and its first to explore the work of an openly gay artist. Reynolda is the opening venue for a national planned tour of “Leyendecker and the Golden Age of American Illustration.”

Between 1896 and 1950, Leyendecker illustrated more than 400 magazine covers for the nation’s trade and general interest publications, including *The Saturday Evening Post*, for which he created 322 cover paintings. With his instantly identifiable style—“The Leyendecker Look”—he helped shape the image of a nation, producing dozens of enduring icons and creating some of the earliest national advertising brands. Leyendecker was talented at self-promotion and quickly established an easily recognizable style. His approach to his own career influenced an entire generation of younger artists, most notably Norman Rockwell, who observed, “There wasn’t an illustrator in the country who could draw better.” In his commercial work, Leyendecker created the famed Arrow Collar Man, who came to define the fashionable American male of the Roaring Twenties. Leyendecker based the Arrow Collar Man on his favorite model and lifelong partner, Charles Beach.

Born in 1874 in Montabaur, Germany, Leyendecker immigrated to Chicago in 1882 with his parents and three siblings. Showing an early artistic talent, Leyendecker and his youngest brother, F. X., studied at the Art Institute of Chicago before moving to Paris where they developed their distinctive styles. Upon returning to the United States, the brothers entered a publishing renaissance and soon found themselves at

its center, New York City. In 1914, they moved into a 14-room house in New Rochelle, New York, along with Charles Beach, for 48 years.

At the turn of the century, illustrators could disseminate original artworks on a national scale for the first time. As publishing technologies advanced to include images, and later colors, the methods of transportation and communication accelerated, allowing publications to be circulated to millions of Americans on a weekly basis. This change revolutionized the way Americans consumed media, from printed text to vibrant representations of the modern world in mastheads, highly illustrated novels and store windows. It was America's Golden Age of Illustration.

“Leyendecker was a prolific artist, classically trained in Paris and recognized by Norman Rockwell as the most talented illustrator of the age,” explains Phil Archer, deputy director at Reynolda House. “He has been presented in that context—as a commercial illustrator with a broad public appeal. With this exhibition, he will take his rightful place in the long tradition of brilliant artists who have portrayed Americans the way *they would like to appear*. Jaunty, urbane, and impeccably dressed, Leyendecker's subjects embodied the youthful independence of the Roaring Twenties.”

“Leyendecker and the Golden Age of American Illustration” includes 42 original paintings and 101 Post covers from the National Museum of American Illustration in Newport, Rhode Island, as well as other materials related to Leyendecker's work in advertising throughout his five-decade career. The exhibition has particular visual and cultural relevance to the early decades of Reynolda, an era of ball gowns and flapper dresses, tailcoats and tennis whites. Visitors to “Leyendecker and the Golden Age of American Illustration” are invited to experience the complementary exhibition “A Self in the Remaking: Katharine Smith Reynolds Johnston,” on view in the House, which features historic costumes, photographs and manuscripts, many on display for the first time, pulled from the collections in the Reynolda House Archives and the Z. Smith Reynolds Library Special Collections and Archives, Wake Forest University.

“Leyendecker and the Golden Age of American Illustration” will be presented in English and Spanish. Tickets are on sale now at [reynoldahouse.org/leyendecker](http://reynoldahouse.org/leyendecker).

Reynolda is grateful to lead sponsors for the support of “Leyendecker and the Golden Age of American Illustration:” Joseph M. Bryan, Jr.; Frank and Gary; Michael Felsen, in honor of the Family Equality Council; The David R. Hayworth Foundation; John Hoemann and Howard Upchurch; Leonard Ryden Burr Real Estate; Wake Forest University; contributing sponsors: Joan and David Cotterill; Cathleen and Ray McKinney Exhibition Fund, in honor of Frank and Gary; and exhibition partners Natalie and Penn Broyhill, in honor of Frank and Gary; Phyllis Dunning, in honor of Frank and Gary; Sue and Doug Henderson in honor of the wedding of Conley and David; and Jeff Lindsay and Terry Robertson.

### **Exhibition Season Events**

Reynolda welcomes the public throughout the season for lectures, a mini-symposium, and the Southern premiere of the play “In Love with the Arrow Collar Man.”

### **Race in Early-Twentieth Century American Illustrations**

*Sponsored by Macy's*

Sat., Sept. 7, 2 p.m.

Free with Museum admission

Illustration carries a uniquely powerful voice that has directly and historically persuaded perspectives on race and culture in the United States and abroad. This talk by Robyn Phillips-Pendleton will explore how race is portrayed in the work of J.C. Leyendecker and other illustrators of the early 20th century. Phillips-Pendleton is an artist, storyteller, lecturer, writer and an associate professor of Visual Communications at University of Delaware, Newark, in the Department of Art and Design. Advanced registration encouraged.

### **Pay-What-You-Wish Thursday Nights**

*Sponsored by Macy's*

“Fashions fade, style is eternal.”—Yves Saint Laurent

Thursdays, Sept. 19 and Oct. 17, open until 8 p.m.

Cash donations accepted 4:30–8 p.m.

Enjoy evening hours at the Museum on these relaxed nights with a cash bar. On Sept. 19, we'll dig into fashion nostalgia with detachable collars, flapper dresses and plus-fours! Check out the “hotsy-totsy” 3-D fashion trends that J.C. Leyendecker popularized in his 2-D illustrations on view in the exhibition. On Oct. 17, the Golden Age of Illustration meets the Golden Age of Advertising when we join in conversation to explore the convergence of art and consumerism.

### **The Sartorial Seductions of the Arrow Collar Man**

*or Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Detachable Collars But Were Afraid to Ask*

Thurs., Sept. 26, 6 p.m.

\$10 Members; \$15 general admission

Fashion historian and Arrow brand archivist Suzanne E. Shapiro will discuss early 20th-century menswear, the history of the collar industry and how J.C. Leyendecker and Arrow managed to imbue this conventional article of dress with desire.

### **Cover Story: Gay Visual Culture in Mass Media, 1900–1967**

Sat., Oct. 5, 9:30 a.m.–noon

Free, advanced registration encouraged

A mini-symposium co-sponsored by the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department and the LGBTQ Center at Wake Forest University.

### **J.C. Leyendecker's Queer American Icons, Jennifer Greenhill**

Situating Leyendecker's production in relation to that of other celebrated illustrators of his day—such as Coles Phillips, Norman Rockwell and Jessie Willcox Smith—Greenhill will identify the distinctive characteristics of the Leyendecker brand, which made the artist a star in the 1920s but fell out of fashion by the 1940s. Looking across Leyendecker's diverse bodies of work, she will explore his covert and sometimes humorous methods for queering the heteronormative social regimes around which his work for a mainstream market necessarily revolved. Greenhill is an associate professor of Art History at the University of Southern California.

### **How Physique Entrepreneurs Sparked a Movement, David K. Johnson**

Leyendecker and others in the first half of the 20th century conveyed a coded gay sensibility in their work. Like that earlier generation, photographers, illustrators and publishers that followed in the latter half of the 20th century also faced censorship. Examining notions of gender and sexuality in American politics between 1951 and 1967, Johnson will focus on the post-War businesses and networks created by

American physique photographers and artists. Johnson is an associate professor of History at the University of South Florida.

### **Southern Premiere**

#### **“In Love with the Arrow Collar Man”**

*Sponsored by Wells Fargo*

Fri., Oct. 11, 7 p.m. (doors open at 5:30 p.m.) and Sat., Oct. 12, 2 p.m. (seating begins at 1:30 p.m.)

\$20 all tickets

Reynolda hosts the first performances of Lance Ringel’s moving drama following its New York City premiere. “In Love with the Arrow Collar Man” celebrates the true story of 20th-century illustrator J.C. Leyendecker and his life partner, the iconic model Charles Beach. The period piece combines meticulous historical research with vivid characters to bring to life Leyendecker’s extraordinary career and groundbreaking art. This collaboration is made possible thanks to a partnership with The Little Theatre of Winston-Salem. Guests are invited to explore the exhibition “Leyendecker and the Golden Age of American Illustration” prior to show time.

### **About Reynolda**

Reynolda, in Winston-Salem, N.C., is a rare gem among the nation’s cultural institutions and historic greenspaces. The 50-year-old museum at the center of Reynolda’s 180 acres, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, presents a renowned art collection in a historic and incomparable setting: the original 1917 interiors of the country manor of R. J. Reynolds. Spanning 250 years, the collection is an uncompromisingly selective one, a chronology of American art, with each artist represented by one work of major significance. Highlights are: Albert Bierstadt, Mary Cassatt, William Merritt Chase, Frederic Edwin Church, Stuart Davis, Martin Johnson Heade, Alex Katz, Lee Krasner, Jacob Lawrence, Georgia O’Keeffe, John Singer Sargent and Grant Wood. The collection was assembled by the unerring eye of Barbara Babcock Millhouse, granddaughter of R. J. and Katharine Reynolds. The Reynolda experience includes a free app called Reynolda Revealed; touring exhibitions in the museum’s Mary and Charlie Babcock Wing; formal gardens, conservatory and walking trails of Reynolda Gardens; and more than 25 of the estate’s original buildings repurposed as shops and restaurants in Reynolda Village. Reynolda, located at 2250 Reynolda Road, is adjacent to Wake Forest University. For more information, please visit [reynolda.org](http://reynolda.org). Connect at [facebook.com/rhmaa](https://www.facebook.com/rhmaa) and @CurateReynolda.

### **Image credit:**

J.C. Leyendecker, “Couple in Boat—Arrow Collar Advertisement,” oil on canvas, 1922, (c) 2019 National Museum of American Illustration, Newport, RI. Photo courtesy American Illustrators Gallery, New York, NY.

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