

Books Focusing on Magazine Covers

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If you study magazine covers, you need to be familiar with these books. The following bibliography is not meant to be comprehensive. It represents a select group of books that I've found fascinating as a magazine reader and researcher.

Aldiss, Brian. *Science Fiction Art*. New York: Bounty Books, 1975 (128 pages).

As part of his discussion of science fiction art, Aldiss includes numerous covers from such magazines as *Astonishing Stories*, *Astounding Stories*, and *Analog*. Many of the covers are shown full size and in color. The best part is "The Magazine Gallery," 12 pages of covers from more than 60 magazines that represent the hurly-burly of the science fiction pulp genre from 1939-1966.

Cohn, Jan. *Covers of the Saturday Evening Post: Seventy Years of Outstanding Illustration from America's Favorite Magazine*. New York: Viking Studio Books, 1995 (298 pages).

Organized by decades, the book includes more than 3,500 covers from December 30, 1899 through February 8, 1969 when the magazine ceased publication. Although most of us equate Norman Rockwell with the *Post*, this book makes it clear that many other illustrators (such as Harrison Fisher, N.C. Wyeth, and J.C. Leyendecker) and a few photographers (after the 1962 redesign) showcased their work on the cover. The covers are shown for the most part as color miniatures, averaging 16 images to the 9-inch by 12 inch page; according to the author, every cover still in existence is reprinted.

***The Complete Book of Covers from The New Yorker: 1925-1989*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989 (400 pages). Foreword by author John Updike.**

The book showcases 3,277 covers in color from *The New Yorker's* debut on February 21, 1925 through the 65th anniversary issue of February 20, 1989. Although Updike's foreword is only three pages long, it is insightful. He points out, for example, that "people

of my generation used to paper their bathrooms with *New Yorker* covers rather than throw them away.” He also comments on the book’s organization: “One [cover] per year is given full-page treatment, two or three are cast as supporting stars, and the remaining 48, smaller than bread boxes but bigger than Wheat Thins, are delectably, dazzlingly spread over the next four pages, with every one of the artists – 159 in all – given credit and his or her slot in an index.” Actually, those “Wheat Thins” covers are about double the size of the snack, measuring 2-1/2 inches by 3-1/2 inches. The covers are wonderful to view, but more commentary from Updike would have been magnificent.

del Rey, Lester. *Fantastic Science Fiction Art 1926-1954.* New York: Random House, 1975 (100 pages).

This book primarily showcases the magazines edited and published by Hugo Gernsback – *Amazing Stories* and *Wonder Stories* – and the fantastic landscape covers drawn by Frank R. Paul. Examples also are included from *Astounding Science Fiction* and *Startling Stories*. Following del Rey’s introduction, each cover occupies a single right hand page with an identifying caption on the opposite page that includes the name of the illustrator, date of publication, and publisher.

Finch, Christopher. *Norman Rockwell: 332 Magazine Covers.* New York: Abbeville Press, 1979 (456 pages).

Organized chronologically and thematically with a discussion of each cover at the start of the chapter, this oversized book includes Norman Rockwell’s work on *Literary Digest*, *Country Gentleman*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal*, as well the *Saturday Evening Post*. Rockwell’s color illustrations are shown without the cover logo, date, or cover lines; each image has a caption indicating its title, the magazine, and the date of publication.

Fortune: *The Art of Covering Business.* Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith Publisher, 1999 (142 pages). Foreword by John Huey, former managing editor of *Fortune* and now editorial director of Time Inc.

In celebration of *Fortune*’s 70th anniversary, the magazine’s covers from 1930 to 1950 are collected in a single volume. The covers reflect America’s fascination with travel; the rise and fall of fascism; industrialism and labor-saving devices; the advent of television; and mass consumerism. Most of the covers – in color – fill at least a quarter of the 9- inch by 12 inch page; some take the entire page.

Heller, Steven and Louise Fili. *Cover Story: The Art of American Magazine Covers*

1900-1950. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996 (144 pages).

More than 200 covers of American magazines from the first half of the 20th century are presented in color; many of the covers fill the entire 8-1/2 inch by 11-inch page. The authors organize the book according to subject matter: lifestyle, the pulps, culture, humor, fashion, self-help, politics, industry, society, and travel. The brief text at the start of each chapter includes general observations about the relationship between the magazine's cover and content. Each cover has the date of publication, identification of the cover artist (if known), and an insightful, sentence-long comment.

Kery, Patricia Frantz. *Great Magazine Covers of the World*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1982 (384 pages).

Magazine covers from around the world – more than 500 in color with many in full size – showcase the work of artists (such as Matisse, Picasso, Chagall, Dali, O'Keeffe, and Toulouse-Lautrec), illustrators (including Gibson, Flagg, and Christy), and photographers (such as Steichen, Eisenstaedt, and Avedon). Kery, who includes interviews with international editors, art directors, and publishers, pays special attention to the role of art and the artist, fashion covers, unusual typographic and logo techniques, and “great short-lived magazines.”

Kitch, Carolyn. *The Girl on the Magazine Cover*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001 (252 pages).

Media scholar Carolyn Kitch, associate professor and director of the magazine program at Temple University, examines magazine cover images of women from 1895-1930. Her study, starting with the first wave of feminism and the rise of women's magazines and ending with the Depression, offers a visual vocabulary of cultural norms and what it meant to be a woman. Kitch argues that the turn-of-the-century “girl on the magazine cover” was the first mass-media stereotype, pointing out, “If the past informs the future, she will continue to tell us much about media and about American life in the twenty-first century.” The book includes 75 photographs of cover art from such magazines as *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Judge*, *Life*, *McCall's*, *The Crisis*, *The Woman Citizen*, and *Good Housekeeping*. The only disappointment is the lack of color. Yet despite their black and white format, the images are still intriguing and made memorable by Kitch's commentary.

Lesser, Robert. *Pulp Art: Original Cover Paintings for the Great American Pulp Magazines*. New York: Gramercy Books, 1997 (184 pages).

Lesser focuses on the artists who painted the dramatically colorful pulp magazine covers during the 1930s and 1940s, providing a fascinating history of the pulp field. In discussing the various themes – science fiction, fantasy, detective, western, aviation, jungle, and “ladies in terror” – Lesser offers aesthetic interpretations, comparing the covers to classical Greek sculptures and medieval paintings. Often, the pulp painting is shown in its original form without the magazine's logo and cover lines (yes, it seems more “artistic” this way). Many of the covers take up the entire 9-inch by 12-inch page. The text includes 18 brief essays by collectors and experts in the pulp field as well as letters to the pulps' editors from 1929-1946.

Lois, George. *Covering the '60s: George Lois, the Esquire Era*. New York: Monacelli Press, 1996 (180 pages).

George Lois created 92 covers for *Esquire* editor Harold Hayes, who delighted in the jarring images that both informed and disturbed readers during the 1960s. Three of Lois's most memorable covers depicted Andy Warhol drowning in a can of Campbell's tomato soup, Virna Lisi shaving her face, and Muhammad Ali with arrows piercing his body (a la St. Sebastian). This book features 70 of Lois's disruptive, iconoclastic covers, shown in full size and in color. Opposite each cover is an often times irreverent explanation from Lois of the circumstances and context for each image.

MAD: *Cover to Cover: 48 Years, 6 Months & 3 Days of MAD Magazine Covers*. New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 2000 (224 pages). Introduction by “The Usual Gang of Idiots,” with running commentary by Frank Jacobs.

MAD's first 400 covers are shown, starting with the 23 issues of the comic book, *MAD*, and continuing chronologically with 377 issues of *MAD* the magazine (through December 2000). Revealing Alfred E. Newman in a variety of guises and poses, the color covers (only a few are smaller than 2-1/2 inches by 3-1/2 inches) serve as a satirical pictorial time capsule. Some of the covers seem slapstick now, but they all reflect *MAD*'s basic tenet: “Shield no sacred cows; spare neither the right nor left; be conned by no one; take no prisoners. Politics, the media, sports, advertising – all are fair game.” Twelve of the covers are shown full size, bleeding off the page, and honored as the “soul of *MAD*.” These are considered the cream of the crop covers by the gang.

Mouly, Françoise. *Covering The New Yorker: Cutting-Edge Covers from a Literary Institution*. New York: Abbeville Press, 2000 (244 pages with 6 detachable covers, suitable for framing).

Mouly, *The New Yorker's* art editor since 1993, has gathered what she believes are the best of the covers and organized them thematically – the arts, sports, big city, a year at *The New Yorker*, and catching the moment. She includes some of the sketches that led up to the final cover and discusses many of the controversial covers published during editor Tina Brown's tenure. Mouly's front-of-the-book conversation with Lawrence Weschler, a *New Yorker* writer since 1981, provides a lively historical overview of how the covers changed over the decades and when the art editor intervenes in the artistic process. Additionally, the works of six cover artists (Edward Sorel, Bruce McCall, Barry Blitt, Art Spiegelman, J.J. Sempé, and Saul Steinberg) are highlighted throughout the book. Many of the colorful covers are shown almost full size, with some of them bleeding off the pages.

Packer, William. *The Art of Vogue Covers*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1980 (256 pages).

Every British *Vogue* cover between 1920 and 1930 is included here, along with a large selection of covers dating back to 1909 and up to 1940. The more than 400 drawn covers reveal the Roaring Twenties and the Jazz Age in subdued hues that are seldom seen on today's brightly photographed front pages. Most of the cover designs also were used on the French and American editions, but not necessarily on the same date. Packer summarizes the cultural and political influences occurring at the time and includes fashion notes with the detailed captions for each cover.

Rolling Stone: *The Complete Covers 1967-1997*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998 (276 pages). Introduction by founder Jann S. Wenner.

Wenner says the collection of 728 covers “represents not just the evolution of a magazine but a record of our times. For three decades, no surer sign has heralded the arrival of a performer, artist or personality than a cover of *Rolling Stone*.” Known for its emphasis on the faces of rock & roll musicians, it's easy to forget all the movie stars, politicians, and societal rebels who were covered. Interspersed amidst the color covers (the smallest being 2 inches by 2-1/2 inches in size and the largest at 8 inches by 10 inches) are comments from editors, writers, photographers, and the cover subjects themselves, as well as excerpts from the cover stories. Unfortunately, there's no index, although there is a chronological list in agate type of cover subjects at the back of the book. You'll need a magnifying glass and patience to find a particular favorite.

Skapura, Robert, editor. *The Cover Story Index, 1960-1989: An Independent Thirty-Year Index to the Cover Stories of Newsweek, Time and U.S. News & World Report*. Fort Atkinson, WI: Highsmith Press, 1990 (382 pages).

There are no cover images here, but this text is of value to researchers wanting to find a cover story about a particular individual or topic. Skapura provides a subject index (such as Jane Fonda or nostalgia) of the cover story for 30 years of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. There's also a side-by-side, month-by-month chronology of cover stories, so you can see what each magazine had as the cover story in a specific week.

Southgate, M. Therese. *The Art of JAMA: One Hundred Covers and Essays from the Journal of the American Medical Association*. St. Louis: Mosby, 1997 (222 pages).

For the first 80 years of publication, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* had a table of contents as its weekly cover. Then, on April 20, 1964, the cover featured a reproduction of Jan Van Eyck's "St. Jerome in His Study." Thereafter, the magazine ran covers featuring artists as disparate as Dürer and Gauguin and genres as varied as American Primitive and German Expressionist. This book features 100 full size color covers from 1974-1987, with Dr. Southgate's original detailed essay about the artist, the period, and the circumstances of the work. She observes, "I have learned that when I cannot understand something, it is usually because I have not been listening. So I am quiet and let the painting speak . . . the way the physician must listen to the patient in order to discover the diagnosis and begin the healing." Interestingly, most of the art works selected have no relation to medicine.

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