



From Look Magazine

Norman Rockwell's portrait of President Nixon

## Capital to See Rockwell's Nixon

By NAN ROBERTSON

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WASHINGTON, March 5 — An oil portrait of President Nixon by Norman Rockwell—who once complained that Mr. Nixon was “no fun to paint”—will be unveiled Wednesday at the National Portrait Gallery by Tricia Nixon Cox.

One of the smallest of the 32 Presidential portraits the gallery owns, it measures only 14½ inches high by 22 inches wide, and was painted from life by Mr. Rockwell in New York late in 1968, when Mr. Nixon was president-elect.

In tones of beige, black, brown and white showing the subject leaning forward from a purple settee, it was characterized by gallery spokesman as “one of the warmest, most human things” done of Mr. Nixon. “If I were they [the Nixons], I’d be extremely pleased,” said Nancy Bush, the museum’s information officer.

The painting will replace the 1965 portrait of Lyndon Johnson by Peter Hurd that the former President called the “ugliest thing I ever saw.” After uneasy backing and filling, the gallery finally put the Johnson likeness on view in 1969. That will be moved to a nearby hall to join portraits of other former Presidents.

### Given by Foundation

The donor of the Nixon painting was the Richard Nixon Foundation, a private nonprofit corporation whose trustees include Nixon friends, relatives and former business associates. It was formed to raise funds for a Nixon library only four months after Mr. Nixon was sworn in as President.

Neither Mr. Rockwell nor the White House would give the picture’s price, but his originals bring in \$5,000 to \$27,000.

Asked about his statement a year ago in an interview that “Nixon is no fun to paint,” the 78-year-old artist and illustrator said in a telephone conversation from his stockbridge, Mass., home: “I don’t think I should have said that. He’s not Abraham Lincoln — he would have been fascinating to paint—or George Washington, but I wasn’t around at the time.”

He would say only that Mr. Nixon, whom he has done five times from life, “isn’t awfully easy to paint, but he was cooperative, and I did the best I could” during a 45-minute sitting in Mr. Rockwell’s corner room at the Plaza Hotel.

### Took 4 or 5 Days

Why isn’t Mr. Nixon easy to paint? “You take a look at Mr. Nixon and you’ll see,” the artist replied.

Working mostly from “quite a finished color sketch” in oils, as well as some photographs taken during the session, Mr. Rockwell completed the portrait in “four or five days.”

It had been commissioned by Look magazine and has reproduced in color and slightly smaller than actual size, in the Feb. 4, 1969 issue of the now-defunct publication.

According to Gardner Cowles, board chairman of Cowles Communications, Inc., Look’s parent company, Look paid Mr. Rockwell \$25,000 a year for the reproduction rights to “8 to 10” originals commissioned by the magazine but retained by the artist.

In the interview in The New York Times Magazine, published in February, 1971, Mr. Rockwell described paint-

ing not only Mr. Nixon but Lyndon B. Johnson as well.

The artist recalled President Johnson as being “very brusque when I went into his office, and when I asked for an hour to make sketches, he almost hit the ceiling. . . . I took out the wattles under his chin and shortened his ears a little, and he was delighted with the portrait.”

Mr. Rockwell then recalled Mr. Johnson’s “ugliest thing” comment when Mr. Hurd, the artist, showed the President his commissioned portrait in 1965. At the time, Mr. Johnson, according to the Hurd account, yanked a reproduction of a Rockwell likeness of himself out of a desk drawer after saying icily: “I’ll show you what I like.”

“Hurd, of course, had painted

him as he was, while I had done him as he would like to think he is,” Mr. Rockwell said in the magazine interview.

Mr. Nixon has said repeatedly that he would never pose for a portrait while occupying the White House. Just two months ago, an announcement by Andrew Wyeth that he had been asked by Mrs. Nixon to do an “official” portrait of the President, the White House reversed itself.

Mr. Wyeth was indeed the President’s “first choice” to paint Mr. Nixon’s likeness “when the time comes,” the spokesman acknowledged.

Mr. Rockwell greatly admires Mr. Wyeth and calls him “a wonderful artist.” Mr. Wyeth is the brother of Henrietta Wyeth, also an artist—who is married to Peter Hurd.