

PHILLIPS

PRESS RELEASE

Phillips to Offer Norman Rockwell's *Before the Shot* on 14 November

Marking the First Time Rockwell's Work Will be Offered in an
Evening Sale of 20th Century & Contemporary Art



Norman Rockwell

Before the Shot, 1958

Estimate: \$2,500,000-4,500,000

NEW YORK - 18 OCTOBER 2019 - On 14 November, Phillips will offer Norman Rockwell's *Before the Shot*, marking the first time that a work by the iconic American illustrator will appear in an Evening Sale of 20th Century & Contemporary Art, as well as the first time that one of his paintings will be offered at Phillips. The work has never before been sold publicly, having remained in just two families' collections since it was painted, the first of which was Rockwell's own doctor and the model for the painting.

Elizabeth Goldberg, Senior International Specialist of American Art and Deputy Chairwoman, Americas, said, "We are honored to introduce Norman Rockwell's paintings to Phillips' auctions by including this masterwork in our November Evening Sale. While Rockwell has traditionally been offered in sales of American Art, we are eager to break down the barriers that separate these collecting categories and reexamine the way that these different voices of the 20th century are classified. *Before the Shot* is one of the most recognizable paintings by one of America's most iconic artists. This November, Rockwell's name will be rightfully positioned alongside other international 20th and 21st century masters, including Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol, Joan Mitchell, and Jean-Michel Basquiat."

One of Rockwell's most well-known paintings, *Before the Shot* is a nostalgic and humorous reflection of American culture in the 1950s, elevating the commonplace to the remarkable. Nearly identical to the version gracing the cover of the March 15, 1958, issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*, the picture depicts a child standing on a wooden chair in a doctor's office, awaiting an impending shot and uneasily inspecting the diplomas on the wall as the physician prepares a syringe.

While *Before the Shot* betrays a sense of chance encounter, it was actually a picture of much consideration for Rockwell. Typical of his working process for his most important paintings, Rockwell painted *Before the Shot* from a series of photographs that he directed as scrupulously as one would a film shoot. The source images were taken inside Dr. Donald Campbell's office in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Rockwell's home from 1953 until his death in 1978. Dr. Campbell, Rockwell's own physician, served as the model for the doctor, and eight-year-old Eddie Locke, who Rockwell selected from the lunchroom at Stockbridge Plain Elementary School, posed as the patient. Locke would later model for Rockwell's popular painting *The Runaway*. The artist's practice of selecting his neighbors, instead of professional models, to pose for his paintings lends his work an authentic sense of Americana and pays homage to the everyday middle-class existence in post-war America.



Reference Photo for "Before The Shot", 1958.
Norman Rockwell Museum Collection, Photo by Clemens Kalischer.

The doctor-patient relationship is one that Rockwell knew intimately; in addition to his wife's and his own medical treatments, Rockwell had three young boys at the time, who no doubt provided him with much opportunity to study children apprehensively interacting with doctors. Rockwell gave the completed work to Dr. Campbell, who later sold it to another family, in whose collection it has remained ever since. For the past thirteen years, the work was generously on loan to the Norman Rockwell Museum, where it was enjoyed by countless visitors. The painting's power lies in its amusing relatability; as Rockwell has acknowledged, "I guess everyone has sat in the doctor's office and examined his diplomas, wondering how good a doctor he was..." It is this communal experience that makes *Before the Shot* a hallmark image of American culture, as relevant today as it was in 1958.

Auction: 14 November 2019 | **Auction viewing:** 1-14 November | **Location:** 450 Park Avenue, New York
Click here for more information: <https://www.phillips.com/auctions/auction/NY010719>

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