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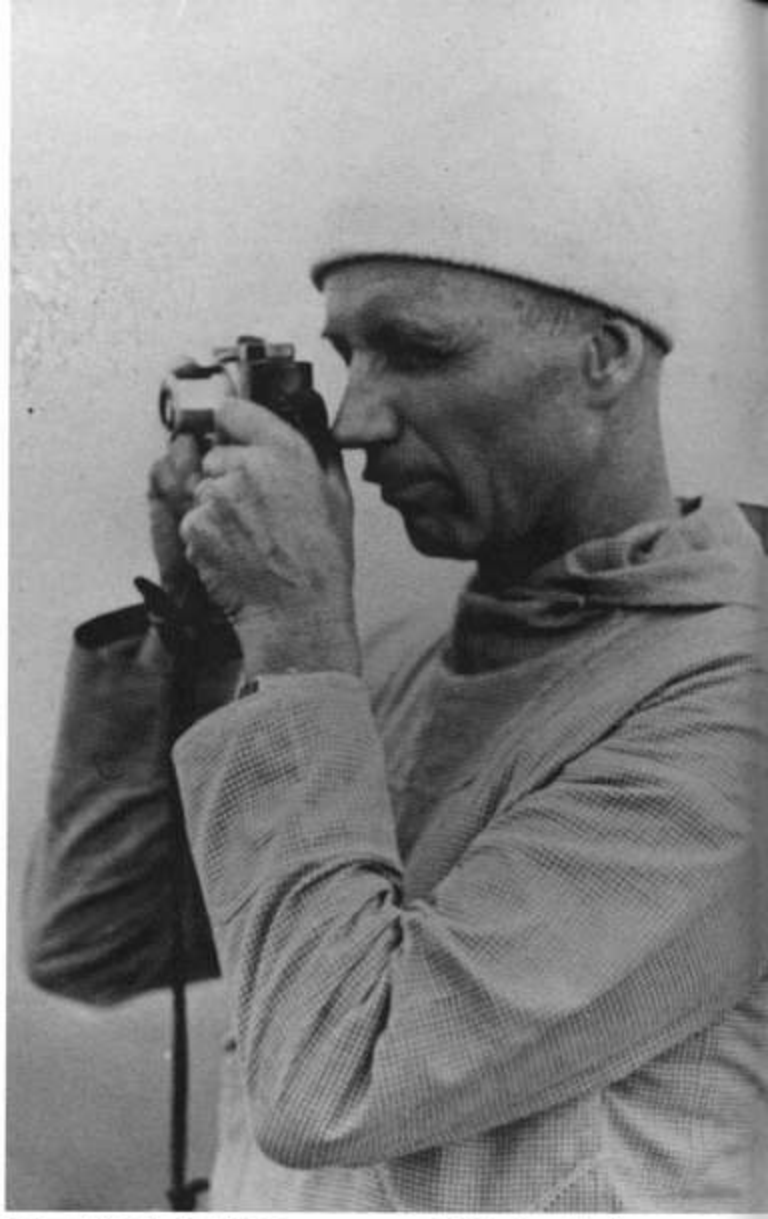
Rockwell Kent and Hollywood

JAKE MILGRAM WIEN

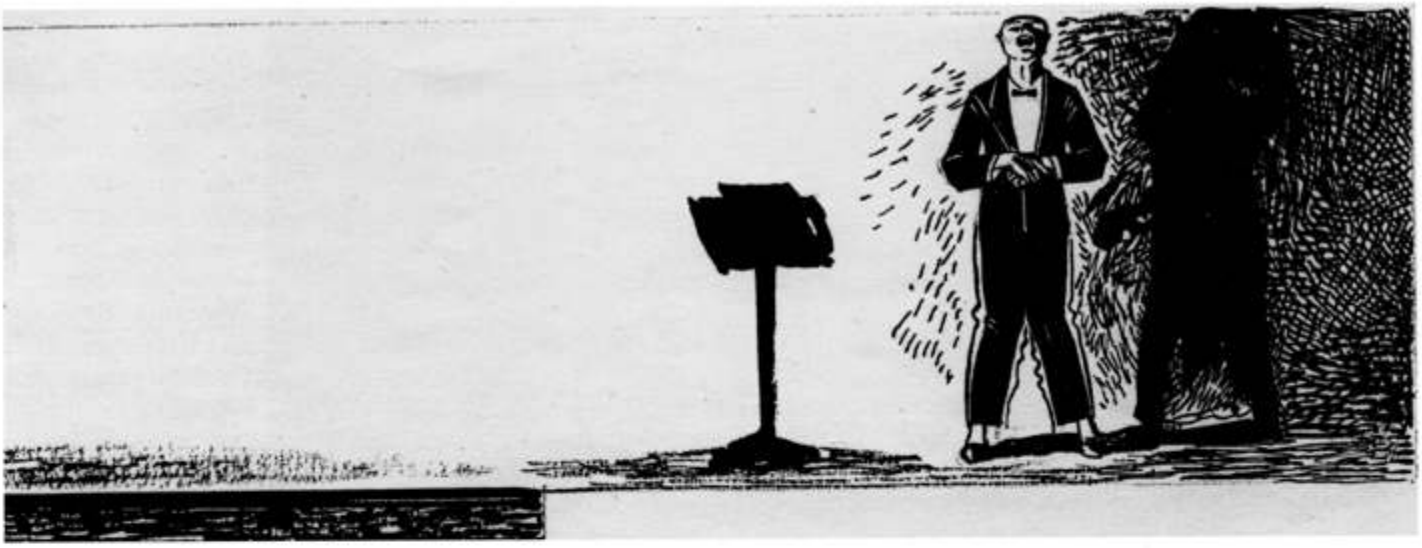


Rockwell Kent behind his Leica camera, probably in Greenland, ca. 1932. Rockwell Kent Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Hollywood deserves a rightful place among the many untamed locales American artist Rockwell Kent (1882–1971) explored. Unlike N. C. Wyeth, who repeatedly resisted the allure of moviemaking,[1] or Edward Hopper, a cineaste who confined his ambitions to the easel, Kent aggressively pursued opportunities to collaborate in motion pictures. Between 1927 and 1945, Kent attempted to parlay his growing critical and popular acclaim as a painter, graphic artist, and writer into work as a screenwriter, art director, or technical adviser. Whether driven by practical need or an unshakeable belief in his own creative versatility, Kent at midcareer did his best to cultivate Charlie Chaplin and to enlist the support of other influential players in the film industry, including publishing scion George Palmer Putnam, Paramount Pictures executive Jesse L. Lasky,[2] talent agent William Morris, Jr., movie director Lewis Milestone and his glamorous wife, Kendall Lee Milestone (Kent's sister-in-law), and Academy Award–winning art director Richard Day. In the end, Kent secured a few commissions to draw movie advertisements and posters, but his larger ambitions as writer, technical adviser, or art director remained unfulfilled. One learns about his cinematic dreams not from his published memoirs, from which they are omitted, but from an extensive survey of archived correspondence.[3]

The leap from painting pictures to collaborating in motion pictures required a fearlessness for which Kent had a well-deserved reputation. By 1930, he was America's foremost intrepid artist, known for his illustrated autobiographical works of adventure in Alaska, Tierra del Fuego, and Greenland—respectively, *Wilderness, Voyaging,* and *N by E.*[4] Artistic self-confidence was also not an issue. Having distinguished himself in other media—drawing (both serious and satirical), printmaking (lithography and wood engraving), and the book and decorative arts—Kent had become America's most famous crossover painter. His nomination three times in the 1920s to the *Vanity Fair* Hall of Fame heralded his status as a painter-celebrity anticipating the likes of Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol—artists whose character, lifestyle, and exploits resonated with the public as much as their artwork.[5] Among those captivated by Kent's persona was Hollywood impresario Merle Armitage, who observed, "Kent has stood on the brink of the void . . . and retrieved himself before the eyes of a delightfully surprised public. . . . Kent can be and is theatrical in the best meaning of that word."[6] So pervasive was Kent's presence in popular culture by the mid-1930s that *Los Angeles Times* art critic Arthur Millier suggested Kent probably had "the greatest influence of any contemporary in genuinely interesting the average American in American art."[7]

Kent's descent into such "lesser" arts as the



Self-portrait of the artist as entertainer on the lecture circuit with lantern slides and film footage. Rockwell Kent, study for *Barn Storming*, ca. 1955. Pen, brush, and ink on paper, 2 3/8 x 7 1/8 in. (6.7 x 18.2 cm), Private Collection. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

Hollywood motion picture, which was fast becoming the quintessential mainstream art form, was consistent with his democratic streak. He was an early member of the Society of Independent Artists, established in 1916, whose no jury–no prize exhibitions included all artists who subscribed to its platform and paid five dollars. A similarly open spirit inhabited Kent's artwork, whose compositions he hoped would appeal to a wide audience. In 1917, the influential critic Henry McBride, who found much in Kent's paintings of Newfoundland to admire, cautioned Kent against this inclination to be popularly understood: "For the really supreme artist how can there be a large audience?"[8] In his review of Kent's next series of paintings of Alaska in early 1920, he similarly advised Kent not to revel in the uniformly glowing notices he would deservedly receive.[9] Kent, nevertheless, disavowed this and like-minded criticism, proposing instead, "Painting is not an art for the few."[10] Fifteen years after making this statement, Kent's designs adorned cigarette boxes, wine coolers, and coasters of Chase Brass and Copper, as well as the dishes, plates, and coffeepots of Vernon Kilns—impeccable credentials for a democratic artist.[11]

The grandest platform—the films of Hollywood—beckoned, and Kent seemed to be a willing apprentice. He had frequented the movies as early as World War I, admiring the silent film-stars of his generation, including Mary Pickford,[12] and developed a passion for both still and motion photography. Kent brought back hundreds of photographs from his painting expeditions to Alaska (1918–1919), Tierra del Fuego (1922–1923), and Greenland (1929, 1931–1932, 1934–1935). During his second trip to Greenland, for example, he shot more than thirty rolls of black-and-white film with his compact Leica,[13] and with his moving camera he shot in both black-and-white and color.[14] When Kent returned to Greenland with his Leica in 1934, he captured on film many of the characters he immortalized in his memoir of 1935, *Salamina*.[15] He toured America in 1933, 1934, and again in 1937 under contract to Columbia Artists Management, a lecture bureau. In town halls and auditoriums, he regaled middle-American audiences with his reels of moving pictures from Greenland—something he self-deprecatingly referred to as "barn storming."

Kent had always been interested in the theater, and dabblings in the stage arts foreshadowed his interest in the cinema. As early as 1912 he designed the scenery for *Come to Bohemia*, an operetta "about Paris Latin Quarter life written and produced on Broadway by a group of nostalgic architects. . . ."[16] In 1930 he collaborated with Jo Mielziner,[17] an influential stage and lighting designer of Kent's era, in the design of the ceiling of the newly built Cape Cinema on Cape Cod, then considered one of the most beautiful art motion picture playhouses in America. Kent supplied the mythic drawings for the animal and human figures that raced across the blue firmament that was part of Mielziner's overall design. And in 1945, Kent completed a series of ink, gouache, and watercolor drawings for a Soviet production of Benjamin Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*. The series included set designs and costume and character sketches of "a distinctly theatrical character."[18]

Kent frequented the stages of Broadway and off-Broadway all his life, but especially during his wartime romance with a German-born dancer and showgirl, Hildegarde Hirsch.[19] In the summer of 1917, Kent excitedly went backstage at the Ziegfeld Follies to draw Hirsch and other performers for *Vanity Fair*. He wrote his wife Kathleen of the thrill and great sport at being "the center of attraction for so many beauties,"[20] and rendered the revue "The Garden of the Follies," in which Hirsch played the sentinel, surrounded by ten dancing flowers.[21] Two other sensational wartime Broadway productions Kent enjoyed included *Business Before Pleasure*, a 1917 Potash and Perlmutter play that

Rockwell Kent, *The Garden of the Follies*, 1917. Sepia and watercolor on buff paper, 17 5/8 x 13 1/16 in. (45 x 33 cm), Private Collection. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

had Kent rolling on the floor with laughter,[22] and a "magnificent" performance by Isadora Duncan, who danced to "La Marseillaise."[23] Twenty-five years later, Kent wrote to one of his editors that he was "crazy about" another Ziegfeld performer—the striptease artist Gypsy Rose Lee.[24]

Of acting, albeit on the amateur stage, Kent could claim some knowledge from his early days. He and his first wife, Kathleen, played the White Knight (in hired shining armor) and Alice in a scene from *Through the Looking Glass* for a costume ball given by the students of the Henri School of Art. Kent recalled this performance, including the mournful song with which he concluded his dialogue with Alice.[25] Around 1918 on

Staten Island, New York, Kent performed the role of Prince Carlo in the Dramatic Club's full-scale production of the popular light opera *The Quaker Girl*.[26] When he moved with his family to southern Vermont in 1919, Kent became one of a motley summer crew of farmer-actors recruited by writer-historian Dorothy Canfield Fisher to stage local performances.[27]

Stage and screen celebrities occasionally enlivened the Kent household, generating an enthusiasm for the performing arts that filtered down to Kent's children. One family friend recalled a summer dinner party at the Kent's cottage on Monhegan Island, Maine, attended by a "star of a Broadway show," whom Kent's wife Kathleen accompanied on the piano during the song "Wait till the Cows Come Home."[28] Actress Pauline Lord, a resident of nearby Elizabethtown in the Adirondacks, attended a birthday party at Kent's home in 1938 and participated, with screenwriter Donald Ogden Stewart, in a spirited charades-like game.[29] By that time Kent had drawn in ink a dramatic portrait of Lord for her use as a bookplate. Kent owed Lord a debt of gratitude for the interest she took in his eldest daughter, Katie, then twenty-five years old. In the fall of 1936, Lord hired Katie—fresh from amateur theater, acting classes in New York, and a brief consultation in Hollywood—as an understudy in her touring stage adaptation of Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* (starring Raymond Massey and Ruth Gordon).[30] In June 1945, actor Paul Robeson accepted Kent's invitation to sing at the outdoor wedding of Peter and Dagmar Freuchen at Kent's Adirondack estate.

By all accounts, the secluded Kent property in the Adirondacks resembled a Hollywood mogul's estate with its well-stocked open bar, tennis court, expansive grounds dotted with horses and Great Danes, and a swimming pond with mountain backdrop. The poet Louis Untermeyer, a neighbor and friend, recalled the alfresco wedding festivities for Kent's daughters, whose guests included "eminent publishers, hired men, Broadway actresses, members of the Vermont Symphony orchestra . . . [all of whom] entertain each other with acrobatics on the lawn, high diving, ground and lofty tumbling, quartet playing, and kayak stunting."[31]

Rockwell Kent, *Bookplate for Pauline Lord*, 1936. Pen, brush, and ink on paper. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

Movie director Lewis Milestone and his wife Kendall Lee, Kent's sister-in-law. Courtesy of Falcone Family Trust.

Kent's second marriage in 1926 to divorcée Frances Lee Higgins eventually brought him greater access to Hollywood. He gained not only a charming new wife but also a sister-in-law of legendary beauty and talent. A professional dancer, Kendall Lee Glaenzer became a Hollywood actress in the 1930s and, after her remarriage in 1935, the wife of Lewis Milestone, best known for his Academy Award–winning direction of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). (Her film credits include *Rain* [1932], directed by Milestone and starring Joan Crawford.) Though based in Hollywood, the Milestones maintained an Adirondack farmstead near the Kents and brought their prominent friends—liberal producers, directors, and actors—into Kent's purview. Kent grew particularly fond of his sister-in-law, and her faithful correspondence from Hollywood during the late 1930s and 1940s, highlighted below, galvanized his moviemaking aspirations.

That Kent envisioned the silver screen as a noble medium worthy of his talent is partly attributable to the brilliance of Charlie Chaplin. Kent perceived in Chaplin an artistic, and later an intellectual, kinship rooted in the transformative power of culture.[32] Kent strongly identified with Chaplin's humanistic impulse,

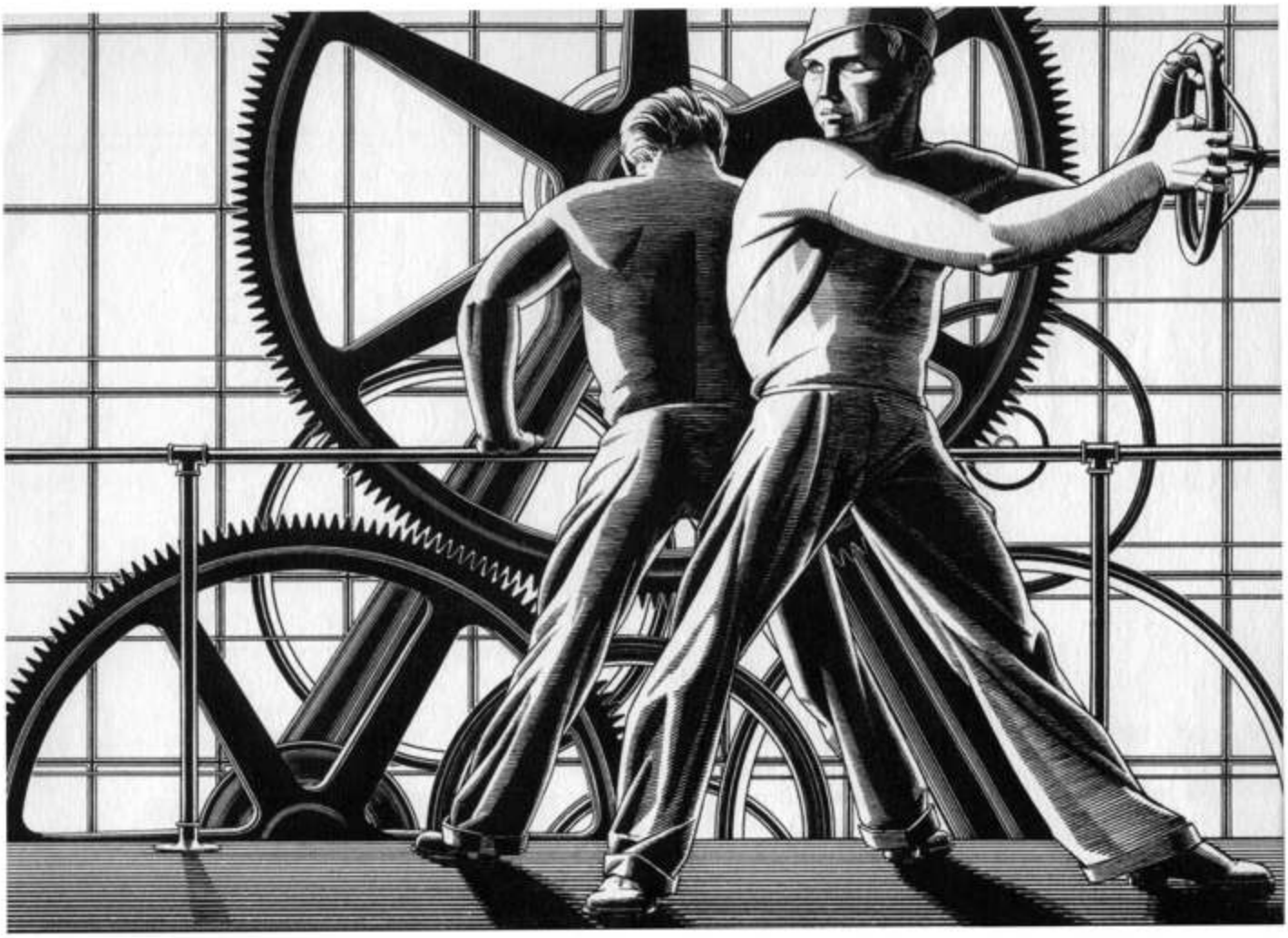
Rockwell Kent, *A Charlie Chaplin Screening*, 1916. Pen, brush, and ink on paper.

Rockwell Kent, *Charlie Chaplin*, ca. 1916. Pen, brush, and ink on paper. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

particularly his appeal across class lines. Though Kent aspired to the lofty realm of high art as a landscape painter, as early as 1916 he catered to the whims of magazine editors who bought his clever lowbrow pen-and-ink drawings of modern life. Not wanting to compromise his growing reputation as a painter, Kent signed these stylish and witty drawings "Hogarth, Jr."[33] By 1926, as "Hogarth, Jr.," Kent had established himself as a player in the mass media through hundreds of inventive drawings published in *Harper's Weekly*, *Puck*, *Judge*, *Vanity Fair*, *New York Tribune*, and *Life*. Interestingly, Chaplin figured in two of these light-hearted drawings, one accompanying the commentary of Franklin P. Adams on Chaplin's unprecedented earning power as a madcap clown,[34] and the other featuring Chaplin's poignant slapstick.[35] Kent relentlessly pursued Chaplin during the 1930s and 1940s, more often than not exposing himself as a vainglorious artist seeking the approval of a star he idolized. In 1933, after dining in Los Angeles,[36] the two reportedly intended to meet at Chaplin's Hollywood home where Chaplin would show Kent his moving pictures from Bali and Kent would show Chaplin his Greenland footage.[37] Chaplin so charmed Kent that, when a six-week exhibition of Kent's paintings opened in a Los Angeles gallery in March 1934, Kent conspired to lure Chaplin to see it. The gallery proprietor fretted, "I tried every way possible to get Chaplin in—wrote him—sent him messages by mutual friends—all to no avail."[38] In June, a pen-and-ink drawing by Kent appeared in an advertisement in *Fortune*, portraying a factory worker whose compact body, mischievous eyes looking "left," and curled upper lip seemed to evoke Chaplin—but was not too recognizable a portrait that it would have compromised the integrity of the ad.[39] That Kent intended a nod to Chaplin is probable, for Kent customarily portrayed idealized figures of indeterminate countenance in his drawings for advertising. Chaplin's *Modern Times* was not released until early 1936, but pre-production publicity for the movie appeared as early as August 1933, and shooting was scheduled to begin in November 1933,[40] precisely when Kent met with Chaplin in Hollywood. Kent would have identified readily with the premise of Chaplin's movie—a lampoon of modern industrial society, particularly the mindless assembly line.

When Kent completed his 1940 Adirondack memoir,[41] he made sure to send Chaplin a signed copy. In his cover letter Kent drew a parallel between his book and Chaplin's film *The Great Dictator* (1940), implying that both were works largely of comedic satire but with ponderous concluding overtones. Kent ingratiatingly wrote that audiences viewing *The Great Dictator* "sit roaring with laughter through nine-tenths of it, only to be moved to tears by its conclusion."[42] Wounded when Chaplin failed to acknowledge receipt of his book, Kent lamented, "When, eager to share with you my thoughts on what's happening today, I bought, inscribed and sent to you a copy of my book, I might just as well have dug a hole in the ground and interred the book to the grateful memory of Charlie Chaplin. In short: Did you get my book?"[43] There is no evidence Chaplin responded to this or to two more letters from Kent that year. Instead, Chaplin's secretary replied, apologizing for Chaplin's preoccupation with the Hollywood re-release of his 1925 film, *The Gold Rush*.[44]

Kent's admiration of Chaplin grew further during the Cold War years, when both deviated from the prevailing liberal consensus. Their brand of progressive



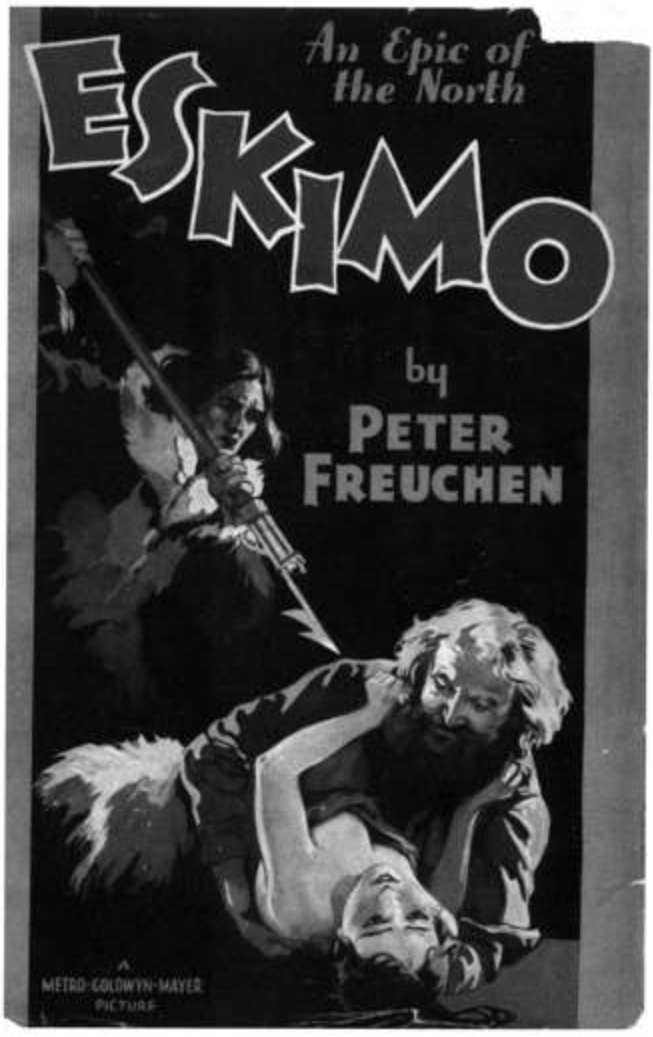
Rockwell Kent, *Factory Workers*, 1934. Pen, brush, and ink on paper, 9 3/8 x 13 3/4 in. (25 x 35 cm). By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

politics did Chaplin's "star image no good"[45] and eventually brought Kent's New York gallery representation to an end. Both supported the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee and its work toward unhampered freedom to travel. From Geneva, Chaplin wrote: "The natural right of every free man to travel is being violated more and more by the unscrupulous withholding of passports. . . . Such international artists as Paul Robeson and Rockwell Kent, whose art is a credit to America and whose art has enriched understanding between America and Europe, are chained by this vicious and dangerous policy."[46]

The creative force that provided Kent with access to a powerful Hollywood network of producers and agents was George Palmer Putnam, whom Kent befriended in Monhegan Island, Maine, as far back as 1906. In the early 1920s, Putnam advanced Kent professionally as a writer by publishing his first two books of adventure, *Wilderness* and *Voyaging*, as well as the humorous masquerade he illustrated, *Rollo in Society*. By 1927, Putnam had achieved success as a literary agent and executive at G. P. Putnam's Sons and had helped produce *Wings*, which in 1928 won the first Best Picture Oscar.[47] Thinking Putnam might help him break out of the adventure mold, Kent sent Putnam a movie treatment of *Tristan and Iseult*, a historical romantic epic Kent favored perhaps for its dramatic extramarital love triangle, a situation that Kent knew well.[48] Putnam forwarded Kent's proposal to Jesse L. Lasky, Jr., head of production at Paramount Pictures in Hollywood (and Samuel Goldwyn's brother-in-law). Lasky politely rejected the proposal, noting its tragic ending, the doubtfulness of its mainstream appeal, and the enormous investment that would be required for period staging and costuming.[49]

In 1933, perhaps concluding that the public might be more interested in the triumph of his life's adventures than in the emotional tribulations of a medieval legend, Kent offered Putnam what he thought was a more dynamic cinematic property—the story of his artistic sojourn in Greenland in 1931–1932. Kent had sailed twice to Greenland since he had first approached Putnam, once in 1929 and again in 1931, where he had lived through an Arctic winter in a remote settlement of hunters, fishermen, and their families. Kent now envisioned a movie fueled by licit and illicit passion at

Woodbridge Strong ("W.S.") Van Dyke, Maureen O'Sullivan, and Peter Freuchen in a publicity photograph taken at MGM Studios, Hollywood, May 1932. Van Dyke points to northern Alaska where he will direct filming of *Eskimo* that summer. Freuchen clutches his book *Eskimo*, for which Kent designed the dust jacket. Rockwell Kent Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



Right: Movie-inspired dust jacket for the new edition of *Eskimo*, ca. 1934, Private Collection.

the center of which would be Salamina, his lovely and clever Greenlandic housekeeper and companion, whose story he planned to publish.[50] Kent proposed making this movie in Greenland during a return visit there in the summer of 1934.

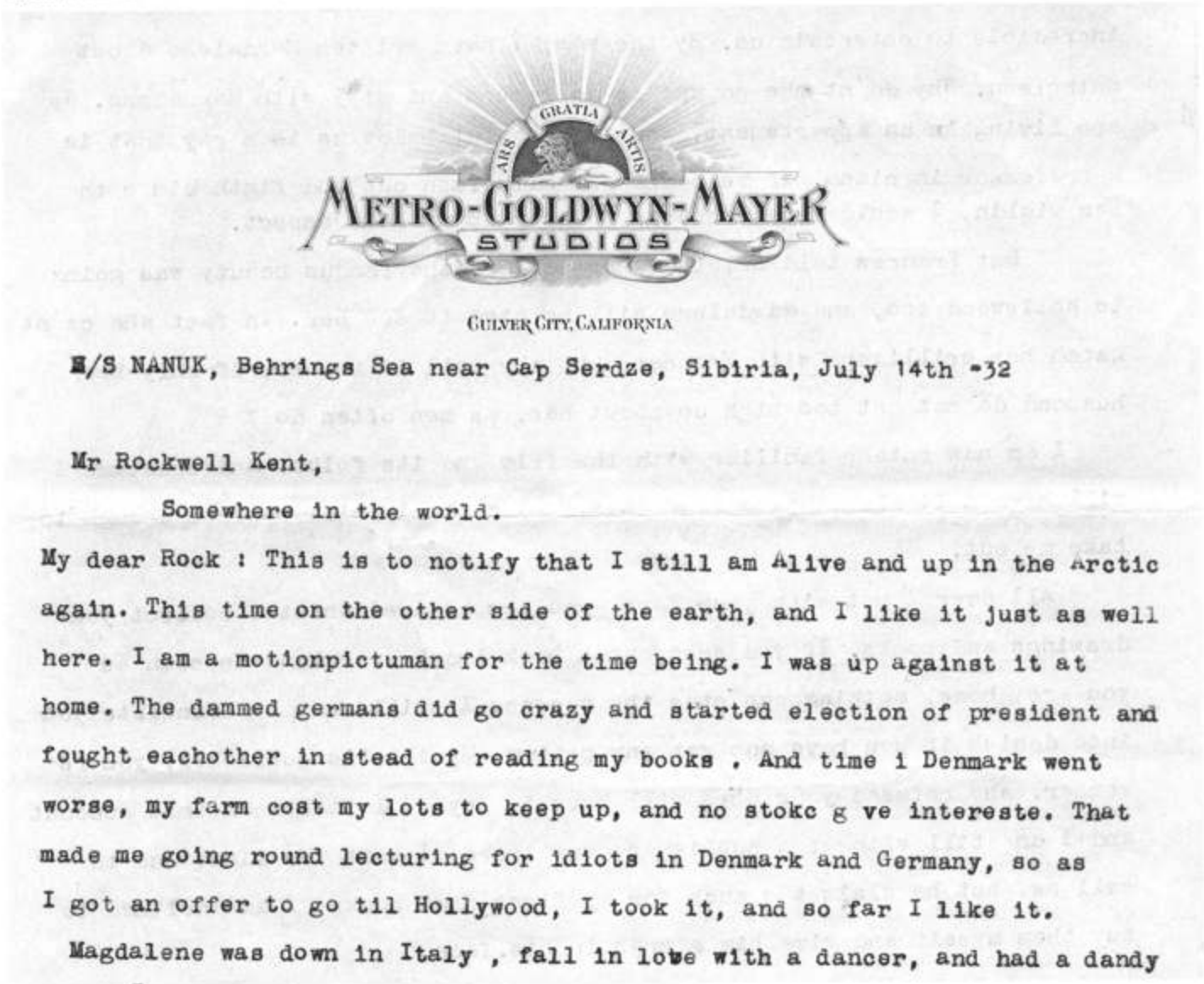
Kent had reason to be optimistic about Putnam, who also suffered from wanderlust and had headed a sailing expedition to Greenland in 1926. Kent's hopes for his feature film were further buttressed by the cinematic trend of shooting in exotic locales. Specifically, four feature films of the North were in production or recently completed, and Kent had personal knowledge of the making of each: *Eskimo* (1933), *S.O.S. Iceberg* (1933), *The Wedding of Palo* (1934), and *Man of Two Worlds* (1934). *Eskimo* was based on Danish explorer Peter Freuchen's novel, the first American edition of which included an introduction by Kent and featured his signature pen-and-ink drawing of the protagonist on both sides of the dust jacket and as a frontispiece.[51] *The Wedding of Palo* was filmed in east Greenland and was largely the work of the Danish-Inuit ethnographer Knud Rasmussen. Kent had met and stayed at the homes of both Freuchen and Rasmussen on his return from Greenland via Denmark in 1929.

Throughout 1932 and into the early months of 1933, Kent experienced vicariously the shooting of a Hollywood feature film through an extraordinary correspondence with Freuchen, whom Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) hired to bring his novel to the screen. In Hollywood and on location in Alaska, Freuchen wrote Kent of his moviemaking experiences during the filming of *Eskimo*. The studio cast Freuchen as the film's antagonist—a one-dimensional, lecherous, drunken captain who rapes the native wife of the heroic Eskimo protagonist. Freuchen referred to his prospective filming misadventures as "Hollywoodfooliness."[52] Kent relished Freuchen's cavalier, ribald letters in broken English, whose crudeness undercut the elegance of the MGM letterhead on which they were typed, and promised to have them "bound into books."[53]

If Kent harbored any illusions about the integrity of the filmmaking process, Freuchen rapidly dispelled them by lamenting the depths to which Hollywood artistry could plummet. Little was beneath Freuchen, who at the very least hoped his efforts at MGM would enhance sales of his novel. He envisioned a cheap trade edition of the book plastered with stills from the campy movie. In such a pulp-fiction incarnation, Freuchen predicted, his novel would look terrible but would sell "in the drugstores."[54] Indeed his marketing vision materialized, with his own film character emblazoned on the dust jacket of the new edition of the novel.

Kent was peripherally involved with another of the Arctic films, *Man of Two Worlds*, which premiered at Radio City Music Hall on 11 January 1934. Kent's signature artwork, of dramatic design—here identified for the first time as Kent's—graced the dust jacket of the book on which the movie was based. The book's author, Ainsworth Morgan, contacted Kent before the première, hoping that he would "derive some mild amusement out of seeing it."[55] Though Kent and Morgan shared Greenland as a paramount interest, it is not clear whether the two met or who commissioned Kent to design the dust jacket of Morgan's book.

Detail of one of several comical letters Peter Freuchen typed in broken English and sent to Kent during the filming of *Eskimo*. Rockwell Kent Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER STUDIOS

CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

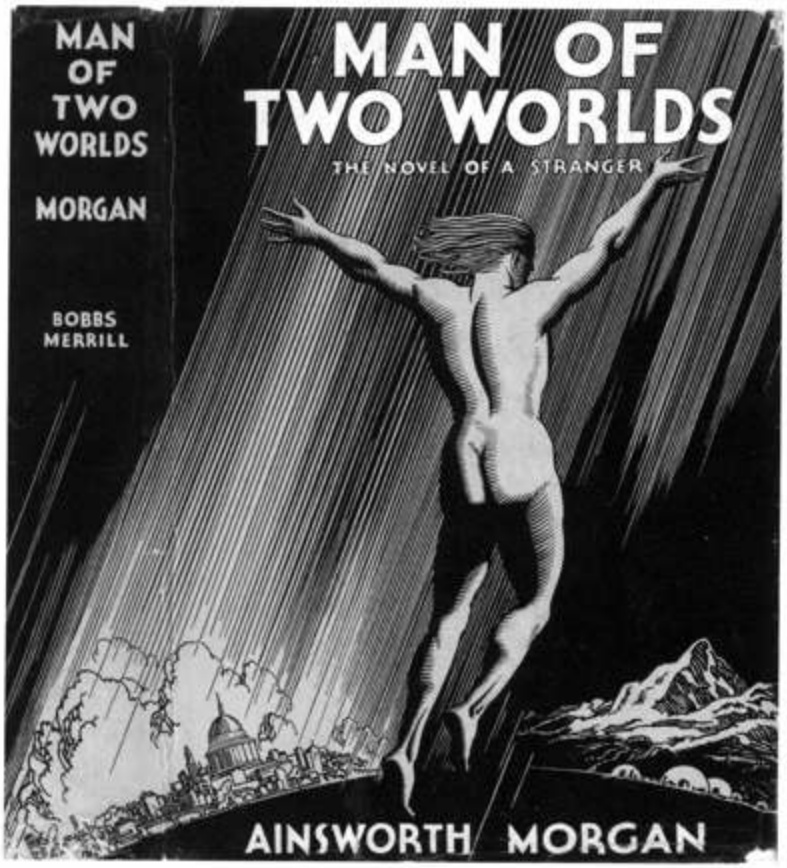
M/S NANUK, Behrings Sea near Cap Serdze, Sibiria, July 14th -32

Mr Rockwell Kent,

Somewhere in the world.

My dear Rock : This is to notify that I still am Alive and up in the Arctic again. This time on the other side of the earth, and I like it just as well here. I am a motionpictuman for the time being. I was up against it at home. The dammed germans did go crazy and started election of president and fought eachother in stead of reading my books . And time i Denmark went worse, my farm cost my lots to keep up, and no stokc g ve intereste. That made me going round lecturing for idiots in Denmark and Germany, so as I got an offer to go til Hollywood, I took it, and so far I like it.

Magdalene was down in Italy , fall in lowe with a dancer, and had a dandy



Rockwell Kent, dust jacket for *Man of Two Worlds*, 1933, Private Collection. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

Kent followed with interest the progress of the third Arctic film, *S.O.S. Iceberg*, knowing that its box office appeal would affect the reception of his own film proposal. The German-American co-production commenced filming in Greenland during the summer of 1932 and starred Leni Riefenstahl, the young German actress who later gained infamy for her directorial achievements in *Triumph of the Will* (1934) and *Olympia* (1938). The production's three airplanes were stationed at Igdlorssuit, the expedition's "flying camp"[56] and the very same remote settlement above the Arctic Circle where Kent was residing as a painter. To the Greenlanders—"peaceful men" who "never fight"—the *S.O.S. Iceberg* crew demonstrated, according to Kent, "much drunkenness, brawling and fighting with fists," which the Greenlanders found less than amusing.[57] Kent wrote Freuchen of the hilarious nickname—the "Mattress"—the Greenlanders gave the German leading lady, who was not named by Kent in his letter.[58] Only when he revisited his memoirs from Greenland some thirty years later did Kent identify the German actress as "a somewhat faded leading lady, Riefenstahl" and brand her as the woman who would later "shine with evil luster as a Hitler favorite."[59]

Curiously, Kent's known writings never say whether he befriended Riefenstahl in Greenland. His reference to her as "faded" seems to imply, at the very least, that he had seen her on location. One of Kent's Danish correspondents, Peter Borresen, possibly alludes to the two having met; after seeing *S.O.S. Iceberg*, Borresen wrote Kent that the acting "was bad and the star—your friend Leni—was not so good."[60]

By early 1934, Kent had seen the completed *S.O.S. Iceberg*. He found the movie "abominable," with redemptive value only in "the magnificent photography of ice . . . the few shots of Greenlanders . . . and [Kent's] five beautiful dogs. . . ."[61] *S.O.S. Iceberg*, Kent railed, was "a cheap misrepresentation of the personnel and the activities and aims of exploring expeditions, and it only serves to build up in the public mind that misconception of Greenland as a country of terrific cold, inhabited by nearly savage people."[62]

Kent distinguished *Eskimo* and *S.O.S. Iceberg* from the Arctic feature film he would make, assuring Putnam that he could "get at folk material as few people can."[63] The movie he pitched in August 1933 would be "a drama of folk life in Greenland to-day, and relics of the past." From Putnam, who had left G. P. Putnam's, married Amelia Earhart, and become an executive at Paramount Pictures Distributing Corporation, Kent

Actress Leni Riefenstahl during the filming of *S.O.S. Iceberg*, ca. 1932.

Amelia Earhart and her husband George Palmer Putnam, 1931.

requested a budget "to the tune of say $10,000" that would provide for the hiring of "a young and adventurous movie-camera operator" for a full year in Greenland, as well as for a motor boat and dog team and their attendant expenses, two men to assist the camera operator, food, and housing. Kent saw himself as expedition head with ultimate power to hire the movie-camera operator. "Someone's going to back me," Kent presumptuously concluded.[64]

Putnam expressed "real hope" in Kent's proposal, but emphasized that "indiscriminate footage" would be meaningless without a story with "entertainment value," the more spectacular the better. Folk material, he added, would be of no popular appeal. Putnam mentioned that he had not yet seen *Eskimo* or *S.O.S. Iceberg* and that their success would color his opinion of the likely fate of Kent's proposed movie. He advised Kent on the atmospherics behind a story that Kent or a film crew could film—"spectacular hunting, icebergs, dog sledding, blizzards . . . carefully staged thrills, polar bears, walrus, narwhals, kyaks [*sic*]."[65] The story itself might involve "some popular and dramatic figure (the picture people I know would be crazy to get Amelia [Earhart—Putnam's wife] to figure in such a story if she would do it, and possibly she would if she appeared simply as herself and not mucked up in any way with the play-acting part.)"[66] Putnam envisioned Kent's role in the filming of the larger story as that of "technical adviser" rather than director and imagined Kent earning a stated salary in addition to the price of the story, or even "a small cut in the picture."[67]

Whatever optimism Putnam conveyed to Kent in August had evaporated by November when Putnam saw MGM's *Eskimo* and thoroughly disliked it. Without "laughter or joy" and with "plenty of hokum and ham stuff," *Eskimo*, Putnam feared, would satisfy for awhile whatever curiosity there might be for "Eskimo pictures."[68] By January 1934, Putnam had viewed *S.O.S. Iceberg*, which he also found unsatisfying, and he articulated his having "pretty much lost heart about a Greenland picture. Obviously there are far better and truer [Arctic] pictures to be made," he noted, "but I believe the motion picture master minds are probably right in their belief that generally speaking the American theatre-going public doesn't care overly for too much snow and ice and round-faced Eskimos."[69]

With only a few months remaining before his passage to Greenland in the summer, Kent pegged his last best hope on Hollywood talent agent William Morris, Jr. Kent initially sounded out Morris through a mutual acquaintance, Hugh King, pitching his drama as one "to be entirely carried out by the natives of Greenland."[70] Morris responded favorably to the notion of a Greenland picture by finding parallel logistical concerns in the making of *The Devil Tiger* (1934), filmed in the Malasian jungle, a picture Morris's office had been instrumental in having made. Morris suggested further discussion at length with Kent.[71]

Just before leaving for Greenland in July 1934, Kent provided Morris with a narrative outline of his screenplay as well as a budget of one year's expenses for the equipment and salary of a four-man crew he proposed hiring. The screenplay was rather conventional: boy meets girl, they rendezvous, girl conceives, boy builds turf home, girl gives birth, villagers celebrate with a coffee klatch, native pastor from nearby settlement marries the two and christens the child, boy continues hunting for seal, shark, and whale, home is left momentarily unattended, sled dogs invade home to snatch seal meat, and so on. Among the thrilling aspects of his feature film, Kent enumerated "men, dogs and sledges plunging through the late spring ice" and "men climbing thousand foot cliffs for bird's eggs." Amidst the bucolic splendor of their summer months, Kent described "picnics in the deep grass of the meadows among the flowers, and, incidentally, everybody continuously beating the air at the clouds of mosquitoes that are everywhere."[72] Kent proposed taking two cameras, sound equipment, and a compact motor and generator that would make night photography possible.

With apparent sincerity, Morris wrote that Kent's movie synopsis had brought him to tears. Nevertheless, he believed the story lacked "'thrills, sensations and Hollywood.'"[73] By late May, Kent's desperation to secure funding for his proposed movie nearly brought him to his knees. He implored Morris, "I hope to Heaven that you can get some one to be interested in this."[74] To impress Morris, Kent alluded to Charlie Chaplin having "showed tremendous interest" in what Kent referred to as the "Salamina side" of his Greenland story.[75] Only after Kent departed for Greenland did Morris notify Kent's wife that he had no prospects

Thomas Hart Benton, *Departure of the Joads*, 1939, reproduced on a poster for Twentieth Century-Fox's *The Grapes of Wrath*, 1939. © Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation.

for Kent's movie and suggest that Kent muster publicity for his movie outside such conventional media as the movie and theater sections of the newspapers.[76]

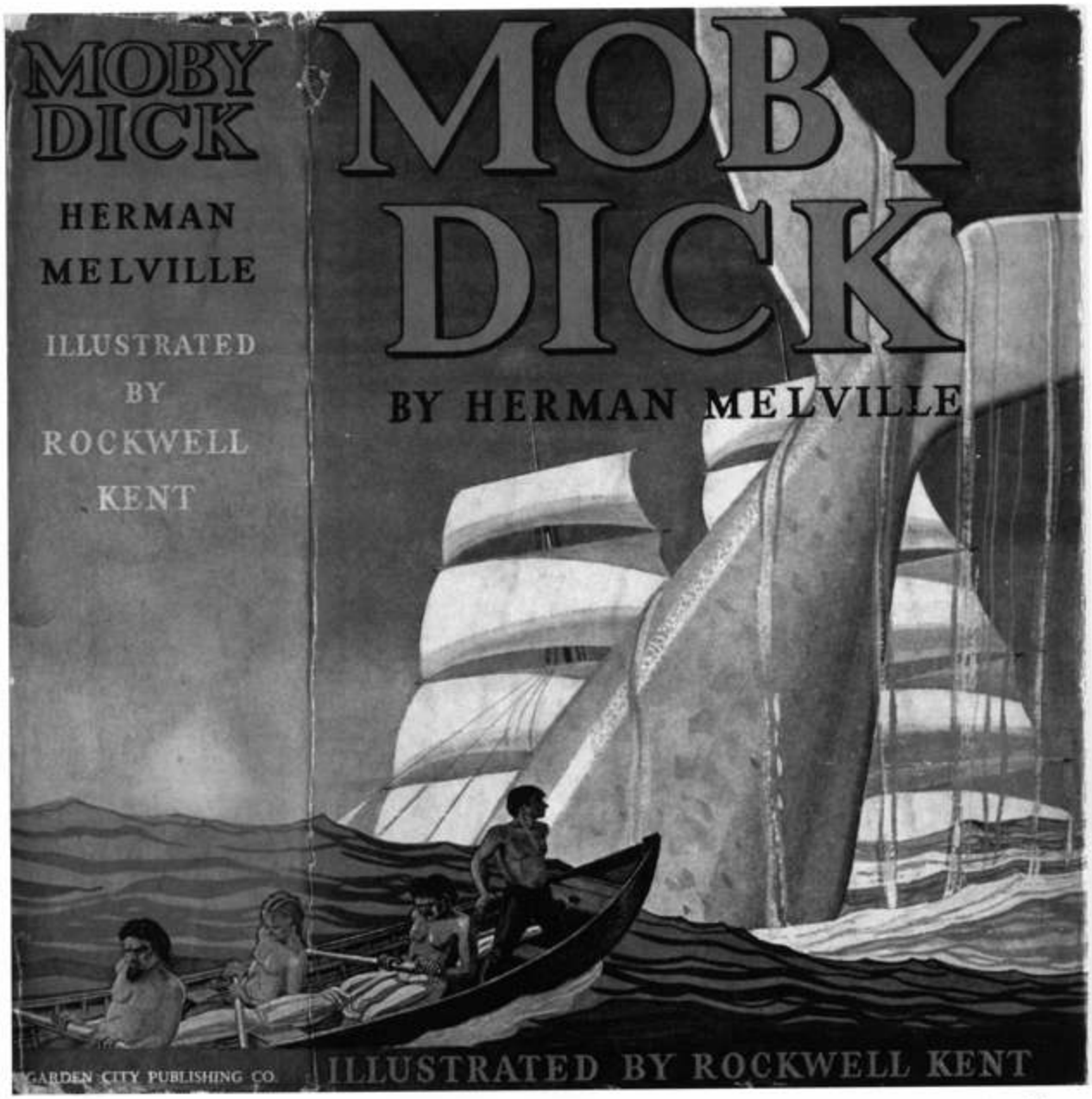
In 1940, Hollywood, for once, called on Kent. Putnam, who had since left Paramount, relocated to Hollywood at the corner of Hollywood and Vine, and incorporated as a motion picture promoter, asked Kent whether he might handle the motion picture rights to Kent's forthcoming autobiography, *This Is My Own*.[77] On reading Kent's literary property several months later, Putnam found it "bully . . . fresh, authentic, unpretentious," and even though he saw no "'picture story'" in it, Putnam began marketing it to the various motion picture studios.[78] Offhandedly, Kent offered to star in whatever movie might be made about him: "And as for acting the part—well, you know me. Just give me the chance."[79] As he had expected, Putnam failed to "get to first base" with *This Is My Own* because it lacked a "motion picture story which stands on its own feet."[80]

Their old friendship revived, Kent felt comfortable enough to ask Putnam to "think up a good and extremely lucrative Hollywood job" for him.[81] After the holidays Kent asked again, needing to "earn some money and earn it quick. This war business threatens to be as serious for artists as the last war was."[82] Kent's attention had been seized by a job secured by his contemporary Thomas Hart Benton with Twentieth Century-Fox. In 1939, Fox had commissioned Benton to create a series of character sketches to aid in the artistic direction of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, which came out in 1940. Basing his sketches on his earlier drawings from eastern Oklahoma and northwestern Arkansas, Benton made a series of six lithographs, which were used by Fox to publicize the motion picture.[83] "Departure of the Joads," the largest and most cinematic of the six, was used on the poster promoting the movie. According to Kent, who did not disclose the source of his information, Benton's "fee was a large one."[84] A year later Kent asked his friend Donald Ogden Stewart, who had just won an Academy Award in 1941 for his screenplay for *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), to help him secure a Hollywood agent. Stewart recommended his own agent, Leland Hayward.[85]

Another movie opportunity appeared in March 1941, when Walter P. Lewisohn, an aspiring movie promoter based in New York City, proposed a Greenlandic feature film based on Kent's best-selling book *N by E*. Invoking the films of Robert Flaherty (sometimes called "the father of the motion picture documentary"), Lewisohn envisioned their making together "a great artistic and also scientific achievement outstripping 'Nanook of the North' [1922] or 'White Shadows of the South Seas' [1928]."[86] It is no wonder that Lewisohn might find cinematic promise in *N by E*, for Kent drew its dramatic chapter headings in ink with storyboard-like precision. *N by E* was conveniently structured the way a movie might be scripted, with flashback sequences that punctuate the narrative flow, providing the reader with anecdotal background and comic relief.

After an initial meeting, Kent presented Lewisohn with a formal contract based on a "scenario" Lewisohn would provide by 15 May, stipulating that Kent would be "artistic director and technical advisor on the picture in Hollywood and/or on any expedition."[87] By the middle of June, however, the U.S. Department of State advised Kent that he would not be able to make his movie in Greenland because of the military conflict in Europe. The 7 December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor dealt a deathblow to the Kent-Lewisohn project, and their correspondence amicably concluded shortly thereafter.

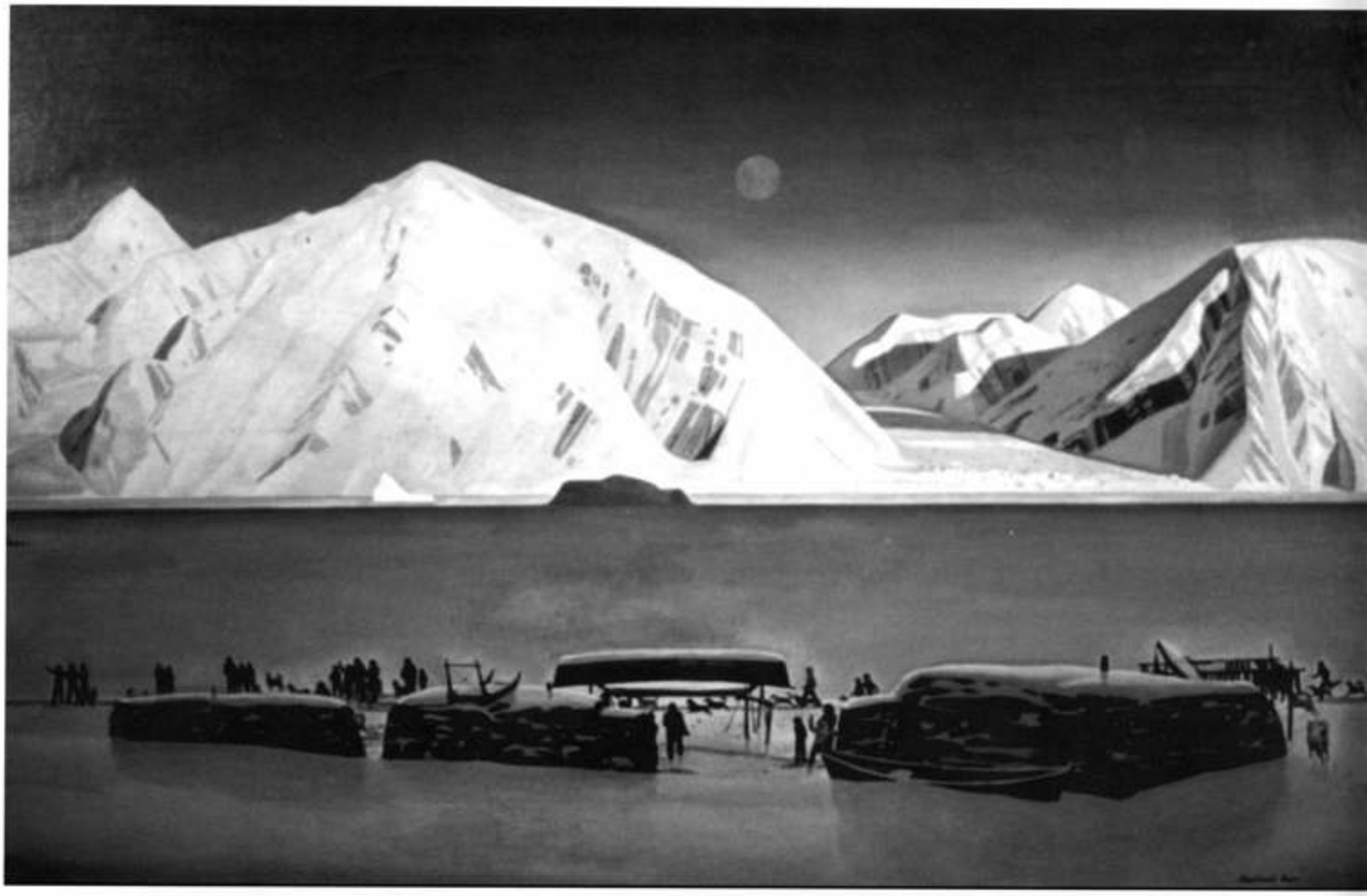
What might have been the perfect collaboration between Kent and Hollywood came to the fore one week in early April 1942, when Kent and his third wife, Sally, traveled to Los Angeles for the opening of "Know and Defend America"—Kent's one-man painting retrospective organized by Wildenstein and Company.[88] In honor of the Kents, Kendall Milestone (now Kent's former sister-in-law) and her husband, Lewis, contributed to the success of the "great and costly" opening party, invited Hollywood notables to their house for stylish parties, and otherwise entertained the Kents.[89] That week, Kent heard talk of a Hollywood film to be based on Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Having been celebrated as the illustrator whose nearly three hundred ink drawings animated the book in a best-selling 1930 edition and who created a cinematic pictorial dust jacket for a deluxe edition in 1937, Kent recognized the opportunity for what it became—his last chance to make it big in Hollywood. With a feeling of entitlement, as the one who had brought visual life to the white whale, he urged Kendall to "beg" her husband "to scheme, plot, plan, conspire in every way" to get him work on the filming of *Moby Dick*.[90]



Rockwell Kent, dust jacket for the Garden City De Luxe edition of *Moby Dick*, 1937, Private Collection. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

By July, Kent bristled with anticipation of a Hollywood collaboration. He wrote Kendall, "I hope to heaven that 'Moby Dick' does go ahead some time, that Milly [Lewis Milestone] and Bob Rossen [at that time a Hollywood screenwriter] want me to work with them on it and, incidentally, that Warner Brothers want me too."[91] Feverishly, Kent broke with routine and wrote directly to Milestone, because he had been thinking about *Moby Dick* "a lot, and I talk about it a lot; and the instant reaction of people to whom I mention that such a production is being considered is 'Wonderful!' It's just the time—now when we are building up national pride—to bring out a great picture of this great American classic."[92] Kent believed that promoting cultural pride would lead to a heightened "victory spirit." He even went so far as to see in the Melville novel a paradigm of political good and evil, with the evil of the white whale corresponding to that of Hitler:

"Moby Dick," a story of one of the great periods of American life, and about one of America's all-time greatest activities, by an American who was himself a whaler, a story of hardship, courage and manhood and of relentless, undeviating pursuit of an object of vengeance, is the greatest story, from the point of view of nationalism, that can be given the American people today. See in Moby Dick, Hitler, and in Ahab, ourselves endowed with the wrath and will to vengeance that we've got to have. For heaven's sake move heaven and earth out there to get "Moby Dick" produced.[93]



Rockwell Kent, *Arrival of the Post*, 1935–1941. Oil on canvas mounted on plywood, 40 x 60 in. (102 x 152 cm), Pushkin Museum. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

Ultimately, the wartime *Moby Dick* project was shelved, and it took fourteen years before director John Huston realized his interpretation. Kent went to see Huston's *Moby Dick* shortly after its release in 1956, and in his inimitable way branded as "awful" Gregory Peck's performance as Ahab.[94]

Another high point of Kent's stay in Los Angeles that spring of 1942 was meeting Richard Day, the leading Hollywood art director of his generation, who won over the years seven Academy Awards for such movies as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *How Green Was My Valley*, and *On the Waterfront*. (The two men had many friends in common, including Carl Zigrosser, Merle Armitage, and the Milestones.) A lithographer of stark landscapes, Day was represented by Weyhe Gallery in the early 1930s, and he provided Kent with the ultimate Hollywood validation by purchasing a Greenland painting then hanging in Kent's retrospective. He also invited Kent to the set of Twentieth Century-Fox's *Pied Piper*, one of the many movies on which Day worked in 1942 and a recipient of an Academy Award nomination for Best Picture. Thrilled to experience the filming of a movie, Kent later thanked Day for his friendship as well as his patronage and congratulated him for the beauty and stirring quality of *The Pied Piper*, which he saw in New York that fall.[95]

Kent confided to Day his art-directing ambitions, and Day conveyed his sincere "enthusiasm over the prospect of a collaboration" with Kent and promised to "do everything possible" were the opportunity to arise. He hedged his bets, however, by acknowledging the "strange and trying times. . . ."[96] Knowing that Kent looked forward to "hopping a plane for Hollywood if the call should come,"[97] Day notified him in October 1942 of a possible job designing the posters and advertising layouts for *The Moon Is Down*, under production by Twentieth Century-Fox. By then, however, Day had joined the Marine Corps to command a school of camouflage, and his communications with, and efforts on behalf of, Kent came to a close.[98]

Kent fanned the flames of his last hopes for Hollywood employment in 1943 by reviving the notion of a Hollywood feature film based on *This Is My Own*. He offered the otherwise engaged Day the opportunity to acquire his title and story[99] and asked Kendall Lee Milestone to raise the idea with her husband, who might then discuss it with others. Kent believed the book's Americanism timely, calling it a "back-to-the-

land" story that "would kindle something in the hearts of most people."[100] He prepared a rough outline that could be embellished with additional dramatic elements.

Having heard nothing from the Milestones in response to his proposed outline, Kent worried of having made a "serious mistake" by overstepping the bounds. He adopted a more self-effacing strategy he hoped would raise a response: "Maybe you Hollywood people are resentful of outsiders trying to barge in."[101] Kendall took umbrage at Kent's generalization, replying "Hollywood is made up of all sort of people, some are nice some are dull, some are bright and some are dumb, but luck seems to me to play the most important role of anything out here." She also noted "those big boys aren't very bright and have no imagination. Don't give up. I hope sometime to pearce [*sic*] the dense fog of their little intellect." She added that she had given Kent's outline to a Twentieth Century-Fox producer who sat on it for some time and had since left that studio.[102] A few months later Oliver Hinsdell of the Studio of Dramatic Art in Los Angeles notified Kent that Harry Bucquet of MGM would read his synopsis.[103]

Rockwell Kent, *Salamina*, 1932. Watercolor over traces of graphite on paper, 13 15/16 x 9 15/16 in. (33 x 23 cm), Private Collection. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

Kent's letter writing to Hollywood tapered off after his former wife Frances Lee married the dashing Hollywood movie actor Gregory ("Grisha") Gaye in 1945 and after the Milestones sold their Adirondack farm at about the same time.[104] Hollywood rapidly receded from Kent's dreamscape after World War II, though he maintained limited professional ties through an annual art auction sponsored by the magazine *New Masses* and held in Los Angeles. Kent shared committeeman status with several other artists known for their progressive politics, as well as with such Hollywood glitterati as Charles Boyer, Gene Kelly, Ava Gardner, and John Garfield.[105]

In the end, two bodies of work came out of Kent's struggles to make a place for himself in Hollywood. The lasting and more important of these artworks are his paintings and works on paper of Greenland and Greenlanders, produced during the 1930s when he hoped to film a movie based on his adventures and romances there. Kent channeled his cinematic vision into his paintings, watercolors, prints, and drawings from Greenland, animating them with a theatricality and heightened drama that distinguish them from his earlier work. Many of his panoramic icescapes from Igdlorssuit are of a cinematic nature, including the epic-sized *Arrival of the Post*. Brightly lit, well-choreographed scenes are rendered as if viewed from a box seat. Kent's contemporaneous descriptions from Greenland suggest he was imaginatively constructing paintings in a way a stage or film director might conceive of a theatrical production:

> *Standing on the sloping foreland of Igdlorssuit, one looks out as though upon the stage of a great theater. Of that stage, the level plain of the sea is the floor, the great circle of the heavens is the proscenium arch, the two headlands are the wings. Sea, mountains, ice, are its one set; sun, moon, and stars the light. And of the drama endlessly deploying there . . .*[106]

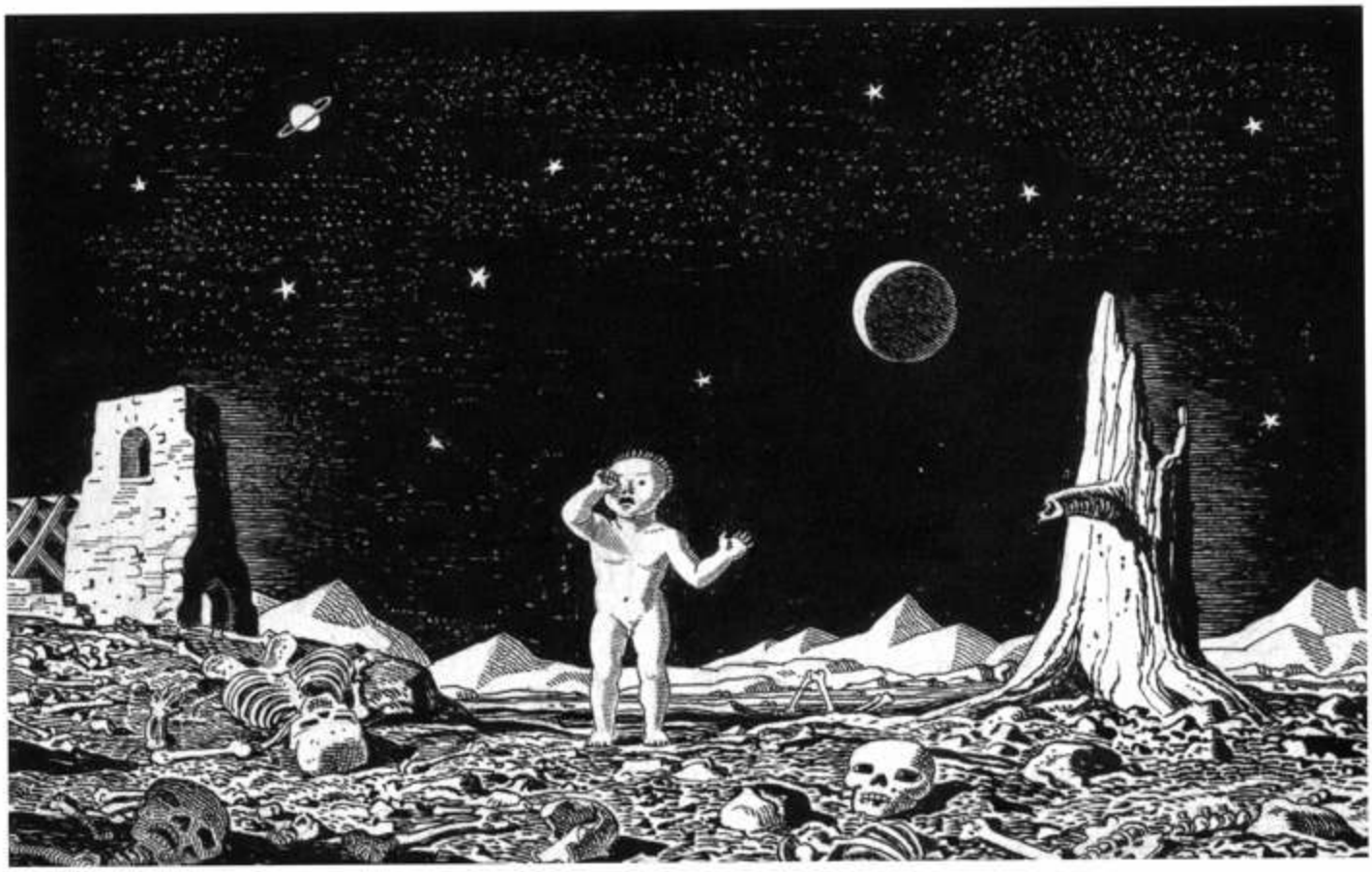
Kent's full-length portraits of Greenlanders, either in watercolor or conté crayon, present a veritable cast of characters, the same people who populate the dramatic narratives of his autobiographical *Salamina*. The portrait of his eponymous heroine is particularly theatrical—lit from below as footlights animate an actress on a stage. His series of lithographs of Greenlanders from the mid-1930s are invested with the same documentary spirit and authenticity that distinguished Knud Rasmussen's *Wedding of Palo*. A heightened theatricality similarly inspired Kent's series of twelve wood engravings created between his first and second journeys to Greenland. Each portrayed a luminous white figure, scantily or not clad at all, against the black darkness of space—what one curator described as "a darkened natural theater of the sublime."[107]

Kent's campaign to make a name for himself in Hollywood produced a second body of artworks, his promotional drawings. In 1930 Kent completed a draw-

Rockwell Kent, *Entertainment—A Giant Industry*, 1930. Pen, brush, and ink on paper. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

Rockwell Kent, *Nana*, 1934. Pen, brush, and ink on paper. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

Rockwell Kent, *The Last Chance*, 1945. Pen, brush, and ink on paper. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.



Rockwell Kent, *Europe, A.D. 1944*, 1944. Pen, brush, and ink with touches of china white on paper, mounted on artist's board. 5 5/8 x 8 11/16 in. (14.3 x 22 cm), Private Collection. By permission of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, Rockwell Kent Gallery and Collection.

ing that crowned advertising copy for Halsey, Stuart and Co., a bond financier, underscoring the powerful economic force the entertainment industry had become.[108] Kent's drawing demonstrates the appeal movies had among the affluent, who considered Hollywood an attractive realm for investment. The following year, Kent worked on his first known commission for a Hollywood studio—a "title drawing" for Paramount Pictures' *Stolen Heaven* (1931). The film was written and directed by George Abbott, and Kent's fee was one thousand dollars.[109] In 1934, Kent drew the fashionably dressed, up-and-coming Ukrainian actress Anna Sten in her starring role in MGM's *Nana*, an adaptation of the Emile Zola classic, produced by Samuel Goldwyn and directed by Dorothy Arzner.[110] In a tidal wave of publicity about Sten, Kent's drawing was featured in the newspapers of William Randolph Hearst[111] and in a promotional movie poster.[112] The beauty of Sten, Goldwyn's Garbo, was widely recognized and depicted by other artists such as Reginald Marsh, whose painting *Twenty Cent Movie* (1936, Whitney Museum of American Art) immortalized the actress.[113] Kent's last Hollywood commission was an ink drawing used to promote *Die Letzte Chance* (*The Last Chance*), a German-language black-and-white motion picture from Switzerland, distributed by MGM Films, produced by J. Wechsler,

Film still for *The Master Race*, 1944.

and directed by Leopold Lindtberg. The opening-day advertisement for the war story appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune* on 27 November 1945. Kent's vertiginous scene—a group of anxious, diminutive individuals stranded on towering snow-capped peaks—visually complemented the blurbs of Alfred Hitchcock and Walter Winchell.

Kent's shift away from the fictive to the real, from moviemaking to politics, accelerated during World War II. It can clearly be seen in another of his ink drawings, which bears a remarkable resemblance to a film still for the black-and-white movie *The Master Race* (1944).[114] This somber drawing, possibly conceived as a promotion for the film, instructs rather than entertains.[115] It mirrors the evolving mindset of Kent, whose political ambitions overtook his artistic aspirations. Running for Congress in 1948, Kent appeared on stage before an entirely new audience. ◧

NOTES

An earlier version of this article was presented at the symposium "Rockwell Kent Rediscovered," 16 September 2000, at the Norman Rockwell Museum. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Robert Rightmire, Will Ross, Don Roberts, Gordon Kent, and Fred Lewis during the various stages of writing.

1. In the 1920s, actors Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford offered Wyeth the opportunity to direct pirate pictures, but he turned them down (David Michaelis, *N. C. Wyeth: A Biography* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998], p. 274).

2. Rockwell Kent communicated with Paramount Pictures executive Jesse L. Lasky, and his son, Jesse L. Laksy, Jr., head of production at Paramount Pictures. In this text, I have differentiated the two individuals by referring to the senior Lasky as Jesse L. Lasky, and to his son as Jesse L. Lasky, Jr.

3. The omission can be attributed to his lack of success or to his despair over, and desire to distance himself from, the Cold War. Guilt-by-association politics debilitated Hollywood and were still at play in 1955 when Kent published his memoir, *It's Me O Lord: The Autobiography of Rockwell Kent* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1955).

4. *Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1924), and *N by E* (New York: Random House, 1930).

5. *Vanity Fair*, June 1921, June 1923, and March 1928. *Vanity Fair*, April 1924, included Kent a fourth time among masters in the field of black-and-white satirical art. In the layout of the June 1921 nominees, Kent was placed next to Charlie Chaplin, a figure Kent grew to revere.

6. Merle Armitage, *Rockwell Kent* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932), pp. 33–34.

7. Arthur Millier to Paul Landacre, 1 February 1937, requesting Landacre to chair the Print Makers' Committee as part of the activities surrounding Kent's Los Angeles lecture on 8 March 1937 (Paul Landacre papers, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles).

8. Henry McBride, "Rockwell Kent," *The Sun*, 4 March 1917. Kent's Newfoundland paintings were exhibited at the Daniel Gallery.

9. Henry McBride, "Paintings by Rockwell Kent on View at Knoedler's," *The Sun and New York Herald*, 7 March 1920.

10. Rockwell Kent, foreword to exhibition catalogue *Twenty Tierra del Fuego Paintings*, Wildenstein and Company, 1925, reprinted in Rockwell Kent and Carl Zigrosser, *Rockwellkentiana: Few Words and Many Pictures* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), p. 7, where the foreword is dated 1924.

11. One of Kent's designs for Vernon Kilns, the Salamina set of dinnerware, was the subject of an exhibition at the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, in 1996. The exhibition and catalogue were titled *Serving Art: Rockwell Kent's Salamina Dinnerware*.

12. Rockwell Kent to Kathleen Kent (on Monhegan Island, Maine), 7 July 1918, Rockwell Kent papers (hereafter Kent papers), Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, microfilm reel 5202, frame 991.

13. E. L. Leitz to Kent, 11 January 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5207, frame 1024. Kent had 295 enlargements made from his negatives (Kent papers, ibid., frame 1026).

14. Kent to Miss Berger, 17 January 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 771. Miss Berger was associated with Paramount Publix Corporation.

15. *Salamina* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935). Eight of Kent's Greenland photographs are reproduced in *Leica Photography*, no. 39 (February 1936): 5.

16. Kent, *It's Me O Lord*, pp. 273–274. One of the architect-writers was Kent's friend George S. Chappell (typescript of Paul Cumming's 1969 interview with Kent, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5194, frame 428).

17. Mielziner created striking set designs for the original productions of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *Guys and Dolls*. At about the same time that Mielziner collaborated with Kent, he probably influenced the career of Kent's contemporary Edward Hopper. Mielziner's 1928 stage design for the drama *Street Scene* is pictorially related to Hopper's *Early Sunday Morning* (1930) (see Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995], pp. 227–228).

18. According to Kent, some of his costume designs were used (Cumming's interview, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5194, frame 428). See also Susan C. Larsen, "New England," Archives of American Art *Journal* 40, nos. 1–2 (2000): 35. These drawings were part of the 2001 bequest of the Sally Kent Gorton papers to the Archives of American Art.

19. Kent's relationship with Hirsch took on a melodramatic life of its own. It is detailed in Jake Milgram Wien, "His Mind on Fire: Rockwell Kent's Amorous Letters to Hildegarde Hirsch and Ernesta Drinker Bullitt, 1916–1925," *Columbia Library Columns* 46, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 5–22.

20. Rockwell Kent to Kathleen Kent (on Monhegan Island, Maine), ca. 14 June 1917, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5202, frame 804.

21. Kent's sepia drawing with watercolor depicts a scene in the program for the week beginning 30 July 1917. In the same program, Fanny Brice and the Ziegfeld Follies dancers, among whom was "H. Hirsch," appeared in the sixth scene of act 1.

22. Rockwell Kent to Kathleen Kent (on Monhegan Island, Maine), ca. August 1917, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5202, frame 932.

23. *It's Me O Lord*, p. 406.

24. Kent to Van H. Cartmell of Doubleday, Doran and Company, 30 September 1942, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5175, frame 701.

25. *It's Me O Lord*, pp. 252–253.

26. Ibid., p. 322.

27. Kent to Carl Ruggles, 3 August 1919, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5230, frame 129.

28. The summer dinner party probably occurred in 1917, when the song became famous (Lee Richards Libby to Kent, 18 February 1958, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5208, frame 653).

29. Carl Zigrosser, *My Own Shall Come To Me: A Personal Memoir and Picture Chronicle* (Haarlem, Holland: Casa Laura, 1971), p. 152. Lord was a Broadway actress who by 1938 had appeared in two movies, a 1934 comedy with ZaSu Pitts and W. C. Fields and a 1935 drama with David Niven and Basil Rathbone.

30. Rockwell Kent to Katie [Kathleen] Kent, 21 September 1936 and 26 September 1936, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5203, frames 1188 and 1190. Gordon Kent, the youngest of the five Kent children, recalled one summer in the late 1920s when the peripatetic Kent family lived in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, directly across the street from the summer stock theater. James Cagney and other actors would drop by the Kent household for tea (author's telephone conversation with Gordon Kent, 8 May 2003).

31. Louis Untermeyer, *From Another World: The Autobiography of Louis Untermeyer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), pp. 277–278.

32. Sacred to Kent's generation, Chaplin's cinema tramp was "skilled in the techniques of shrewd evasion and makeshift appropriate to the age's open road" (Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1980], p. 57).

33. Chaplin referred to himself as a "high lowbrow," someone looking to strike a responsive chord in both the cultural elite and the masses (quoted in Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995], p. 70).

34. F. P. A. (Franklin P. Adams) "Plutarch Lights of History No. 5: Charles Chaplin," *Harper's Weekly*, 25 March 1916, p. 300. In his drawings for *Harper's Weekly*, Kent inserted the tiny face of a masked man sandwiched by the letters *M*. This is Kent's early signature (perhaps the "Masked Man"), which preceded his signature "Hogarth, Jr."

35. Probably intended for the F. P. A. article cited above, the drawing was published in the article by Rockwell Kent, "Alias Kent by Hogarth, Jr.," *The Colophon*, Part 13, February 1933.

36. Ward Ritchie, "An Evening with Rockwell Kent; Famed Artist Unexpectedly Joins Occidental Alumni for Steak, Wine and a Burst of Harmony," in *The Phi Gamma Delta*, 56, no. 6, April 1934. This first recorded meeting took place well after Kent's sympathetic leanings (largely cultural) toward Germany began to wane. Chaplin held robust anti-German views long before the advent of Fascism.

37. Arthur Millier, "Big-City Civilization Played Out, Avers Rockwell Kent," *Los Angeles Times*, 19 November 1933.

38. E. H. Furman to Kent, 29 May 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5184, frame 1478. Furman was the proprietor of The Print Rooms, 1748 N. Sycamore Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif.

39. The ink drawing appeared above advertising copy for the Commercial National Bank and Trust Company of New York, *Fortune*, June 1934, p. 183. The copy read: "Industry's Wheels . . . are revolving with increasing tempo. As production's upward trend brings the need for money, The Commercial National [sic] of New York is ready to meet the credit requirements of progressive business." The advertisement reappeared in *Time*, 18 October 1937, p. 74.

40. Charles J. Maland, *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 143–144.

41. Rockwell Kent, *This Is My Own* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940).

42. Kent to Charlie Chaplin, 23 November 1940, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5169, frame 123.

43. Kent to Chaplin, 19 February 1941, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5169, frame 124.

44. Secretary for Chaplin to Kent, 30 October 1941, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5169, frame 127.

45. Maland, *Chaplin and American Culture*, p. 230.

46. Letter dated 10 October 1955, reprinted in *The Kent Collector* 5, no. 4 (Spring 1979): 8.

47. George Palmer Putnam, *Wide Margins: A Publisher's Autobiography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 301.

48. In the 1910s, Kent read a great deal of German literature, particularly the poetry of Heinrich Heine and the philosophical works of Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck. In 1923, Kent created a diminutive wood engraving, an impression of which was later bound into an existing copy of *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* (trans. H. Belloc [Portland, Maine: T. B. Mosher, 1922]; see also Kent and Zigrosser, *Rockwellkentiana*, pp. 54–55, where the print is identified and first catalogued).

49. Jesse L. Lasky to Putnam, 7 February 1927, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 698.

50. *Esquire* considered Kent's humanistic storytelling worthy of publication and featured highlights from his forthcoming book *Salamina* in a three-part serialization in July, August, and September 1934 (vol. 2, nos. 2–4).

51. *Eskimo* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1931).

52. Peter Freuchen to Kent, 29 February 1932, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5184, frame 448.

53. Kent to Freuchen, 23 January 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5184, frame 474.

54. Freuchen to Kent, 14 July 1932, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5184, frame 458. The sentiment is reiterated in Freuchen to Kent, 10 March 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5184, frame 481.

55. Ainsworth Morgan to Kent, 5 January 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5239, frame 1490.

56. Leni Riefenstahl, *Leni Riefenstahl: A Memoir* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 113.

57. Kent to Harry Kelly, 23 January 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5187, frame 469.

58. Kent to Peter Freuchen, 23 January 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5184, frame 474. Freuchen met Riefenstahl in 1934 at the Berlin opening of *Eskimo*. When recalling that meeting in his autobiography written two decades later, the anti-Nazi Freuchen impugned Riefenstahl's character by alluding to her proclivity to welcome "visitors" to her tent while on assignment with *S.O.S. Iceberg* in Umanak, Greenland. Although not attributed to Kent, the rumor thus was propagated in book form for the entire reading public (Peter Freuchen, *Vagrant Viking: My Life and Adventures*, trans. Johan Hambro [New York: Julian Messner, 1953], p. 271).

59. Rockwell Kent, *Greenland Journal* (New York: Ivan Obolensky, 1962), p. 265.

60. Peter Borresen to Frances and Rockwell Kent, 8 December 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5163, frame 945.

61. Kent to Jens Daugaard-Jensen, 6 March 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5173, frames 642–643. Jens Daugaard-Jensen was the Danish director general of Greenland, 1912–1938. The dog team in the movie was the same one provided to Kent for his excursions from Igdlorssuit during the winter of 1931–1932.

62. Ibid., frame 643.

63. Kent to George Palmer Putnam, 1 August 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 785.

64. Ibid.

65. Putnam to Kent, 4 August 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frames 786–787.

66. Ibid., frame 787.

67. Ibid.

68. Putnam to Frances Kent, 21 November 1933, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 803.

69. Putnam to Frances Kent, 27 January 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 806.

70. Kent to William Morris, Jr., 22 February 1934, Kent papers,

microfilm reel 5214, frame 63.

71. Morris to Kent, 26 February 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5214, frame 65.

72. Kent to Morris, 2 April 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5214, frame 73.

73. Morris to Kent, 30 April 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5214, frame 87.

74. Kent to Morris, 26 May 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5214, frame 91.

75. Ibid. Presumably, during their November 1933 meeting, Kent told Chaplin of his romance with Salamina and his intention to bring the romance to the silver screen. Kent later claimed that Charlie Chaplin showed an interest in his Greenland movie project and was willing to provide Kent with financial assistance had Kent been able to get sufficient initial backing (Kent to Walter Lewisohn, 19 March 1941, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5208, frame 606).

76. Morris to Frances Kent, 21 June 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5214, frame 95.

77. George Palmer Putnam to Kent, 1 July 1940, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 890.

78. Putnam to Kent, 19 November 1940, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 894.

79. Kent to Putnam, 6 January 1941, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 896.

80. Putnam to Kent, 9 January 1941, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 897.

81. Kent to Putnam, 18 December 1940, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 895.

82. Kent to Putnam, 6 January 1941, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5226, frame 896.

83. Creekmore Fath, *The Lithographs of Thomas Hart Benton*, rev. ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), pp. 88, 90.

84. Kent to Kendall Milestone, 6 January 1942, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5212, frame 118.

85. Ibid., frames 117–118.

86. Walter P. Lewisohn to Kent, 15 March 1941, Kent papers, reel 5208, frame 605.

87. Draft letter of agreement, Kent to Walter Lewisohn, April 1941, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5208, frames 608–609.

88. The exhibition opened in February at Wildenstein and Company in New York before moving to the Stendahl Art Galleries in Los Angeles.

89. Kent to Kendall Milestone, 30 April 1942, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5212, frame 125. According to Hollywood character actor George Gaynes, Kendall Milestone had a reputation for being the "best party giver in Hollywood" (George Gaynes, interview by Jake Milgram Wien, 16 February 2000).

90. Kent to Kendall Milestone, 30 April 1942, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5212, frame 125.

91. Kent to Kendall Milestone, 25 July 1942, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5212, frames 129–130.

92. Kent to Lewis [Milly] Milestone, 15 September 1942, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5212, frame 132.

93. Ibid. No reply letter is found in the Kent papers.

94. Kent to Arthur Price, 3 October 1956, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5224, frame 512.

95. Kent to Richard Day, 21 September 1942, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5173, frame 1038.

96. Day to Kent, 18 May 1942, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5173, frame 1037.

97. Kent to Day, 30 April 30, 1942, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5173, frame 1035.

98. Richard Day to Kent, 8 October 1942, on "Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation" letterhead, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5173, frame 1040. Other personal dislocations may have helped to relegate Kent's appeals. Richard Day's son, Richard M. Day, with whom I spoke by telephone on 8 September 2002, recalled that his parents divorced during the early years of World War II. Given the turmoil in his personal life, Day probably viewed Kent's Hollywood ambitions with less urgency.

99. Kent to Day, 3 February 1943, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5173, frame 1052.

100. Kent to Kendall Milestone, 31 January 1943, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5212, frame 162.

101. Kent to Kendall Milestone, June 28, 1943, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5212, frame 165.

102. Kendall Milestone to Kent, 17 July 1943, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5212, frames 166–167.

103. Oliver Hinsdell to Kent, 20 September 1943, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5191, frame 446.

104. Gregory Gaye, born in Russia in 1900, appeared in more than eighty screen and television productions. Because of his distinguished appearance and native accent, he typically portrayed a foreign count, prince, or political dignitary. In 1944 he appeared as Peter Voroshevski in *The Purple Heart*, directed by Lewis Milestone.

105. Catalogue of the Fourth Annual Exhibition and Sale of Modern and Contemporary Paintings, auction sale 19 July 1946, at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, Auspices *New Masses*. See also *The Kent Collector* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1978): 6, 8.

106. *Salamina*, p. 107.

107. May Castleberry, Associate Curator, Whitney Museum of American Art, "Rockwell Kent by Night," brochure for exhibition, 13 June–14 September 1997.

108. This image appeared in *Literary Digest* 105, no. 5 (3 May 1930): 57, and also in *World's Work* (October 1930): 102.

109. Jesse L. Lasky, Jr., to Kent, 19 December 1930, and Kent to Walter Wanger, Paramount Publix Corp., Long Island, 31 January 1931, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5221, frames 136–137. In 1930, George Abbott wrote the screenplay adaptation for *All Quiet on the Western Front*, directed by Lewis Milestone. Kent's two graphite sketches for the *Stolen Heaven* commission depict a naked man and woman gamboling up a mountainside; the sketches are in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

110. Kent may have acquired this commission during his November 1933 visit to Los Angeles, where he lectured on Greenland and on modern art.

111. One such paper was the *Morning Oregonian*, 2 March 1934.

112. Frances Kent to Morris Ernst, 3 April 1934, Kent papers, microfilm reel 5214, frame 341.

113. Sten appears under the "Now Playing" sign in the painting. Beth Venn and Adam Weinberg, eds., *Frames of Reference: Looking at American Art, 1900–1950* (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York: 1999), p. 91.

114. The film still, taken by Alex Kahle for RKO, was featured as one of the "Best Movie Stills of the Year [1945]" in *Look* 10, no. 4 (19 February 1946): 70. Lloyd Bridges and Jason Robards, Sr., were featured actors in the movie.

115. Kent knew the movie's director and co-writer, Herbert J. Biberman, though their archived correspondence commences well over a decade later. By that time Biberman had become one of the Hollywood Ten and, like Kent, an advocate of U.S.–Soviet friendship and the protection of civil liberties.

Jake Milgram Wien, a cultural historian and freelance curator, has written widely on Rockwell Kent, including a chapter for *Chaucer Illustrated: Five Hundred Years of the Canterbury Tales in Pictures* (Oak Knoll/The British Library, 2003). He received *Print Quarterly's* 2001 Williams Prize for an outstanding contribution on American printmaking. Wien is completing a book about Rockwell Kent's engagement with modern art and ideas.