

# CHARLEY HARPER (1922-2007)

## BIOGRAPHY

### BORN:

1922–2007, Frenchtown, WV/Cincinnati, OH

### EDUCATION:

Art Academy of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH

Art Students League, NY

West Virginia Wesleyan, WV

Charley Harper (1922-2007) was raised on a farm in rural West Virginia where he was first inspired to create. Harper, not keen on taking over the family farm, left to study art, first at West Virginia Wesleyan and then at the Art Academy of Cincinnati where he met his wife, artist Edie Harper. After two years at the Art Academy, Charley was drafted into the Army during World War II and served nearly three years. When the war ended, Charley used the GI Bill to go to school in New York at the Art Students League but left New York after a month and returned to the Art Academy where he finished his studies. After graduation, he received the Stephen H. Wilder Traveling Scholarship from the Art Academy. Charley and Edie wed, and then spent the next six months honeymooning and touring the country—drawing, painting and taking in nature. This trip proved to be one that provided life-long creative inspiration for both Charley and Edie.

Charley's impressive 60-year career as a prolific graphic designer, painter and illustrator brought his unique, modernist style to a wide range of publications. Harper is best known for his unique style combining straight and curved lines and flat areas of carefully selected colors. Through his work for classic books such as *The Golden Book of Biology* (1961, Golden Press) and *The Animal Kingdom* (1968, Golden Press), Betty Crocker's *Dinner for Two* (1958), Charles Harper's *Birds and Words* (1974, Frame House Gallery, 2008, AMMO books) and *Ford Times and Sohoan* publications, illustrated ads for Morten Salt, Libby's Pineapple and Proctor & Gamble, together with his work for the U.S. National Park Service, Harper brought an entirely new perspective to the chosen subject matter of birds and wildlife, a genre dominated by naturalism and realism. Harper referred to his approach as "minimal realism." Recent publications and exhibitions have introduced Harper's modernist vision of nature to an entirely new generation of artists and critics. Harper's exceptional skill and creativity elevated any book, advertisement or brochure to a true work of art and his work resonates as fresh and contemporary as any painter's of his generation.

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

2009

Charley Harper, Country Club, Los Angeles, CA

Charley Harper, Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco, CA

Charley Harper, Puyallup Fair, Puyallup, WA

"Charley Harper: An Exhibition of Original Paintings & Vintage Serigraphs", The Public Trust, Dallas, TX

2008

Charley Harper Works On Paper 1961—1970", Country Club, Cincinnati, OH

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

2007

"Minimal Realism: Charley and Edie Harper, 1940–1960", Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH

2006

"Graphic Content: Contemporary and Modern / Art and Design", Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH



## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- 2008  
Charles Harper's Birds and Words by Charles Harper, republished by AMMO books, Los Angeles, CA
- 2007  
Charley Harper An Illustrated Life, edited by Todd Oldham, AMMO books, Los Angeles, CA
- 1994  
Beguiled by the Wild: The Art of Charley Harper, Flower Valley Press
- 1974  
Charles Harper's Birds and Words by Charles Harper, Frame House Gallery, Louisville, KY
- 1968  
The Animal Kingdom, illustrated by Charley Harper, written by George S. Fichter, Random House, Inc.
- 1961  
The Giant Golden Book of Biology, illustrated by Charley Harper, by written Gerard Ames and Rose Wyler, Random House, Inc.
- 1958  
Betty Crocker's Dinner for Two, illustrated by Charley Harper, published by General Mills
- 1948–1985  
Ford Times Magazine, Art Director Arthur T. Lougee, Ford Motor Company, Dearborn, IL
- 1950  
Children's Nursery Rhymes Series, illustrations by Charley Harper

## PUBLIC COMMISSIONS:

- 1986  
"Web of Life", mosaic mural, Pearson Hall, Miami University, Oxford, OH
- 1970  
"Space Walk", mosaic mural, Convention Center, Cincinnati, OH
- 1964  
"Space for all Species", mosaic mural, John Weld Peck Federal Building, Cincinnati, OH
- 1951  
"Model T Mural", installation at reception area of the Ford Rotunda Building, Dearborn, MI

## ADVERTISING, PROMOTIONS & ILLUSTRATIONS:

- 1950-1975  
Rotunda Brochure, Ford Motor Company, Dearborn, MI  
The Sohioan Magazine, Standard oil Company, OH  
The Crosley Group Broadcasting Corporation, Cincinnati, OH  
Abbot Laboratories Chicago, IL  
Moonbeams by Procter & Gamble, Cincinnati, OH  
Farm Quarterly  
Morton Salt Company, Industrial Division, Chicago, IL  
Libby's Pineapple, Libby, McNeil and Libby, Chicago, IL  
Ford Motor Company, Dearborn, MI  
Hallmark Cards Associated American Artists  
Emery Industries

Ford Motor Company, Lincoln- Mercury Division, Dearborn, MI  
Associated American Artists, NY  
Brazil Airlines  
Ranger Rick Magazine

**GRAPHICS COMMISSIONS:**

New Jersey Audubon Society [2006]  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology [2005]  
The Entomology Foundation [2005]  
Friends of the Desert [2002]  
The Monteverde Cloud Forest School Foundation [1999]  
Hamilton County Ohio Park District, Hamilton, OH [1998]  
Ohio Historical Society [1998]  
Society For Ecological Restoration [1996]  
Cincinnati Nature Center [1996]  
The Ownes [1994]  
The Nature Center [1991]  
Florida Conservancy, Naples [1987]  
U.S. National Park Service [1977, 1979, 1980, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1990]