Several years ago, I compiled and distributed a series of Christmas-related works of art covering the 16th to the 20th century. Of necessity, it was only a small sampling of many possibilities. I thought it was time for a second version….no repeats!

From the Middle Ages through the 17th century, much, if not most, of Western art reflected religious themes, including nativity scenes.

The Adoration of the Kings (1564), painted by the Netherlandish artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569), was one of the first of the artist's works to depict large portrait-like characters rather than his more typical landscape approach. The painting is part of the collection of the National Gallery in London.

In 1609, the Italian artist Caravaggio (1571-1610) painted *Nativity with St. Francis and St. Lawrence*, pictured below. The painting is known not only for its worth as a work of art but also because its 1969 theft from the Oratory of St. Lawrence in Palermo is considered one of history's most important art thefts. The painting has never been recovered. A replica hangs in its place.

El Greco (1541-1614), considered the architect of the Spanish Renaissance, painted the Adoration of the Shepherds in 1612-14. The painting, which hangs in the Prado Museum in Madrid, was one of El Greco's last and was designed to hang over his tomb at the Santo Domingo el Antiguo convent in Toledo, Spain.

The Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) painted the Nativity more frequently than any other episode in the life of Christ, including a version that currently hangs in the Prado Museum in Madrid. The version below is his 1633-34 *Adoration of the Magi*, found at Kings College Chapel, Cambridge. The painting was vandalized in 1974, with the letters IRA scratched into it.

Fast forward to the late 19th century. Among the artists of this period to depict scenes of Christmas was the artist Viggo Johansen (1851-1935), considered one of Denmark's most prominent painters of the 1890s. Johansen's *Silent Night* (or *Merry Christmas*) (1891) reflects the subdued lighting typical of the artist's work.
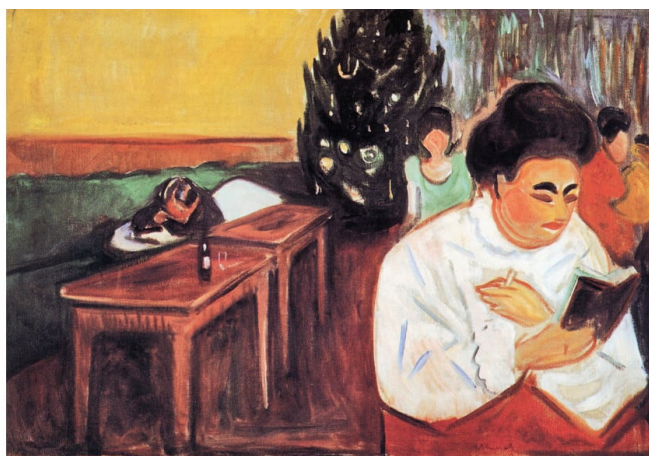
During the 1890s, the post-impressionist French artist Paul Gaugin (1848-1903) lived in Tahiti, whose culture is represented in much of his work from that period. Among the works of art from the latter years of Gaugin's life is Bé Bé (Nativity of Tahitian Christ) (1896). The painting has been interpreted as a variation on the Nativity, with Tahitian figures and a backdrop instead of the traditional figures and manger.

Edvard Munch, the Norwegian artist (1863-1944), is perhaps best known for his painting, *The Scream*. Among his other works is *Christmas in the Brothel* (1903-04), which was painted when Munch suffered from mental stability issues. The painting is part of the collection of Oslo's Munch Museum.

Christmas scenes were a frequent subject of two female folk artists, one American and one Canadian.
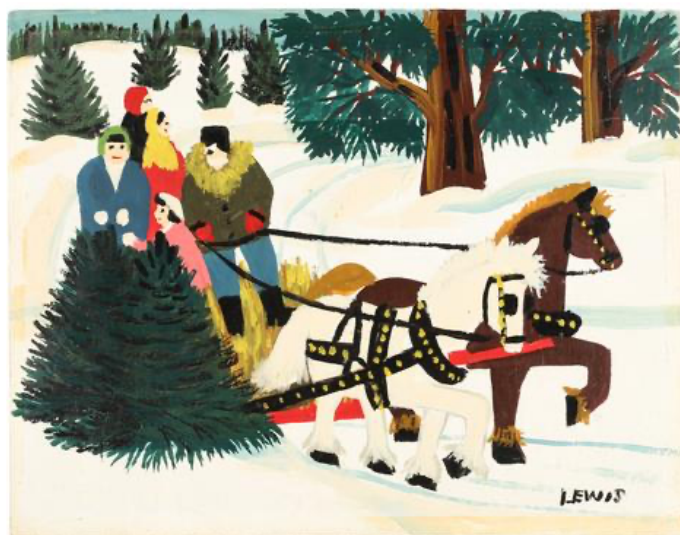
Grandma (Anne Marie Robertson) Moses (1860-1961) is an icon of American folk art, often depicting scenes of everyday life in America. She did not start painting in earnest until age 78; she lived to be 101. Moses entertained herself and her friends by making needlework pictures and quilts portraying colorful scenes of farm life. It was when arthritis rendered her unable to embroider that she began painting these scenes instead. Self-taught, Moses worked with whatever materials were at hand, using house paint and leftover canvas or fireboard for her first paintings. Grandma Moses painted over 1,500 images. Hallmark purchased the rights to reproduce her paintings on greeting cards, including the Christmas scene below, entitled *Out for Christmas Trees* (1955). The original painting is in the Smithsonian American Art Museum's collection.

Art for Christmas- Partie Deux
By Kathy McShane

Maud Lewis (1870-1903) was born in Nova Scotia, mainly in poverty, and lived there her entire life. She would accompany her fish peddler husband on his rounds, selling Christmas cards she had painted for 5 cents. Later in life, she would sell her cards and paintings directly from her home. The small cottage in which they lived was covered with her artwork. After her husband died in 1979, the Province of Nova Scotia purchased the house, restored it, and placed it on permanent exhibit at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Lewis's life is the subject of an award-winning film, *Maudie*. The painting below, entitled Winter Sleigh Ride (c. 1955), is one of several that recall a favorite childhood memory.

Grandma Moses was not the sole artist whose work was featured on Hallmark greeting Cards. Picasso, Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, and Georgia O'Keeffe all took a turn on Hallmark's Christmas cards. Picasso's Père Noel is featured below.
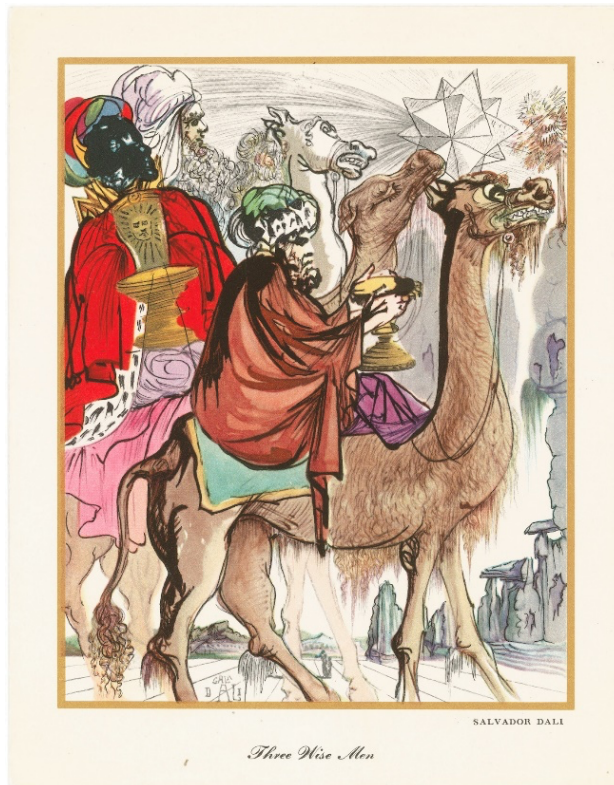

When, in the late 1940s, Hallmark began reproducing the paintings and designs of contemporary artists on its Christmas cards, it had a noble mission: Sharing artistic masterpieces with average Americans. Hallmark founder J.C. noted in his autobiography, "Through the 'unsophisticated art' of greeting cards, the world's greatest masters were shown to millions of people who might otherwise not have been exposed to them." By 1959, Salvador Dalí had agreed to join the fold with several stipulations. He asked for $15,000 in cash in advance for ten greeting card designs, with no suggestions from Hallmark for the subject or medium, no deadline, and no royalties. Dalí eventually submitted ten images to Hallmark, mostly Surrealist renditions of the Christmas tree and the Holy Family.   Hallmark felt that only two of the ten designs might have public appeal. Dalí's take on Christmas proved a bit too avant-garde for the average greeting card buyer. Hallmark ultimately pulled the cards from the racks.

The several hundred Dalí Hallmark cards that still exist have become rare collectors' items. Two Christmas-themed Dali paintings, *Three Wise Men* and *Santa Claus,* are shown below.

Three Wise Men

No selection of Christmas art would be complete without one Norman Rockwell piece. Many of the 321 images Rockwell (1894-1978) created for the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* were Christmas-themed. *The Tired Salesgirl* appeared on the cover on December 27, 1947.
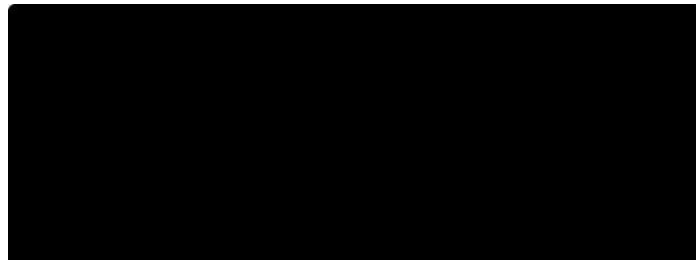

The photo below is of a Christmas card Cuban American artist Arturo Rodriguez (1956- still active) sent to a friend. The artist took a reproduction of Vincent Van Gogh's painting *La Chambre de Van Gogh à Arles* and added his own painting of Santa Claus. The card, created in 1982, is in the Smithsonian American Art Museum archives.

Lastly, just for fun, pictured below is a selection of Christmas trees painted in the style of various famous artists.
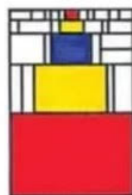
ARTIST'S CHRISTMAS TREES

Botticelli	Dalí	Matisse
Michelangelo	Mondrian	Monet
O'Keeffe	Picasso	Seurat
Van Gogh	Vermeer	Warhol