

The Women Who Created Jell-O Illustrations



By Lynne Belluscio

Early Jell-O advertising featured some of the best commercial artists of the time -- Maxfield Parrish, John Newton Howitt, Angus Macdonnall, Norman Rockwell and Linn Ball. When Jell-O was introduced in 1897, the technology of half-tone printing had just been introduced. It made it possible to reproduce all the lines and brush strokes of the artists. By 1900, ads could be printed in color by using the half-tone process and many magazines printed at least the front and back cover in color. Color photography was many years away. For over 50 years, Jell-O used illustrations for their advertising, even into the 1950s and 1960s through the popular Nursery Rhymes and colorful animal series.



The Jell-O Girl by Lee O'Neill, Rose O'Neill's sister

This era was known as the "Golden Age of Illustration" and artists were in demand. Many of Jell-O's well-known artists worked for other

commercial products and created illustrations for magazines such as Scribners, The Home Companion, and the Saturday Evening Post. There were several talented women who illustrated for Jell-O. A career as an illustrator attracted many women in the post-Victorian society. Although many educational opportunities were not offered to women, they were allowed to study art and sketching in school. This profession also allowed women to work in a studio in their home which was perfectly acceptable. Never the less, these women had to have talent and tenacity to compete in the commercial art field.



Rose O'Neill and the Kewpies

Probably the most famous was Rose O'Neill, who began her career with Jell-O in 1908, about the same time as she introduced her famous Kewpies. She completed nearly 100 illustrations for Jell-O.

Most were printed in black and white but many were also printed in color, with her unique signature in red. It is believed that Rose was the artist that created the iconic portrait of the Jell-O Girl that appeared with different poses, all with the same face. Rose was a very successful artist, and was quite wealthy. She continued to illustrate for Jell-O until 1928. Her sister Lee O'Neill also produced some illustrations for Jell-O.



Color ad by Rose O'Neill

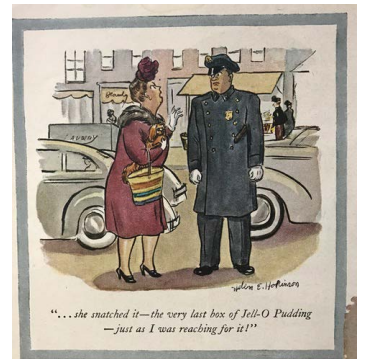


Marion Powers

Marion Powers created beautiful colorful still lifes for Jell-O. She was born in London and was known for her illustrations in Harper's Magazine, Women's Home Companion, and the Sunday Magazine. In 1907, she won the prestigious Walter Lippincott prize and had exhibitions at the National Academy in New York and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Maude Tousey was a talented teenager and stud-

ied at Boston's School of Fine Arts. She presented her portfolio to the art director of Good Housekeeping Magazine, Guy Fangel, who gave her her first assignment. They later were married. Maude was known for her "glamor babies." Many of these images were of her son Lloyd. She drew 1500 portraits of him before he was three, and he was the face of the little boy on the Cracker Jacks box. Later her models were children from poor families and orphanages. Her favorite medium was pastels.



Helen Hokinson

During World War II, Jell-O hired cartoonist Helen Hokinson to draw a series of cartoons which featured some of her famous "club women." Because sugar was rationed during the war, the production of Jell-O was restricted. Hokinson's cartoons presented a humorous story of a serious situation. Helen Hokinson was born in 1893 and attended the Academy of Fine Art in Chicago and worked as a freelance fashion illustrator for department stores such as Marshall Fields. In 1920, she moved to New York City and was one of the first cartoonists to be published in the New Yorker magazine. Several of her cartoons appeared on the cover. Her illustrations featured wealthy, plump, society women who seemed to be oblivious to their situation. Hokinson referred to them as "My Best Girls" and they were described as mature women who were more weighty physically than intellectually.