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THE ART & ARTISTRY OF
RICHARD AMSEL
AMERICAN ILLUSTRATOR



by Adam McDaniel

(1)

•AMSEL•

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A child in the 1980's, I lived, breathed, and loved movies. Every genre, every type...from boyhood fantasies of aliens and adventurers courtesy of Spielberg, to somber tales of axe-wielding fathers and war-torn battlefields courtesy of Kubrick. (I saw FULL METAL JACKET three times when it came out; I was a pretty intense 13-year-old.)

But however great my experiences then - this was, after all, the decade of *Indiana Jones*, *Rambo*, halfway decent *Star Wars* sequels, *Back to the Future*, *Ghostbusters*, and a pre-nipped *Batman* - I think what excited me most, whenever stepping beneath that local town center theater marquee, was the chance to see the latest round of movie posters.

An important clarification: when I say "movie poster", I'm not referring to the photo-touched, photoshopped, photodigital photocrap that's become the norm these days, slick and stylish though some may be. I'm talking about *real* movie posters - the big, artful, sometimes cheesy, often delightful product of some guy who actually sat down behind a drafting table and put a sharpened pencil to paper.

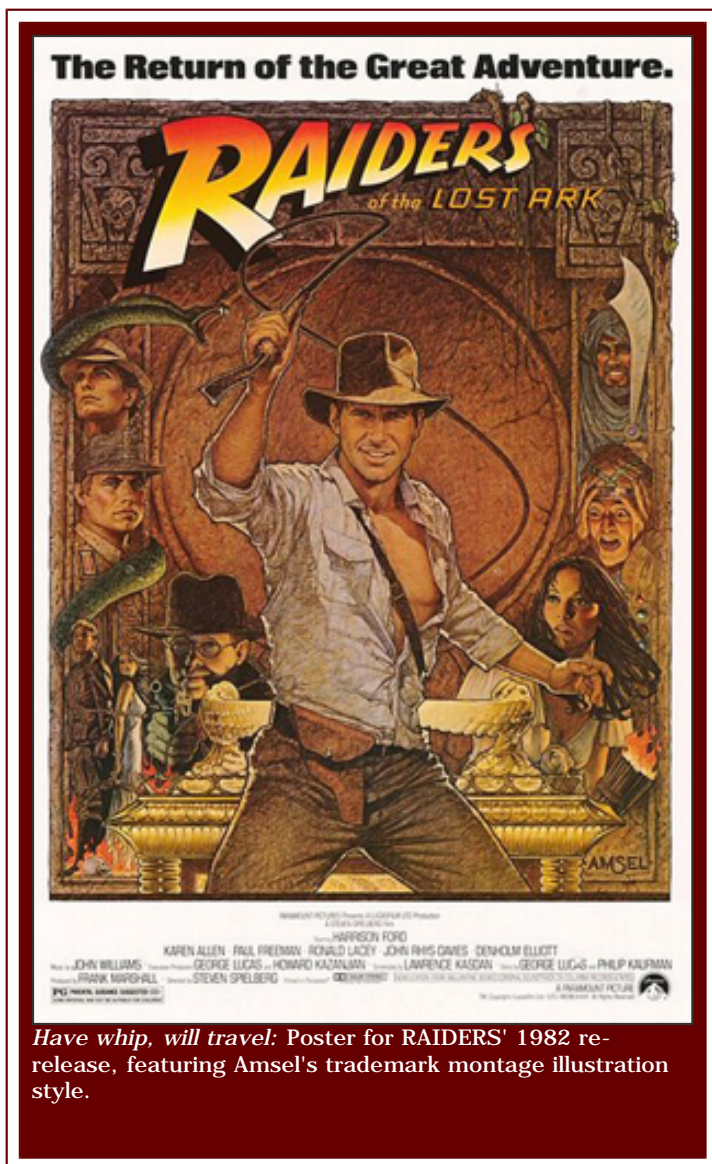
That's *pencil*, I said now. Not pixel.

It's probably the toughest art to master for any illustrator. It's not just about getting the actors' likenesses

right; it's about conveying the best and most enticing things a movie going experience can offer -- it's *soul*, if you will -- even if that sounds a bit inflated when so many films out there are such soulless enterprises.

Most poster artists rarely get the chance to see the very films they're slaving over prior to finishing their work. Commissions often come at the very last minute, with deadlines fast approaching. (A rather inexcusable crime on the studios' part, when one considers the inordinate amount of time they waste gestating their projects.)

It's a tough job, and poster artists are a rare breed.



For me, "masters" like Bob Peak, Drew Struzan and Roger Kastel deserve to be held in the same regard as classic illustrators like Norman Rockwell, Maxfield Parrish and N.C. Wyeth. Why? Because at their best, their work didn't just convey the highlights of a movie coming soon to a theater near you, but rather they built upon the anticipation, the promise and excitement of what (hopefully) was in store...hinting just enough to whet our appetites, while not spoiling things by giving too much away.

Toggle through some of the pages on my site and it will come as no surprise that RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK is my favorite film of all time. But it also has my favorite movie poster of all time.

Look at this poster at left, used for the film's re-release in 1982. I challenge anyone to so perfectly capture a film's spirit within a single drawn image.

It's not just that the actors' likenesses are good; here, they take on a larger than life quality -- epic, heroic, even cartoonish, but all in the most wonderful, high-spirited way imaginable. Like the film itself, this poster evokes the grand, stylish, and cheesy fun of 30's and 40's adventure serials, while executed with far more sophistication and visual panache.

Simply put, this poster is the movie, and I've been a fan of both ever since.

Of all the American illustrators of the 20th Century, there are two whose work I have admired the most. The first is Joseph Christian Leyendecker. The second is Richard Amsel.

These men lived and worked decades apart, and their experiences were far removed from each other. Leyendecker, born in Germany in 1874, trained in Chicago and Paris, and produced literally hundreds of works of enormous influence and popularity, most notably his covers for *The Saturday Evening Post* and his advertisements for "The Arrow Collar Man".

Before Rockwell (with whom the artist had both a close friendship and career rivalry), Leyendecker was the great American illustrator, and his career spanned over half a century.

Amsel's career lasted fifteen, a life cut short by the AIDS epidemic. He was 37 years old.

Yet I don't think it's outlandish to make a comparison between these two men. To say that they were extremely gifted is all too obvious; both Leyendecker and Amsel were something of art prodigies, and both

began their respective careers at a very young age. In Leyendecker's case, it is said that his talent, while studying at the Chicago Art Institute, was already so sophisticated that his art instructors didn't know what was left to teach him. (Or perhaps Leyendecker felt they had too little to contribute.) In similar fashion, Amsel's career took off while he was still a mere student at the Philadelphia College of Art. When 20th Century Fox sponsored a nationwide poster contest for their big budgeted Barbara Streisand vehicle, HELLO DOLLY, it was Amsel's design that took the prize; the artist was then a ripe old age of 22.

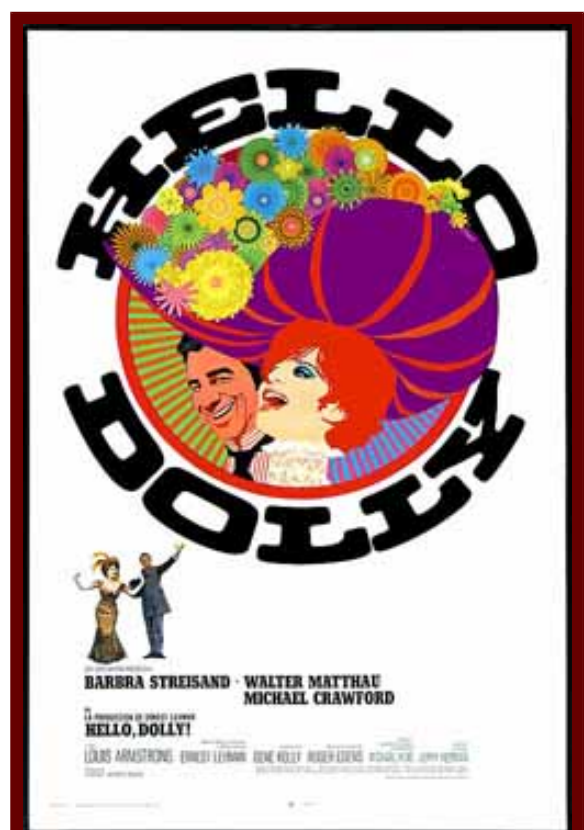
On a personal level, perhaps it's because both Leyendecker and Amsel strike me as enigmas that I find them so intriguing. Little is known (or at least has been made public) about their private lives, and, however great their success during their respective careers, neither name is quickly recognized by the public ... an especially peculiar, bittersweet fact when compared to the enduring popularity of their work.

Of Leyendecker, this we do know: he was gay, had a lifelong partnership with Charles Beach, a man who served as the artist's model, caregiver, and business "agent" of sorts. Leyendecker remained intensely private about their relationship, and grew increasingly reclusive after the death of his brother, Frank, in 1924.

(Frank was a gifted artist in his own right, though he reportedly often struggled with living in the shadow of Joseph's towering success.)

I mention Leyendecker's sexuality not to incongruously dwell on the topic -- the question of how much an artist need be revealed when discussing his art is another matter entirely -- but to put his life in historical perspective. Leyendecker kept his personal life private because, understandably, social attitudes of his day dictated he do so. But so extreme was his need for secrecy that only a handful of photographs of the man still exist; Beach, apparently acting on Leyendecker's instructions, burned many of them upon the artist's death in 1951, along with virtually all of their personal writings. In fact, most of what we know today about Leyendecker's life has been from Norman Rockwell, whose early work was so influenced by the elder artist's that Rockwell devoted an entire chapter to him in his autobiography.

As for Amsel's private life, I feel no need, nor find it in good taste, to besmirch it in any way simply because the man had AIDS. Thousands did then. Millions do now. The virus' only relevance for my discussion here is that it robbed us of a superlative talent, and all the glorious, wonderful work that could have been.



Amsel's winning design for Fox's HELLO DOLLY campaign, 1969. (His original version can be found in the "Movie Poster" section below.)



For THE STING's movie poster (detail right, 1973), Amsel's design paid homage to the painting style of J.C. Leyendecker, and evoked both Leyendecker's "Arrow Collar Man" (left) and his beloved *Saturday Evening Post* covers. Leyendecker's technique is extremely difficult for even skilled painters to emulate; Amsel was in his mid twenties when he did it.

The dearth of available information on Amsel, the man, always seemed odd to me, as his career in the seventies and eighties was relatively recent. Surprising, too, is the almost complete lack of material on Amsel in the two places I had most expected to find them: the Motion Picture Academy Library in Beverly Hills, and the Philadelphia College of Art, where Amsel studied.

His obituary in *Variety* seemed cruelly brief, even fleeting. It opens, "...illustrator for numerous Hollywood film print campaigns as well as portrait artist for many TV Guide covers, died Nov. 17 in New York of pneumonia, it has been learned."

No tributes, no thoughtful eulogies or tender reflections. Of Amsel's family, it merely stated that he left behind his parents, a brother and a sister.

Why does this affect me so? What is it about Amsel's work that I find so remarkable? Why should I wonder so much about the man, and look back on his career with such poignance, even tenderness?

AMSEL'S EARLY CAREER

Richard Amsel was born in Philadelphia in December, 1947. He attended the Philadelphia College of Art, and, thanks in no small part to his winning HELLO DOLLY illustration, quickly found enormous popularity within New York's art scene.

The key to his success, beyond raw talent, was the unique quality of his work and illustrative style. Amsel could perfectly evoke period nostalgia (his posters for THE STING and westerns such as MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER come to mind), while also producing something timeless and iconic, perfectly befitting both something old and something new. And however different his approach from one assignment to the other, all would bear his instantly recognizable stamp. Not to mention a damn cool signature:



Bette Midler (2)
Acrylic and ink on board

"Amsel's work usually pays affectionate tribute to the past," one critic stated. "His style, however, is timeless and his attractive use of warm, glowing colors adds an even greater 'modernity' to his evocations of times and styles gone by."

Amsel himself said, "I'm interested in uncovering relationships between the past and the present, and in discovering how things have changed and grown. I don't see any point in copying the past, but I think the elements of the past can be taken to another realm." Such was the case with an early commission from RCA Victor, who asked the artist to create new artwork for their remastered recordings of Helen O'Connell, Maurice Chelalier, and Benny Goodman.

Amsel's illustrations then caught the attention of a young singer/songwriter named Barry Manilow, who at the time was working with a newly emerging entertainer in cabaret clubs and piano bars. Manilow introduced the two, and it was quickly decided that Amsel should do the cover of her first Atlantic Records album.

You could say it was a sure Bette.

The artist's cover, for Bette Midler's *The Divine Miss M*, proved to be one of the most ubiquitous of the year, and more album covers and posters soon followed, as well as a series of magazine ads for designer Oleg Cassini.



Of course, more movie posters materialized, and for some of the most important and popular films of the 1970's: THE CHAMP, CHINATOWN, JULIA, THE LAST PICTURE SHOW, THE LAST TYCOON, THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JUDGE ROY BEAN, McCABE & MRS. MILLER, THE MUPPET MOVIE, MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS, NASHVILLE, PAPILLON, THE SHOOTIST, and THE STING among them. (The latter's poster design paid homage to the painting style of J.C. Leyendecker, evoking both his famous "Arrow Collar Man" and beloved *Saturday Evening Post* covers.)

Though brief, Amsel's career was certainly prolific. By the decade's end his movie posters alone matched or exceeded the creative output of many of his contemporaries. Yet Richard Amsel was far more than just a movie poster artist.

His work graced the cover of *TIME* -- a portrait of comedienne Lily Tomlin, now housed in the permanent collection at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. In keeping with the magazine's stringent deadlines, Amsel's illustration was created in only two or three days.

LONG ASSOCIATION WITH *TV GUIDE*



In 1972, *TV Guide* commissioned him to do a cover featuring the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, coinciding with a telefilm about their love affair. Thus began Amsel's thirteen year association with the entertainment magazine, resulting in over 40 covers -- a record held to this day. (Not unlike Leyendecker's record for *The Saturday*

Evening Post.)

The "Amsel covers", now prized collector's items, feature portraits of such figures as Mary Tyler Moore, John Travolta, Elvis Presley, Ingrid Bergman, Johnny Carson, Tom Selleck, Nancy Reagan, Frank Sinatra, Princess Grace and Katherine Hepburn. Particularly notable issues include Clark Gable and Vivian Leigh for *GONE WITH THE WIND*'s television debut, the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, and Richard Chamberlain for the miniseries *SHOGUN*.

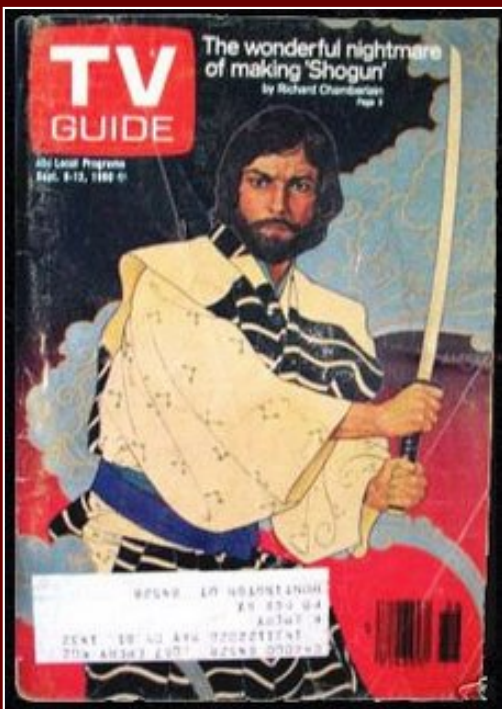
Yet perhaps the most beloved is Amsel's portrait of Lucille Ball, done for the magazine's July 6th, 1974 issue honoring the comedienne's retirement from series television.

"I did not want the portrait to be of Lucy Ricardo," Amsel explained, "but I didn't want a modern-day Lucy Carter either. I wanted it to have the same timeless sense of glamour that Lucy herself has. She is, after all, a former Goldwyn Girl. I hoped to capture the essence of all this."

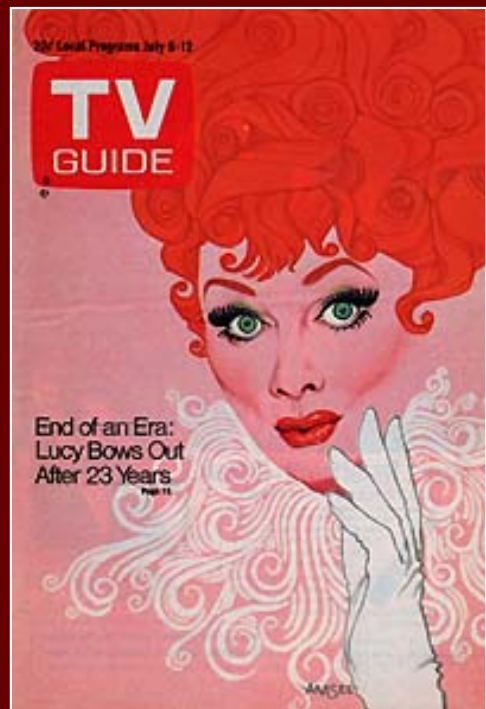
Amsel's work so impressed Ms. Ball that the artwork was later prominently featured in the opening credits of a two-hour television tribute, *CBS Salutes Lucy: The First 25 Years*.



Talk about a killer deadline! Amsel's cover art for *TIME*, featuring Lily Tomlin, was created in only two or three days. It is now part of the Smithsonian Institution's permanent collection.



For this opulent cover featuring *Shogun*, Amsel took inspiration from the bold lines and vivid colors of Japanese art. For the original painting, he employed actual gold leaf on the clouds in the background. (5)



Perhaps the most beloved of all his *TV Guide* covers, Amsel's illustration of Lucille Ball honored her overall "timeless sense of glamour" rather than referencing a specific period.

Years later, representations of Amsel's covers were placed on exhibit at the Museum of Television and Radio in Beverly Hills, commemorating *TV Guide's* fortieth anniversary.

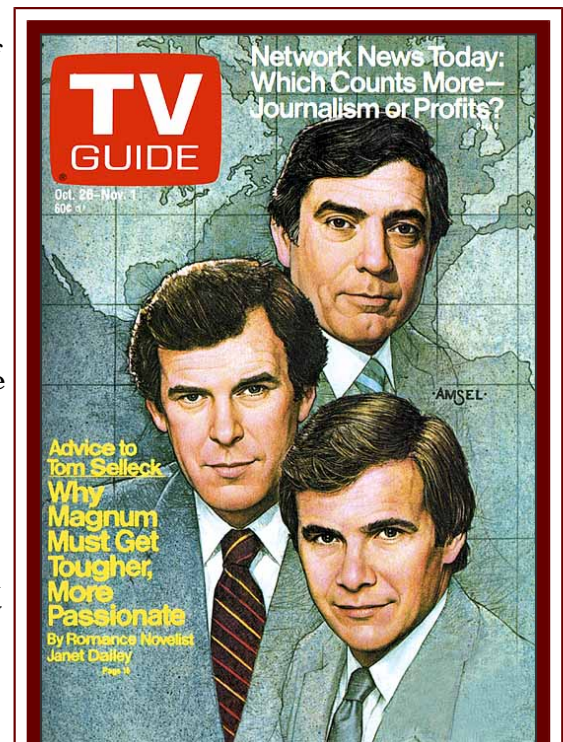
THE 1980's

The 1980's marked a dramatic change in movie marketing campaigns, with more and more employing photographs in favor of illustrations. Movie poster artists now faced a narrower field in which to compete, often limited to science fiction, fantasy, and adventure films. The old masters like Bob Peak -- whose bold, striking campaigns for *CAMELOT*, *STAR TREK*, *SUPERMAN*, and *APOCALYPSE NOW* helped redefine the very nature of movie poster art -- seemed increasingly dated in their style, and had to make way for a new generation of artists (notably Drew Struzan).

Yet Amsel remained productive, his trademark signature becoming a widely recognizable fixture on further magazine covers and movie posters, including such high profile, "event" films as the colorful, campy *FLASH GORDON*, the elaborate fantasy *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, and - of course - that action/adventure film with a grandstanding name, *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*.

Amsel's output garnered numerous awards, from the New York and Los Angeles Society of Illustrators, a Grammy Award, a Golden Key Award from *The Hollywood Reporter*, and citations from the Philadelphia Art Director's Club.

His last film poster was for *MAD MAX BEYOND THUNDERDOME*, the third of George Miller's apocalyptic action movies with Mel Gibson.



TV Guide: Oct. 26-Nov. 1, 1985 (4)

His final completed artwork was for an issue of *TV Guide*, featuring news anchors Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings and Dan Rather.

The final work of art completed by Richard Amsel. He died less than three weeks later, on Nov. 17, 1985. He was 37 years old.

GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Amsel died less than three weeks later, on November 17, 1985. When he fell ill, he was to have done the poster for the ROMANCING THE STONE sequel, THE JEWEL OF THE NILE.

It's been over two decades since Amsel's passing, and in that time we've also said farewells to Bob Peak, Birney Lettick, and John Alvin. (Alvin died of a heart attack hours after this article was completed.) Peak's sons, including artist Matthew Joseph, maintain an online archive of their late father's work, and are currently developing a book of his movie poster illustrations. Alvin and Struzan also have their own respective websites, with the latter -- now the leading figure among today's successful poster artists -- having two extensive books already published chronicling his career and work.

Yet what of Amsel's legacy? While his art continues to amaze and inspire, little has been said about the man himself. I figured surely someone, somewhere in the world was willing and able to speak for him.

Thankfully, I was right.

In researching this article, I came across some rare sketches Amsel did in preparation for his RAIDERS posters. Having never seen them before, I asked their owner how she came to acquire them. Thus began a conversation that led me to many of the answers I'd been searching for.

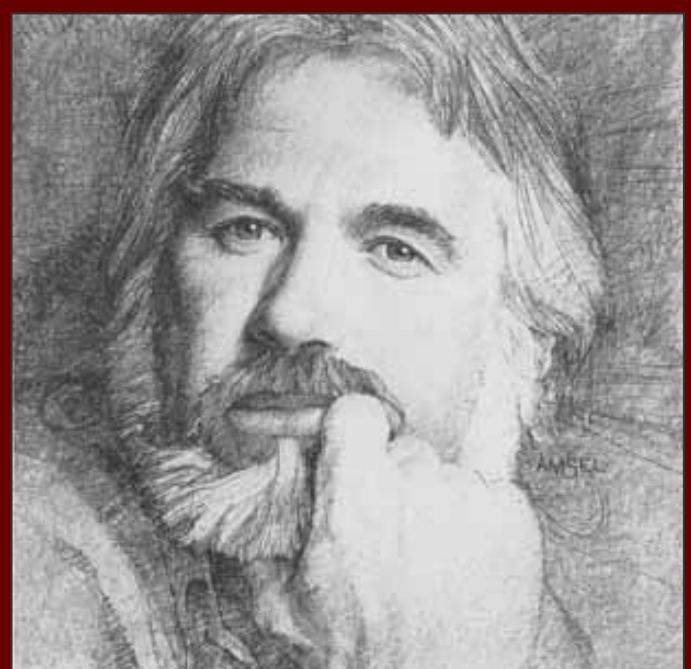
PERSONAL REMEMBRANCES

Amsel, I would learn, was someone who was open, warm, gracious, and full of life -- a handsome young man, stunningly gifted, who surrounded himself with good friends, and was receptive to and reciprocating in his friendships.

Dorian Hannaway is the director of late night programming at CBS Entertainment. For years she has been the champion of Amsel's work, fighting to get his name better recognized. She also owns many of Amsel's original pieces. But to call her a collector is inaccurate, for Hannaway's interest was -- and remains -- a very, very personal one.

She first met Richard Amsel in 1974, and the two struck up a close friendship that lasted until his death. Perhaps it lasts still, for while we discussed the artist at length, Hannaway often tenderly referred to him as "My Richard." It was clear to me that she is still wounded by his absence.

"No one, no one ever worked as hard as Richard," she said, almost forcefully, in our first phone conversation. Her knowledge led me to better appreciate the man, as well as the artist I'd idolized. Hannaway, in fact, conducted one of the few known recorded interviews with Amsel, a profile of the artist for *Emerald City*, a cable access show. Made in 1978, Amsel described his work on the poster for the motion picture DEATH ON THE NILE.



Kenny Rogers: Love Will Turn You Around (2)
Acrylic, watercolor, pastels and pencils on board
14 x 14 in.

The enduring charm of Amsel's work is that while he was quite capable of drawing faces with photorealistic accuracy, he also gave them a more personal, illustrative quality. This portrait of Kenny Rogers is a good example.

Among their circle of friends were Jerry Alten, the art director of *TV Guide*, and artist David Edward Byrd, with whom Amsel was particularly close.

Byrd is celebrated for his work featuring Jimi Hendrix, The Who and their rock opera TOMMY, the commemorative poster for Woodstock, and countless Broadway and Off-Broadway shows. (His poster for GODSPELL is especially famous.) Byrd, too, was eager to share his recollections of the late artist.

"Richard was an odd man," Byrd said, his tone far more affectionate than in any way critical. "I called him *the savant*. He was this genius, but had trouble negotiating life in a bad way. He had no taste in clothes, but his taste in art was impeccable. ... He wore the same outfit everyday: a plaid shirt and bluejeans. I asked him if he wore the same things all the time, or just had a thousand copies of them! ... (Yet) he was vain in the way he looked. He was very handsome, but he would never wear his glasses -- he didn't like the way they looked on him! So he couldn't see, he was almost blind!"

In an email, Byrd added:

Richard and I got on very well. We loved to talk with each other about everything -- sometimes we would be on the phone for five hours -- art history, artists, technique, boyfriends, 3-strip technicolor, gossip, pop culture, drugs, Nathalie Kalmus, Pete Smith, pencils, Earl 'The Pearl' Moran, Film Noir, etc., etc...

I went to California for the first time with Richard and Dori -- Richard and I had just delivered TV Guide covers to Jerry Alten the day before (John Travolta by Amsel and Robert Conrad by myself). We made a lot of Super-8 movies together. I was Richard's date at the big TV Guide banquet at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. It honored both the subjects and their artists. I remember we were at the table with Julia Child and Henry Kissinger. We stayed in a seedy hooker hotel not far from the event. We made a long movie about that trip, which is pretty amusing!

Hannaway recalled how Amsel owned his own prints of several classic Disney animated films, and would invite people over to watch them. "He had a little one bedroom apartment up on East 83rd Street, and would project *CINDERELLA* on the wall."

"It was smaller than most motel rooms," Byrd chuckled, remembering Amsel's Manhattan pad. "It was maybe 400 square feet ... it had a tiny kitchenette. I could probably do a drawing of what it looked like. ... He had an apartment in a luxe door-man high-rise on the Upper East Side. ... Even when he moved out to L.A., he always had to have a doorman!"

"Richard kept all his art supplies in a cardboard grocery box under the bed. His bed was like a narrow cot that could hold one person barely. Next to that was a 35mm projector for his vast collection of 3-strip Technicolor prints of everything worth seeing in that medium, from *GONE WITH THE WIND* to *COBRA WOMAN*. He had a hole cut in the wall of the bedroom so he could project the films on the opposite living room wall. We had movie nights at least twice a month, it seems."

In describing Amsel's personality, both friends emphasized the artist's sharp, droll style of humor. "He was very silly, very funny," Hannaway said. "No one had a sense of humor like he had." Byrd laughed, "He had no social skills, but he had a stringent wit."

In addition to his drawing abilities, Hannaway said that Amsel was quite the skilled photographer. Working with the late gay activist and writer Vito Russo (co-founder of GLAAD and author of *The Celluloid Closet*), Amsel contributed photographs to articles published in *The Advocate* magazine.

THE ARTIST'S TECHNIQUE

I asked Hannaway about Amsel's technique, for however familiar I may have been with the artist's work, I'd yet to see many images chronicling his creative process. It's one thing to see a finished piece, but quite

another to see how it all started.

Amsel worked with all sorts of mediums. He frequently used thin glazes of acrylic, like washes of watercolor, and then applied colored pencils and pastels. He'd then go back and forth, combining them little by little, layer upon layer, until the piece was completed to his satisfaction.

Sometimes his methods were more exotic. For his illustration on *THE SHOOTIST*, Amsel used gold paint to accentuate the background, even though printing limitations prevented its shimmering effect from being accurately reproduced. For *McCABE AND MRS. MILLER*, the artist's "canvas" was an actual piece of wood, keeping in the style of the period western.

"Probably the most amazing thing that people do not know about Richard was his working habits," Byrd said. "Richard worked on his little glass dining table with the cardboard box of Prisma Pencils, frisket, etc. on the floor beside him. He never allowed anyone to see him work. He was truly a 'savant' in that he could create a gorgeous piece almost anywhere. ... I am forever in awe of his ability to draw in any style. In even the tiniest sketch, the likeness of the person is there. ..."

"He came to my loft very often. I had a 5000 square foot place in Chelsea, right off 5th Avenue at 17th. He often shot photos for his jobs at my loft. For instance, with *THE BIG SLEEP*, I stood in for Robert Mitchum and my assistant, Amy, was Candy Clark.

"Richard was my art hero, a true A-Team player. I always considered myself on the B-Team, so to speak, a modest talent with a modest success. And, oddly, Richard Amsel is the only illustrator I have known socially, except for my first student at Pratt Institute, Frank Verlizzo, who became a great Broadway Poster artist...."

PRESERVING AMSEL'S LEGACY

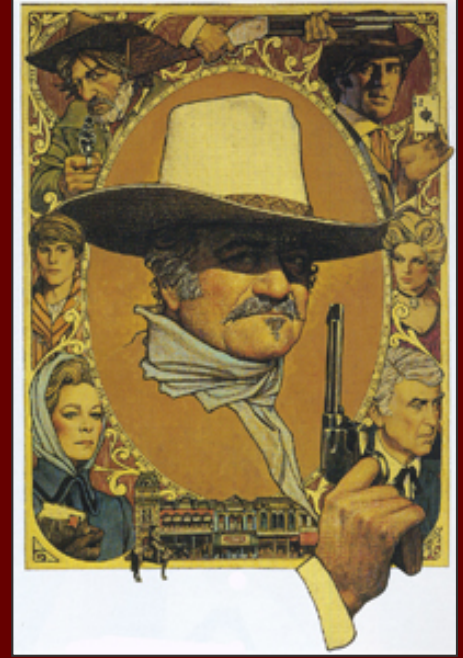
When I met with Hannaway at CBS, my eyes lit up upon entering her office. Amsel's posters dominate the room - each one tastefully placed, beautifully framed. There was also an original piece - a curious, three-sided block of wood Amsel painted as part of a promo for the TV movie, *THE LAST OF SHEILA*. I held the thing in my hands and was stunned by the level of detail -- so good that it was as if Amsel had painted it five times its actual size, then glued shrunken photographs of the artwork to each side. The greedy little kid in me was tempted to steal it.

Hannaway took out a large, handmade three-ringed binder, an impressive thing several inches thick. She opened it to reveal a chronological archive of Amsel's work. The book itself seemed to be a labor of love -- Hannaway's prized possession, her own little Holy Grail or Ark of the Covenant. I could hardly blame her, for as we sat on the couch flipping through the pages I was transfixed by the images I saw.

There were pages, many pages, of Xeroxed pencil sketches, of color photocopies, of art comps and studies. Some were simple thumbnail sketches - tiny things Amsel loosely whipped up on the fly; seeing them was like stepping through a doorway to his mind. Other colored sketches were quite detailed - so good, in fact, that they could have easily made for impressive final designs.

There was a copy of a *GQ* cover Amsel painted in the style of Gustav Klimt, a glorious thing the Austrian might have done himself. There were sketches of Richard Chamberlain in samurai garb, studies for the *TV Guide* *SHOGUN* issue; Hannaway shared that Amsel used actual gold leaf for the final illustration.

Most of this I'd never seen before in any form. They included designs for such films as *CUBA*, *KRULL*, *SAHARA*, and *GREYSTOKE* -- poster campaigns that Amsel *didn't* get. Even the most talented runners can



Amsel's painting for *THE SHOOTIST*, John Wayne's final film, incorporated gold paint on the background even though its shimmering effect couldn't be reproduced on the posters. (2)

still lose a race, and I realized that however much success he enjoyed, Amsel still had to fight like hell to get each job.

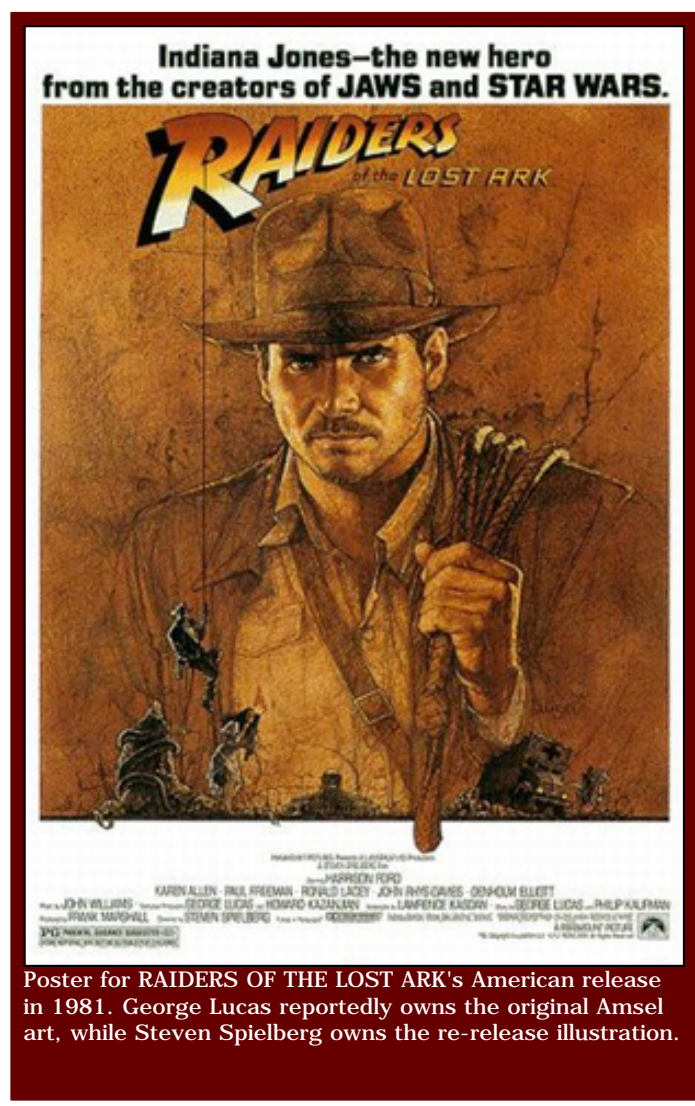
Byrd later confirmed my feelings, adding: "Richard never did art for his own pleasure. He needed to be paid."

Hannaway showed me Amsel's RAIDERS comps. The first sketch was a quick pencil rough - a tiny image of Harrison Ford, whip in hand, with small circles standing in for what two or three characters would be. Yet even in this early form, Amsel's layout for the first Indiana Jones poster was almost exactly identical to the final product.

"That was it," Hannaway said. "Richard came up with it, just that way. He drew Harrison Ford, and that's how it stayed for the final poster."

The next page revealed Amsel's color composition for the design, a second step between the tiny rough sketch and the large final illustration. It was detailed, drawn very much like the polished portrait, but with bolder lines and more vivid red and orange colors. Both beautiful and commanding, it reminded me of Bob Peak's intense portrait of Marlon Brando, done for his eye-catching APOCALYPSE NOW poster.

Hannaway owns this original comp, but getting it was a task worthy of Indiana Jones; the passage of years, and collectors' high demand for Amsel's work, have made the artist's original pieces very, very hard to come by.



Poster for RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK's American release in 1981. George Lucas reportedly owns the original Amsel art, while Steven Spielberg owns the re-release illustration.

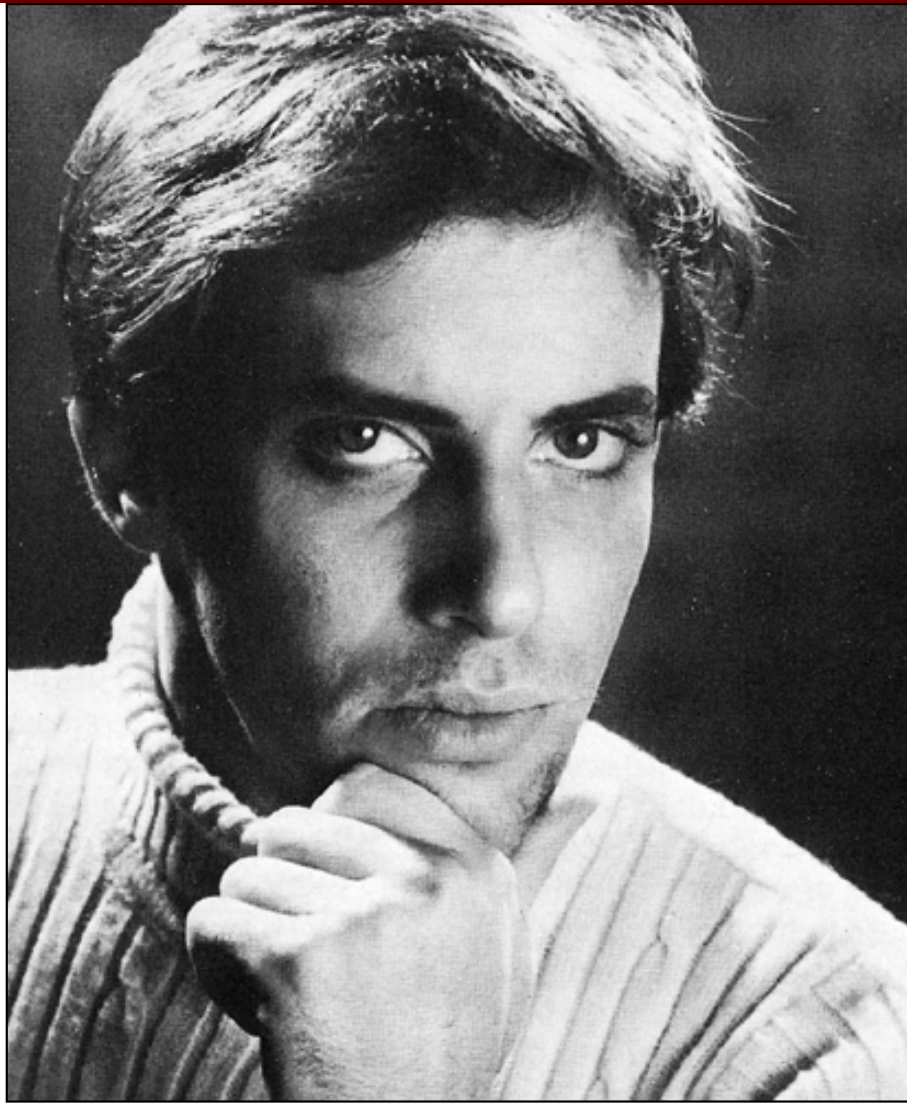
A TRAGIC LOSS

I asked Hannaway if Richard's death was sudden. It was.

"He found out he had AIDS in September, and he was dead by late November," Hannaway said softly. By then the disease had ravaged many in the gay community, and few medical advancements had been made in treating those afflicted. Rock Hudson's death happened just the month before.

In 1985, soon after Amsel moved out to Los Angeles, Byrd grew increasingly alarmed by his appearance. "I'd never seen him look so thin," Byrd said. "He was also chain smoking, and I'd never seen him smoke before."

He recalled their last conversation. "He said he was going to New York and needed an operation. Then," Byrd sighed, "he was dead."



(2)

AN APPRECIATION

I've always admired Richard Amsel's work, and after talking to Ms. Hannaway and Mr. Byrd -- who were so very gracious -- I can now admire Amsel, the man. Certainly I'd value the opportunity to hear from others who knew him; I'd be glad to include their comments here.

Amsel's death may have been tragic, but his life assuredly was not. In spite of his absence, let us simply give thanks for those magical things about him that were left to us...

The work.

And what great work it is! It is silent, yet speaks volumes. It is clever and romantic, sometimes tacky and fanciful. It is often striking and it is always gorgeous.

Take a look at some of the images here. Study them; imagine how they came to be *before* the use of colored pixels and stylus pens. These are not just polished illustrations, they are true works of art...the labors of a true artist. They've excited moviegoers and inspired new generations of artists and illustrators. I proudly consider myself among them.

Looking back on his days with Richard Amsel, Byrd said, "We lived in a time that was more interesting." The sentiment doesn't surprise me, for interesting times, I suspect, are largely the result of being in the company of interesting people.

Here's to you, Richard, wherever you may be.

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Jack Davis: [Article](#)

The Hildebrandt brothers: [Official Website](#)

Birney Lettick: [Page on the Internet Movie Poster Awards](#)

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Drew Struzan: [Official Website](#)

Frank Verizzo: [Article](#)

[MovieMaker article profiling Berkey, Solie, and Struzan](#)

[Posterwire: The Movie Poster Weblog](#)

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