“Mr. Time: Portraits by Boris Chaliapin” Features Original Cover Art for Time Magazine at the National Portrait Gallery

The Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery will open a new exhibition, “Mr. Time: Portraits by Boris Chaliapin,” May 17, which features covers he produced during his 28 years with Time magazine. Chaliapin’s colleagues aptly nicknamed him “Mr. Time” due to his contribution of more than 413 covers as an artist for the magazine from 1942 to 1970.

Throughout Chaliapin’s career as a contract artist for Time he became known for his ability to produce lifelike portraits in as little as 12 hours. Routinely he would create a cover in three days—record speed when most cover artists required a week or more. Week after week, millions of readers recognized Chaliapin’s familiar signature on the cover.

“Chaliapin’s portfolio of recognizable covers for the iconic Time magazine illuminated people in the news for millions of avid readers,” said Kim Sajet, director of the National Portrait Gallery. “During the height of his career, the celebrity image was not yet ubiquitous as it is today. I’m looking forward to showcasing some of his best work from the Portrait Gallery’s collection.”

While some artists replicated subjects in exact detail, Chaliapin’s philosophy was to create “impressions of his cover subjects rather than portray them in minute detail.” Circumstances necessitated his working mostly from photographs, but he preferred life sittings. His time spent with Julia Child in her home kitchen, sketching and sharing recipes, was in his words the “beginning of a life friendship.”

This collection of 26 original works by Chaliapin features portraits of such icons as Marilyn Monroe, Olivia de Havilland, Harry Truman, Muhammad Ali and Child who appeared on Time’s
cover. These portraits were created in a variety of media and include graphite, watercolor and oil on canvas. The exhibition also includes one of Chaliapin’s few self-portraits.

Portrait Gallery historian James Barber is the curator of this exhibition. “Mr. *Time*” will be open through Jan. 5, 2014.

These portraits are part of the National Portrait Gallery’s *Time* Collection of more than 2,000 works of original cover art. This exhibition in part recognizes a recent gift of 130 additional portraits made by Chaliapin’s descendants, in honor of Boris and Helcia Chaliapin.

**National Portrait Gallery**

The Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery tells the history of America through the individuals who have shaped its culture. Through the visual arts, performing arts and new media, the Portrait Gallery portrays poets and presidents, visionaries and villains, actors and activists whose lives tell the American story. The National Portrait Gallery, part of the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture, is located at Eighth and F streets N.W., Washington, D.C. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000. Website: npg.si.edu.

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