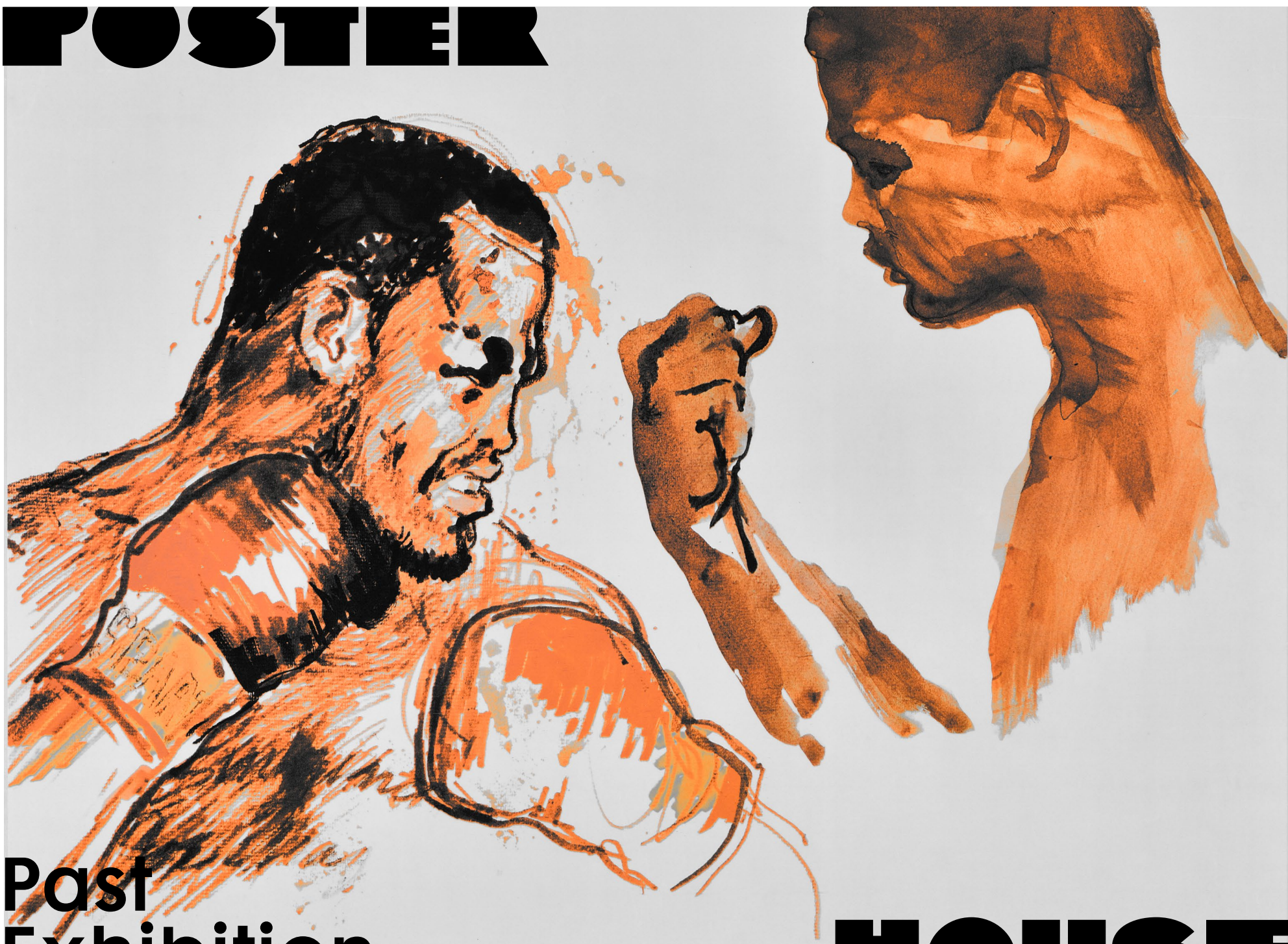


POSTER



**Past
Exhibition**

HOUSE

What's The Score? The Posters of LeRoy Neiman

Sep 2–Mar 27, 2022

When LeRoy Neiman began writing and illustrating the new “Man at His Leisure” column for Playboy in 1958, he could not have known that the title would come to describe his career. Over the next 15 years, the regular article allowed him to travel the world, experiencing the good life in all its forms, from the casinos of Las Vegas to the beaches of Biarritz. He quickly became the artist of the jet set, chronicling the international pastimes of the rich and famous in vibrant, kinetic brushstrokes, giving the average man access to an otherwise exclusive realm. In a time when the art world was dominated by the highbrow concepts within abstract

expressionism, Neiman’s approachable, understandable images of athletes, jazz musicians, and *bon vivants* inspired and touched an unprecedented swath of the American public. In addition to his original paintings, sketches, and advertising posters, he typically produced thousands of attractively priced, limited-edition serigraphs a year, making him one of the most widely collected artists of the 20th century. His designs were hung everywhere, from the headquarters of the New York Jets to local sports bars, the homes of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies to fast food restaurants.

By the 1960s, Neiman had become the most famous sports artist in the world. He designed posters promoting boxing matches, marathons, automobile races, golf tournaments, tennis championships, football games, and, starting in 1972, five Olympics. He was the artist-in-residence for the New York Jets, boxing promoter Don King's go-to illustrator for notorious matchups, and could often be seen live-sketching on national television at the sidelines of various sporting events. His ability to connect with his subjects reflected the fact that he was a true fan; he also refused any commission that did not allow him total artistic freedom. Some saw his work as relating to the concerns of the Impressionists, who focused chiefly on middle-class leisure, but reconfigured in a decidedly masculine, competitive guise. Unlike the Impressionists, though, he rarely created posters showing women, and offered no kind of social commentary within his scenes. Instead, his compositions are dynamic, aggressive showcases of success, money, and power—aspirational ideals of a growing professional class, one of the first American generations with enough disposable income to invest in its own leisure time.

In honor of the centennial of his birth year, this exhibition highlights some of LeRoy Neiman's best advertising posters promoting sporting events and jazz concerts around the world. While many of them were sold as commemorative merchandise, these images originally appeared in shop windows, subway stations, newsstands, and poster hoardings, and have some of the broadest international circulation of any modern promotional art.

This exhibition comes to Poster House through a generous donation by the LeRoy Neiman and Jane Byrne Neiman Foundation.

Curation

Angelina Lippert

Exhibition Design

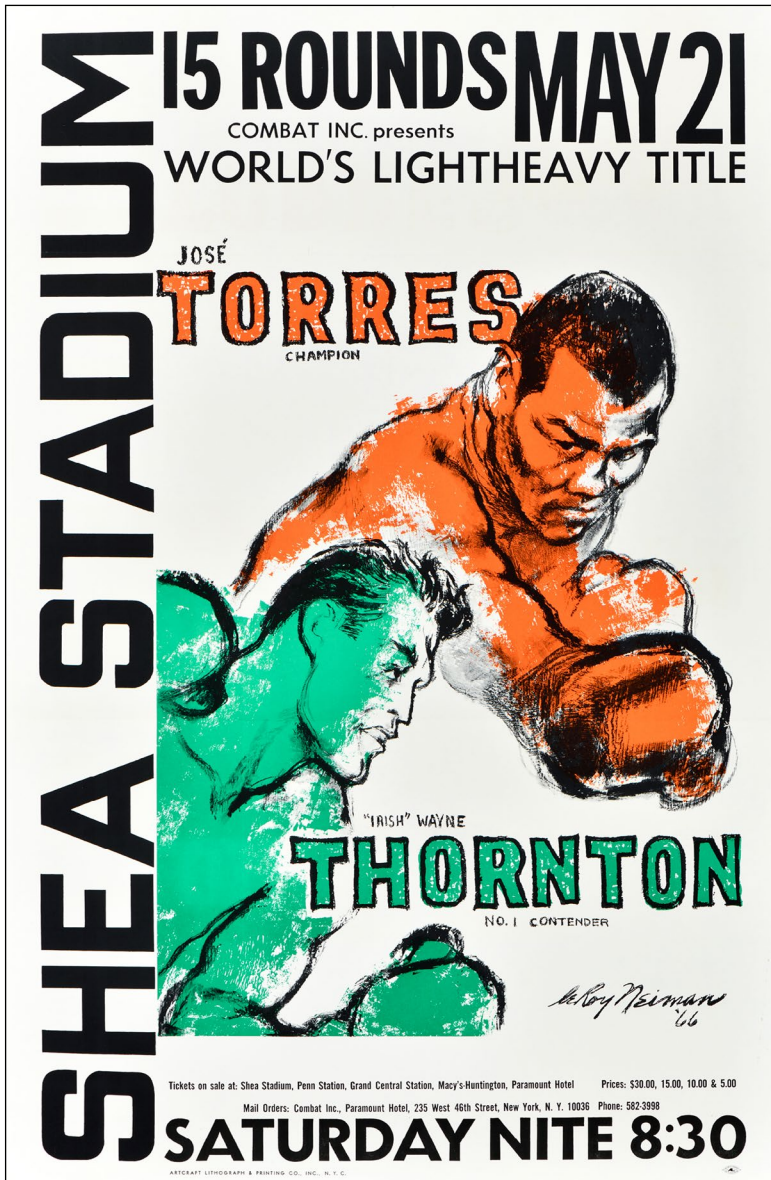
Mihoshi Fukushima Clark

Installation

John F. Lynch

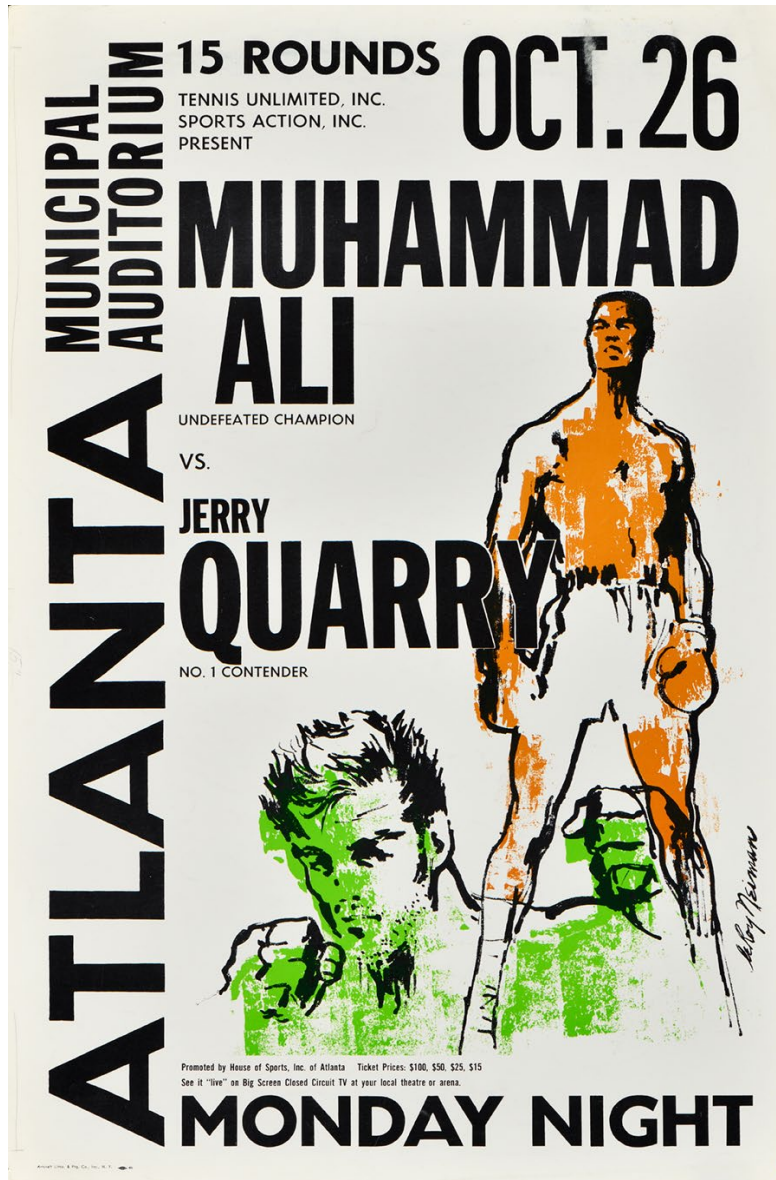
Graphic Installation

Keith Immediato



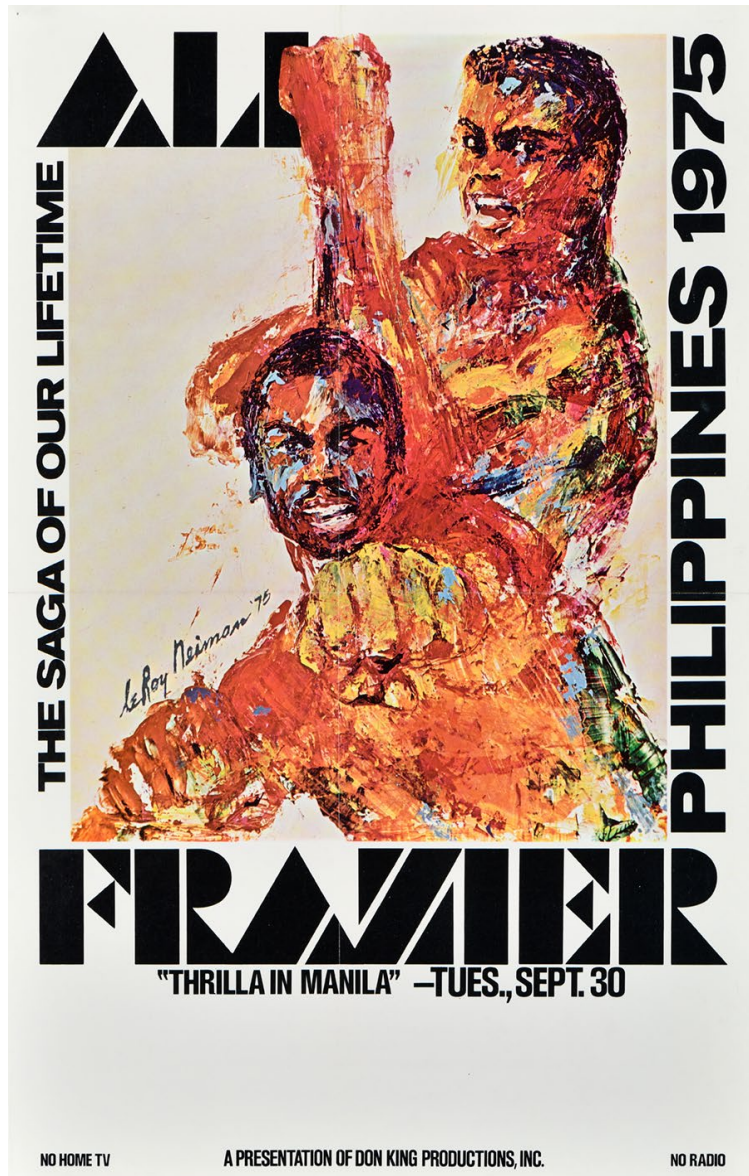
José Torres/"Irish" Wayne Thornton, 1966
LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- Held at Shea Stadium on May 21, 1966, this world-championship match between Puerto Rico's José Torres and "Irish" Wayne Thornton saw Torres maintain his light-heavyweight title after 15 brutal rounds.
- This is one of Neiman's most understated compositions. Each fighter is sketched mid-motion in black, with flashes of a single color smeared over their bodies. The green on Thornton is an obvious reference to his nickname.



Muhammad Ali vs. Jerry Quarry, 1970
 LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- This poster advertises the October 26, 1970 fight between Muhammad Ali and Jerry Quarry in Atlanta. It was the first fight in which Ali competed after his ban from the sport was lifted. He had been stripped of his heavyweight title and suspended from boxing for three years after refusing to be inducted into the U.S. Army in 1967. This was also the first of two historic matches between Ali and Quarry, both of which ended with Ali knocking out his competitor.
- Neiman painted Ali more than any other figure and considered him a personal friend. Some historians have noted that his regular appearance in the artist's dramatic portraits helped elevate the boxer from athlete to celebrity in the United States.
- Early posters like this and the previous one are distinguished from Neiman's later work by their similar limited color palette and basic illustrational style.



Maybe it was also the best
fight I have ever seen.

—LeRoy Neiman

Ali/Frazier/“Thrilla in Manila”, 1975

LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- This poster advertises the last of three boxing matches between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, held on September 30, 1975, in the Philippines. After a brutal 14 rounds, Ali retained his heavyweight title when Frazier’s manager, Eddie Futch, ended the fight due to his client’s injuries.
- While Don King had originally nicknamed the fight “The Saga of our Lifetime,” Ali had boasted to the press that the event would be “a killa and a thrilla and a chilla, when I get that gorilla in Manila.” His posturing rhyme with its ugly racial overtones ultimately gave the fight a more memorable moniker.



Ali/Foreman/Zaire, 1974
LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- Founded in 1974, Don King Productions started with a charity fight its founder had arranged with Muhammad Ali a few years earlier. The success of that event led to King promoting imaginatively titled matches around the world, the first major one being “The Rumble in the Jungle” between Ali and undefeated champion George Foreman in Zaïre (now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo) on October 30, 1974.
- To promote the fight, King displayed LeRoy Neiman’s painting for the poster in Zaïre’s presidential palace in the week leading up to the event. The image was also printed on ticket stubs and other ephemera, making Neiman’s work an indelible part of the fight’s brand.
- This poster shows Neiman’s signature approach to portraiture, in which he used wild splashes of color to create rainbow-hued figures in action. A version of the Fat Albert typeface was added by Edvins Strautmanis, beautifully extending Neiman’s canvas into the body of the text.
- Ali knocked out Foreman in the eighth round, reclaiming his heavyweight title. While still viewed by many in the United States as a traitor because of his position on the Vietnam War, the people of Zaïre regarded Ali as a man who shared their struggles against white oppression (the country was subject to Belgian colonial rule between 1885 and 1960). His victory helped establish the country’s postcolonial identity on the world stage.



Newport Jazz Festival, 1974 LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- Founded in Newport, Rhode Island in 1954, the Newport Jazz Festival gradually outgrew its original home and moved to New York in 1972. Neiman would create numerous posters for the associated events at several Manhattan venues, including Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Radio City Music Hall, the Roseland Ballroom, and the Nassau Coliseum in nearby Uniondale, New York.
- Like athletes, jazz musicians are constantly in motion, their explosive movements an extension of a given score. Neiman's rapid application of paint and gestural brushwork here perfectly encapsulates the essence of such a performance.
- The 1974 festival included performances by Nina Simone, Sarah Vaughan, Count Basie, and the New Orleans Preservation Hall Jazz Band.



Joe Frazier vs. Muhammad Ali, 1971 LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- In this official Madison Square Garden poster, Neiman depicts the two legendary boxers by using different mediums that emphasize their distinct fighting styles. He created the portrait of Joe Frazier with a felt tip pen, the short, scratchy lines reminiscent of his “swarming” approach in the ring, while Muhammad Ali was drawn with watercolor, underscoring his powerful elegance.
- Billed as “The Fight of the Century,” this was the first of three matches between heavyweight champions Frazier and Ali, and would be the first and only time Frazier beat his opponent. It also marked the first loss of Ali’s career.
- This fight represented more than just a boxing match to many Americans: Ali had come to represent the anti-war movement due to his stance against the Vietnam War, while Frazier had become the idol of pro-war nationalism. In addition to the sold-out event with more than 20,000 seats filled, at least 300 million spectators tuned in around the world via closed-circuit television, including Nelson Mandela from prison in South Africa.
- Neiman was asked by the *New York Times* to provide pre-fight sketches of the boxers, granting him access to their training sessions. During the fight, he could also be seen ringside, drawing the fighters in action. This approach to capturing athletes as they worked became a hallmark of Neiman’s art.



**AMERICA HONORS
THE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONS**

May 19, 1977 THEATRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
10:00 P.M. Aladdin Hotel - Las Vegas, Nevada

an in person tribute to: Muhammad Ali, Jack Dempsey, George Foreman,
Joe Frazier, Ingemar Johansson, Joe Louis, Floyd Patterson,
Max Schmeling, Jack Sharkey, Gene Tunney, Jersey Joe Walcott

sponsored by Champions Committee for United Cerebral Palsy, Westchester County, N.Y.
(914) 937-0967 (702) 733-8332 (212) 563-8166

**Neiman makes art for people
who don't like art.**

—LeRoy Neiman

**America Honors the
Heavyweight Champions, 1977**

LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- Featuring a heroic image of Muhammad Ali after a victorious match, this poster announces a charity event at the Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas. Funds would benefit the building of a new wing at the David G. Osterer Cerebral Palsy Center in Rye Brook, New York.
- The evening honored 11 celebrated boxers, including Muhammad Ali, Jack Dempsey, George Foreman, and Joe Frazier. This “Super Star Show” was hosted by John Wayne.



**The Robert F. Kennedy Pro-Celebrity Tennis Tournament
Forest Hills 1978**

The Robert F. Kennedy Pro-Celebrity Tennis Tournament, 1978

LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- Starting in 1971, Neiman created posters for the annual Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Tennis Tournament in which celebrities and pro-tennis players competed for charity. Until 1979, the event was held at the West Side Tennis Club in Forest Hills, Queens.
- Each tournament poster was based on a preparatory oil painting and featured imaginary players rather than identifiable figures. Neiman worked closely with Robert's widow, Ethel Kennedy, in the design of the posters.
- In 1978, the participants included Dustin Hoffman, Pelé, Cheryl Tiegs, Joe Namath, Dolly Parton, and Muhammad Ali.



Newport Jazz Festival, 1978

LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- In 1978, after six years of performances in New York City, the Newport Jazz Festival announced that it would simultaneously host satellite events in both Stanhope, New Jersey and Saratoga Springs, New York.
- Neiman's poster for the 25th Anniversary of the festival features an evocative portrait of Duke Ellington, whom he had sketched frequently before the band leader's death in 1974.
- As noted in the upper-left corner, the beer company Schlitz was the primary sponsor of the event. One of the original reasons the festival moved to New York City was that jazz attracted a largely Black audience, leading to racist pushback against the event by some Newport locals. As Schlitz was one of the two beers most popular with Black Americans, the brand saw this as an opportunity to link itself with a cultural activity that resonated with its clientele.



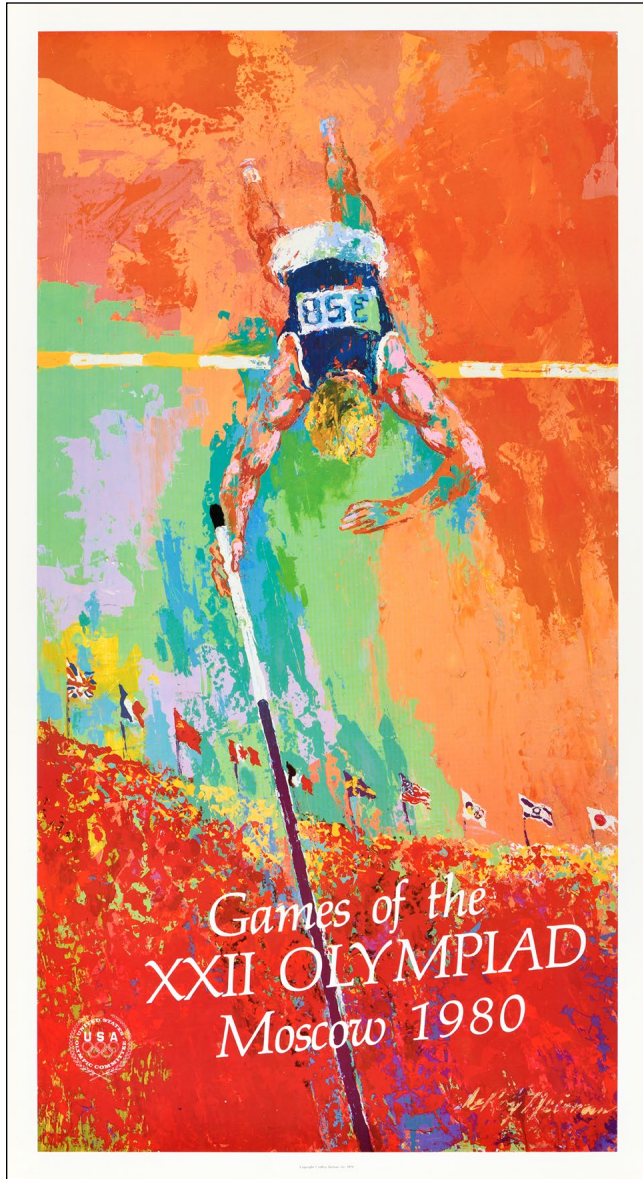
A Neiman is alive; it has a pulse and a heart.

—Don King

Ame XIII Olympic Winter Games, 1980

LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

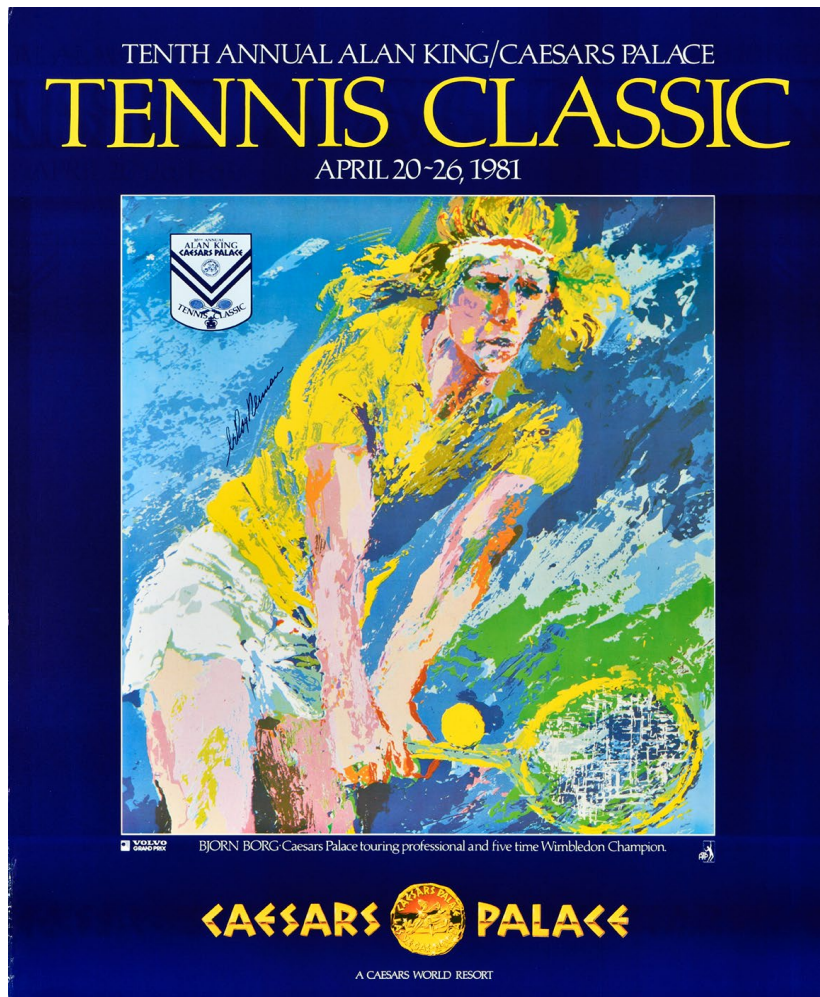
- In 1960, Neiman began producing designs for the Olympics during the Squaw Valley Games in California. He made posters for the Games in Munich in 1971, in Montreal in 1976, in Lake Placid in 1980, and in Sarajevo and Los Angeles in 1984, where he was shown on live television sketching the athletes both preparing for and participating in competitions.
- In 1976, he created a series of five different Olympic-themed posters for Burger King that the fast-food chain gave away to millions of customers. Neiman saw this as an opportunity to present his work to a wider public that might never have been exposed to fine art.
- For the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York, Neiman created two posters: one featuring a figure skater in mid-spin and the other of a lone slalom skier flying down a hill.



Games of the XXII Olympiad, 1980

LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- While Neiman was not the official artist of the 1980 Summer Olympics in the Soviet Union, he created two companion posters to his earlier designs for the Lake Placid Games—this image of a pole vaulter and another featuring two boxers.
- In his numerous compositions for the Olympics, Neiman favored American athletes dominating their sport, reflecting his own strong sense of nationalism.



When Neiman does a tennis ball, it's a tennis ball personified.

—Don King

Tennis Classic, 1981

LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- Held outside Caesars Palace in Las Vegas between 1972 and 1985, the Alan King Tennis Classic was an important ranking tournament in the men's tennis circuit. It was hosted by comedian Alan King, who loved the sport and provided colorful televised commentary.
- This is one of the few posters by Neiman to feature an identifiable athlete: Sweden's Björn Borg with his wild mop of blond hair. While Borg had won the previous two championships, he did not participate in the 1981 event, allowing relative newcomer Ivan Lendl to take the title.
- Fun Fact: Ivan Lendl's collection of posters by Alphonse Mucha was the subject of Poster House's first exhibition!



Kool Jazz Festival, 1981
 LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- In 1981, the Newport Jazz Festival was renamed in honor of its main sponsor, Kool cigarettes. It still held concerts throughout the New York area, from Hempstead to Saratoga Springs, but no longer in Newport, Rhode Island.
- This was not the first time Kool had associated itself with jazz; starting in 1975, it held Kool Jazz concerts, targeting young, Black, male audiences in order to forge positive connections between entertainment and the brand. By the 1980s, 90 percent of the attendees of these events were Black. Kool would continue sponsoring the series until 1985.
- While not explicitly named, the figure in Neiman’s explosive and upbeat design bears a striking resemblance to American trumpeter Louis Armstrong, who had died a decade earlier.



Kool Jazz Festival, 1982

LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- In a joyful riot of blue, pink, and yellow tones, Neiman focuses on a jazz band mid-performance in a composition that underscores the individual personality and style of each musician.
- This was Kool's second year as the primary sponsor of the event. It is interesting that the brand allowed its name to be incorporated into the typeface of the rest of the title, leaving behind its signature sans-serif green-and-white logo.
- The 1982 festival was a remarkable success, with performances by Benny Goodman, Stan Getz, Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Sarah Vaughan, Dizzy Gillespie, Mel Tormé, Oscar Peterson, Herbie Hancock, Dave Brubeck, and Lionel Hampton drawing unusually large crowds.

I'm not a scene painter.
I'm the scene painter.
—LeRoy Neiman



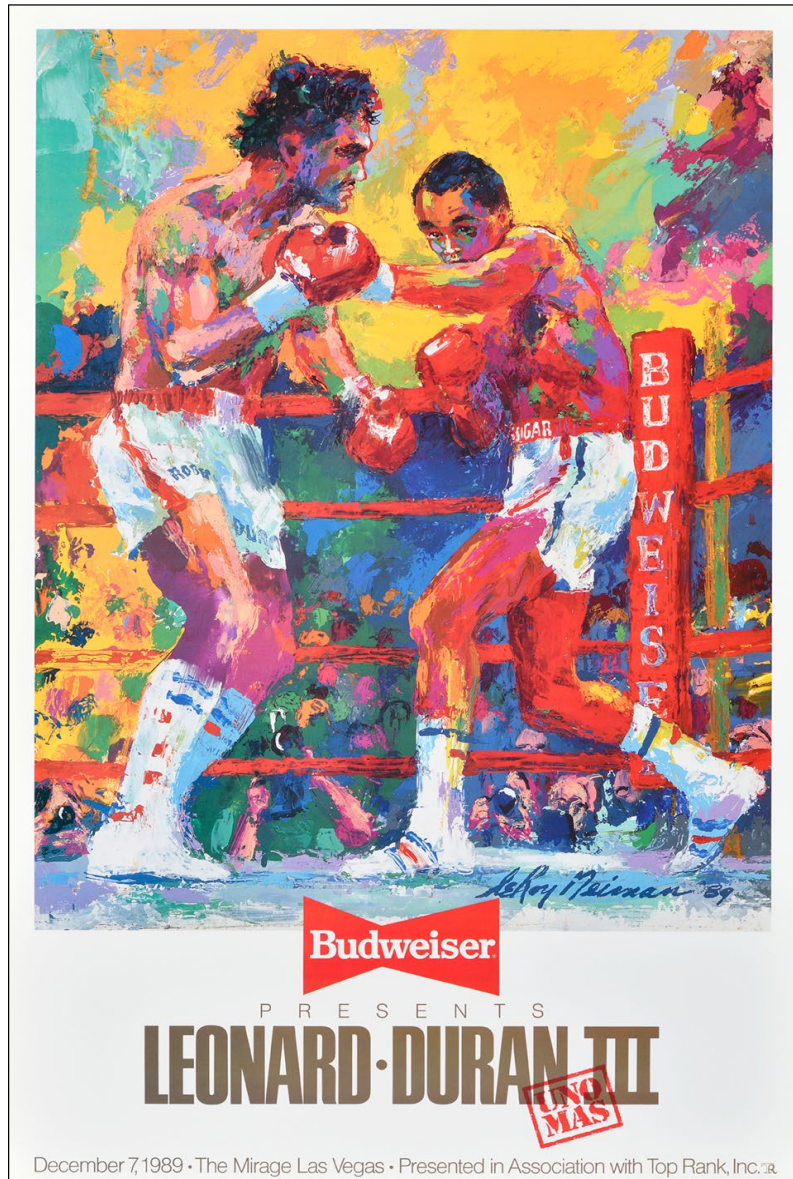
New York City Marathon, 1987 LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- First held in 1970, the New York City Marathon is the largest race of its kind in the world.
- Neiman's bustling composition shows thousands of runners at the beginning of the race crossing the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, with the Manhattan skyline in the upper-right corner. While all anonymous, the runners represent man at his physical best, striving toward greatness—a common theme in much of Neiman's oeuvre. He gave the average person just as much attention in his work as he did a celebrated athlete.
- Neiman often depicted runners, creating posters for the New York City and Boston Marathons.
- In 1987, a competitor from Africa won for the first time, with Ibrahim Hussein of Kenya finishing the race in 2:11:01.



**Games of the XXIVth
Olympiad/Seoul, 1988**
LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- While not the official artist of the Olympics in 1988, Neiman created this poster for ARA Services (known today as Aramark), one of the sponsors of the Summer Games in Seoul. The company was the main food-service provider that year, having provided meals for many Olympic events since 1968.
- Neiman originally created this image as an art print during the 1976 Montreal Olympics. He repurposed it in more vibrant hues for this commemorative poster promoting ARA's involvement with the Games.
- Spectators often play a large role in Neiman's compositions, the act of watching an event as important as the game itself. This sense that they had been fully incorporated into celebrated competitive spectacles might explain why middle-class American men in particular found Neiman's posters so appealing.



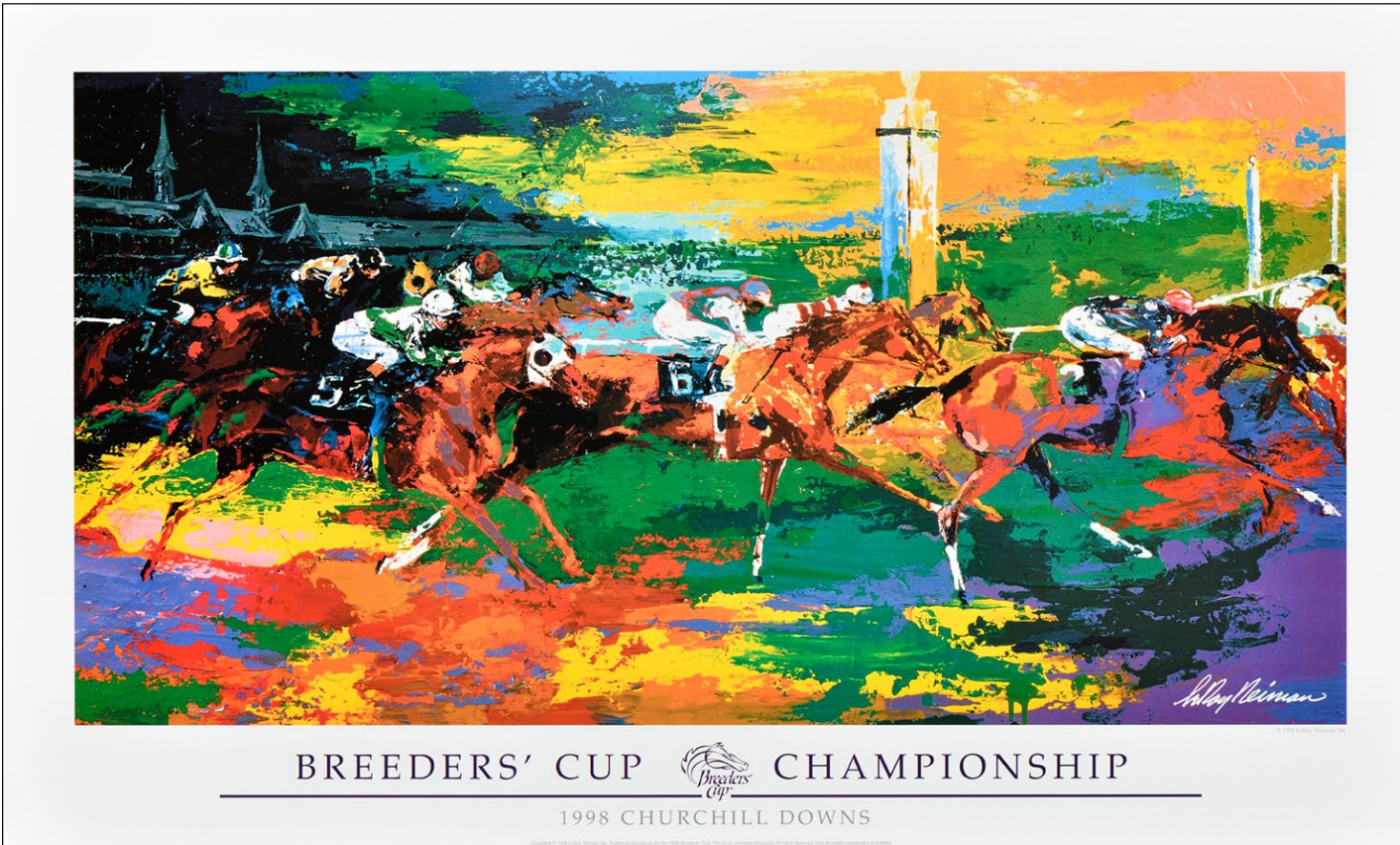
Leonard/Duran III, 1989
LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- Held on December 7, 1989, “Uno Mas” (one more) was the much-anticipated third fight between Sugar Ray Leonard and Roberto Durán for the super middleweight title. The name refers to “The Superfight,” their second match nine years earlier when Durán abruptly called it quits after the eighth round, allegedly saying “No mas” (no more) to Leonard. This time, Leonard would win in a unanimous 12-round decision.
- This was the first major event held at the Mirage Hotel that had just opened in Las Vegas a few weeks earlier on November 22. At the time, it was the largest hotel in the world.
- The composition is slightly less dynamic than Neiman’s other sports images, with Leonard and Durán appearing more rigidly posed than his typical figures. The crowd, however, bristles and pops in the background, their cameras held high to capture the action from the sidelines.



An Queen's Cup, 1990 LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- This poster promotes an all-female golf tournament held at the Hakusan Country Club in Ishikawa, Japan, with collective prize money of forty-million yen.
- The winner of the 1990 competition was Hisako Higuchi, the first Asian-born golfer of any gender to win a major championship. In 2003, she also became the first Japanese player inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame.
- As in all of Neiman's posters, the spectators always embody the "ideal" viewer—no one is ever bored, unengaged, or unattractive. They are the perfect audience to offset and elevate the star of the scene.

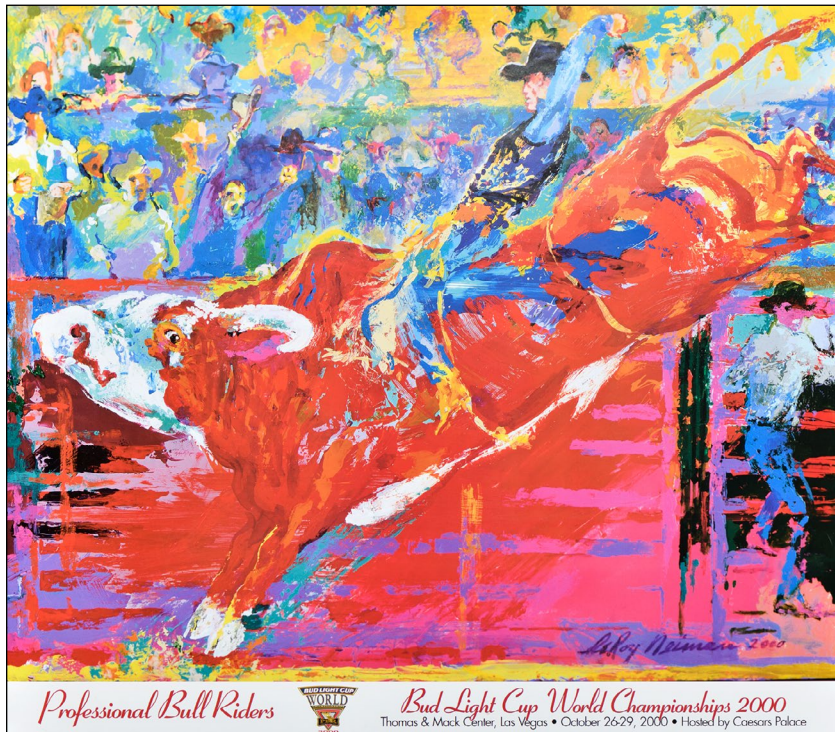


Breeders' Cup Championship, 1998

LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

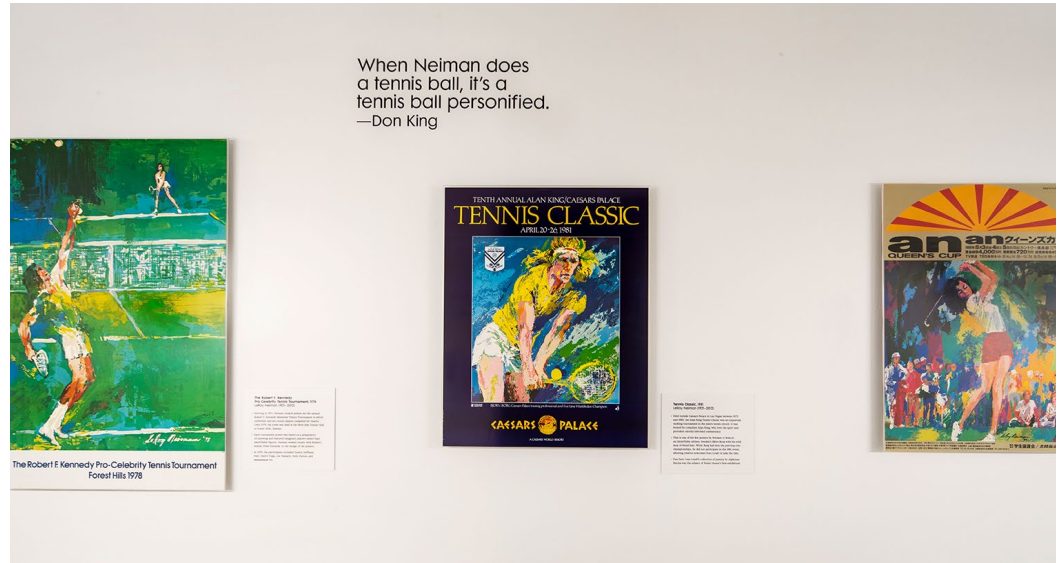
- First held in 1984, the Breeders' Cup is one of the most prestigious horse races in the world, attracting global talent in an annual competition that caps the racing season.
- The 1998 race was held at Churchill Downs, home of the Kentucky Derby, with the thoroughbred Awesome Again taking first place.
- Neiman's composition places the viewer at the sidelines, the speed and force of the horses and their jockeys nearly audible as they canter around the dirt course toward the finish line. To the far left, the twin spires of the grandstand are in shadow, forcing the eye to focus on the central action.

**I prefer only the fittest,
the finest, and the richest to
populate my paintings.**
—LeRoy Neiman



Professional Bull Riders, 2000
LeRoy Neiman (1921–2012)

- In 1992, a group of bull riders broke away from the rodeo system to form their own professional sport. Today, Professional Bull Riders, Inc. (PBR) has the fastest growing fanbase in the United States.
- From 1994 to 2002, Bud Light was the premiere sponsor of the leading tour within PBR, ending annually with the World Championships in Las Vegas.
- Here, Neiman has captured the previous year's winner, Ty Murray, on Red Wolf, a bucking bull with whom Murray achieved a score of 95.5. As appears in much of his mature work, the crowd is as interesting and dynamic as the main subjects, their individual cheers almost palpable.



POSTER

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