

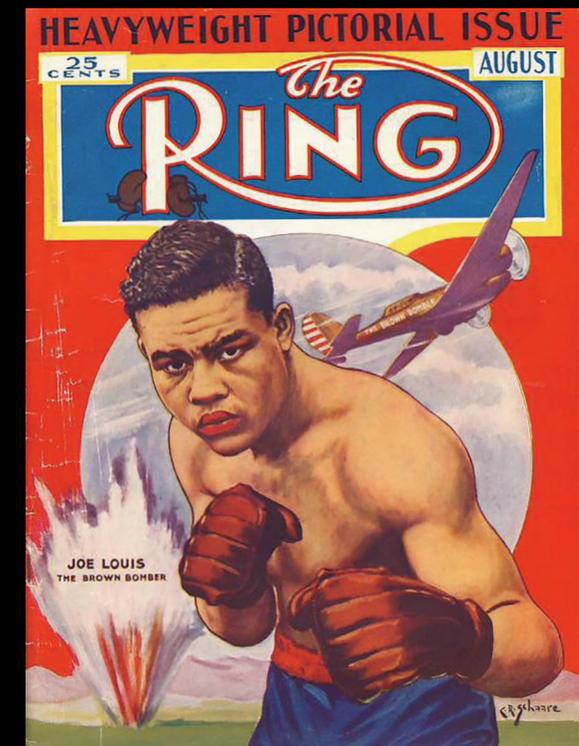
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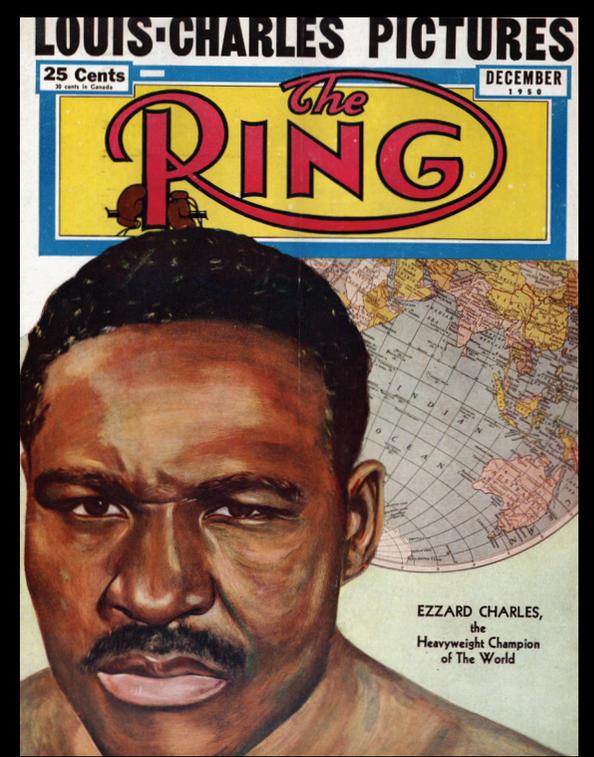
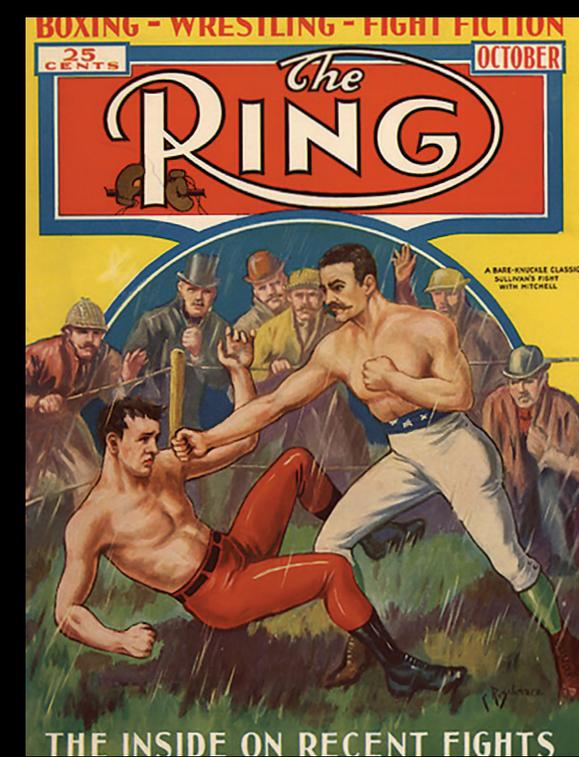
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# THE PAINTERS OF LEGENDS

THE RING'S CLASSIC PAINTED COVER ART, WHICH IMMORTALIZED SEVERAL BOXING ICONS OVER THE DECADES, IS A MAJOR PART OF THE PUBLICATION'S LEGACY »

By Ingo Wegerich



## THE PAINTERS OF LEGENDS

It is a very special honor to contribute to the 100th anniversary of the “Bible of Boxing.” Congratulations, Ring Magazine! Here’s to the next 100 years ...

Where do I start?

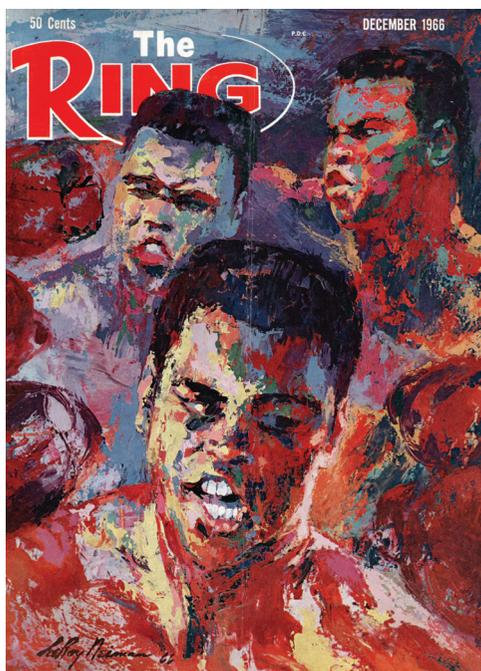
What do you see first when you purchase a copy of The Ring in a store? The cover picture. The covers are legendary and tell their own story. By now, many of the covers that are 50, 60, 70-plus years old are history themselves. I can’t help but envision the Brown Bomber cover from August 1937 featuring Joe Louis when I think of historic magazine covers. In the background, a bomber plane is in the air dropping a bomb that detonates. Louis stands in the foreground in a fighting pose in front of a round disc, perhaps symbolically standing for “The Ring” or even for the globe.

Incidentally, this circle can be seen on every cover of the magazine in the early days. Perhaps not everyone knows that the Louis picture is actually a painted work of art. Despite its great age, over 80 years old, the original is still in very good condition and is owned by the Wegerich Fine Art Collection, like so many other works of art that were featured on the cover of this legendary magazine.

Sadly, only a few of the originals from this era of Ring Magazine cover art remain. Many have been destroyed by fire or water damage. The few that were preserved are true treasures.

The first person to make a name for himself as a painter in the history of The Ring was M.K. Fleming, an illustrator who created the first painted covers for the magazine during the early 1930s. Unfortunately, very little is known about him. The first cover on which his name appears is dated March 1931. I have yet to see any originals of these early painted artworks by Fleming. It is possible that none has survived.

Fleming was followed by C.R. Schaare (né Christian Richard “Dick” Schaare Jr.), who painted the most covers in the publication’s history.



**Top: Richard Slone pays tribute to the style of his mentor, LeRoy Neiman. Bottom: A Neiman original.**

His name first appears on a cover in October 1932. Between 1932 and 1941, Schaare painted 82 artworks for the covers of The Ring. Works by Schaare appeared

sporadically on the cover into the 1950s. His most famous cover is probably the Brown Bomber.

Schaare began his career as an assistant to an engraver. The company he worked for also created graphic design for newspaper advertisements, among other things. Schaare later worked as a sketch artist for a New York advertising agency. This shaped his style. His Ring covers are reminiscent of the style of advertising drawings of the time. They are painted vividly and often focused on a theme, like the Brown Bomber cover picture. Today, they can be understood as early examples of Pop Art.

Schaare was followed by Stanley Weston, an American editor, sportswriter, artist and photographer. Weston, who was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2006, promoted the sport throughout his career, which spanned several decades. He was passionately associated with the Bible of Boxing throughout his life. He started out with the publication as a summer intern when he was 13. He bought the magazine in 1989 when he was almost 70. Even after the sale, he remained loyal to The Ring as publisher.

Weston painted his first ring cover in December 1939. He painted 57 covers in all. Some of these originals are still in the possession of the Stanley Weston Archive, which is continued in Weston’s memory by his grandson Patrick Scholz.

Weston designed his work exclusively for the cover pages of Ring magazine. This is clearly visible, for example, in the Ezzard Charles cover from December 1950. It shows a collage, painted with oil on paper, with glued elements. A globe cut out of a world map is pasted in the background. Charles’ face is painted separately

Pictured left to right: Shane Mosley, Jr., Fernando “El Feroz” Vargas, Diego Magdaleno



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## THE PAINTERS OF LEGENDS

and glued on.

Another great example is the very famous Dream Fight cover from April 1949, showing Joe Louis and Jack Dempsey. Already at that time, “Dream Fights” or “Mythical Matchups” were being discussed by Ring magazine – like the recent cover story that debates who would have won between lightweight legends Roberto Duran and Pernell Whitaker. (Incidentally, the cover art for the December 2021 issue was painted by the well-known artist Richard T. Slone, noted later in this article.)

The Dream Fight cover image of Louis and Dempsey is unfinished. It was completed only as far as was necessary for the cover picture. In the unpainted portion of the original, there are notes by Weston on the colors to use to fill in the rest of the painting.

When talking about the painters of Ring covers, one name cannot be left out, even though only a few covers stem from him: LeRoy Neiman. His Muhammad Ali cover from December 1966 is legendary.

Neiman was best known for his expressive, garishly colored sports paintings. From the 1960s, he specialized in this genre and came to great fame. He is considered by many to be the first great sports artist, challenged only in later years by a new generation of artists such as Richard T. Slone. Neiman painted fight posters and program covers for such historic fights as Ali-Frazier I, Ali-Foreman, Ali-Frazier III, Ali-Spinks II, Hagler-Hearns and Tyson-Lewis. In 2007, he was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Not to be forgotten is artist Gabe Perillo, who painted 18 covers for Ring magazine. Perillo was a graphic designer for The Ring under Nat Fleischer between 1969 and 1979.

Ring covers from the 1980s to the present usually feature photographs. But whenever spectacular fights



Ingo Wegerich has made boxing artwork a labor of love.

are to be highlighted with special cover art, the chosen artist is almost invariably Slone.

Slone has painted covers for the Bible of Boxing for more than 25 years. He painted his first cover picture at age 22; the subject was the first Tyson-Holyfield fight in 1996. Slone has created 25 covers for The Ring, the Duran-Whitaker Dream Fight being his most recent. He has been the official artist of the International Boxing Hall of Fame since 1997, and he’s painted the official fight program cover for most major showdowns of recent times, such as Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Manny Pacquiao, Mayweather-Canelo Alvarez and Deontay Wilder-Tyson Fury I and II, to name a few. Slone is undoubtedly No. 1 among living artists who combine painting and boxing. His paintings are characterized by an energetic style, well illustrating the emotions and dynamics of fights.

*Ingo Wegerich is a lawyer, art collector and namesake of the Wegerich Fine Art Collection. The art collection specializes in contemporary art related to boxing. This collection is one of the most extensive of its kind, ranging from the 1930s to the present. www.wegerich-fineart.com Instagram: @wegerichfineart*

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