

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 7, 2025**

**Skirball Cultural Center Presents the Worldwide Debut of**

***Jack Kirby: Heroes and Humanity***

A comprehensive retrospective of the comic book artist who created enduring characters such as Captain America, The Fantastic Four, The Avengers, OMAC, The X-Men, The Black Panther, Mister Miracle, The New Gods, and The Incredible Hulk

The Skirball's debut presentation showcases rare original comic book artwork and print comics, fine art, and commercial work

Opening May 1, 2025



Captain America Comics #1, Cover art by Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, 1940, © Marvel.

**LOS ANGELES, CA**—The Skirball Cultural Center announces the worldwide debut of a retrospective exhibition celebrating iconic comic book creator Jack Kirby (1917-1994). [\*Jack Kirby: Heroes and Humanity\*](#) showcases works from his extraordinary six-decade career. The exhibition opens to the public on Thursday, May 1, 2025, and will be on view through March 1, 2026.

Jack Kirby created some of the best-known characters in the history of American comics including Captain America, The Fantastic Four, The Avengers, OMAC, X-Men, The Black Panther, Mister Miracle, The Incredible Hulk, The New Gods, and many more. Along the way, he anticipated America's entry into World War II by depicting his heroes fighting Nazis, championed diversity, expanded the emotional and intellectual horizons of the comic book medium, and helped establish the visual vocabulary of popular culture.

*Jack Kirby: Heroes and Humanity* traces Kirby's experiences as a first-generation American born to immigrant parents in Manhattan's storied Lower East Side, a soldier who fought on the beaches of Normandy, a successful commercial artist who worked in marginalized creative industries, a mentor to a generation of younger comic creators, a resident of New York and Los Angeles, and a proud family man whose Jewish faith remained important throughout his life.

The exhibition and its related educational programs at the Skirball Cultural Center are made possible by presenting donor **Brandon Beck**, Riot Games co-founder and a comic collector who drew inspiration from comic artists in his work creating video games. He was instrumental in bringing this exhibition to the Skirball. Additional support was provided by **Stephanie and Harold Bronson, Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary**, and **Marvel Studios**. Media sponsorship is provided by ***The Hollywood Reporter***.

From early drawings of The Incredible Hulk, The Black Panther and Thor to a Kirby-inspired interactive installation, *Jack Kirby: Heroes and Humanity* features over 150 objects, many on view for the first time, including rare comic books, original illustrations, fine artworks, and ephemera that illustrate his life, inspirations and vast body of work.

Highlights of objects on display in *Jack Kirby: Heroes and Humanity* include:

- ***Captain America Comics #1***

This issue, depicting Captain America punching Adolf Hitler, was released one year before the U.S. entered World War II, and went on to sell over one million copies.

- **Jack Kirby's US Army Uniform**

On June 21, 1943, Jack Kirby reported for duty in the US Army and was assigned to Company F of the 11th Infantry. He landed on Normandy's Omaha Beach and fought on the front lines across France under the command of General George S. Patton.

- ***Tales to Astonish* #35, P. 1** (original art)

This page features the first appearance of Dr. Henry Pym in his super-heroic identity of Ant-Man.

- ***X-Men* #7** (original art)

This complete set of pages for *X-Men* #7 allows audiences to see Kirby's hand-drawn pages for an entire Marvel comic.

- ***Avengers* #1, P. 20** (original art)

This page depicts the first battle between Iron Man and the Hulk. The two heroes have clashed many times since, in comics, animated cartoons, and on the big screen.

- **Darkseid, Unpublished Pencil Portrait** (original art)

Kirby conceived Darkseid as a cosmic fascist dictator, the ultimate villain of the DC Comics universe. This image depicts the character looking down upon the viewer, conveying his arrogant sense of superiority and pride.

- **Black Panther Objects**

Jack Kirby's original presentation drawing (circa 1965) of T'Challa, king of the fictional African nation of Wakanda, the first Black superhero to be introduced by a major comic publisher; the original cover art for *Tales of Suspense* #98 (1968), which features The Black Panther alongside Kirby's other iconically progressive creation, Captain America; an original Black Panther costume from Marvel Studios' *Black Panther* (2018).

- **Unpublished Personal Works**

In addition to his work in comics, Kirby created numerous pieces that were not intended for publication. Notable examples on display include untitled collages, oversized watercolor *The Dream Machine*, and illustrations based on his wartime experiences.

- **Paul and Linda Meet Magneto**, unpublished piece

Jack and his wife Roz Kirby presented Paul and Linda McCartney with this drawing backstage at the LA Forum in 1976, when Paul was touring with his band Wings.

*Jack Kirby: Heroes and Humanity* is a journey through the artist's incredible life and work, from his own origin story to his enduring influence. Kirby remains a pivotal figure in

American popular culture, and his effect in the worlds of comics, film, animation, graphic design, and pop art lives on more than thirty years after his passing.

“Jack Kirby’s creativity and imagination were limitless, shaped by life experiences—as the child of immigrants, as an army veteran, as an artist, and as an American Jew—that spilled into the characters, stories, and universes he created,” said Skirball President and Chief Executive Officer, Jessie Kornberg. “Whether it’s Captain America fighting Nazis, the X-Men protecting a world that hates and fears them, or the New Gods exploring the nature of good versus evil, so much of Kirby’s work celebrates discovery and hope—something we try to do every day at the Skirball.”

“Comic books are an enduring cornerstone of popular culture, and their impact can be seen today across a wide range of mediums. Jack Kirby and other comic creators played a central role in shaping the way Americans see themselves, allowing readers to reflect on the very real issues of their time while also imagining more expansive worlds that highlight our shared humanity,” said Michele Urton, Museum Deputy Director, Skirball Cultural Center.

When asked about Kirby’s importance and legacy, co-curator Patrick A. Reed replied, “Jack Kirby is not only a foundational figure in American comics, his influence as a creative force, graphic stylist, and visionary storyteller reverberates across generations and throughout popular culture.” Co-curator Professor Ben Saunders added, “I would simply argue that Jack Kirby is one of the most important American artists of the 20th Century in any medium, period.”

For more information about *Jack Kirby: Heroes and Humanity*, please visit:

<https://www.skirball.org/museum/jack-kirby-heroes-and-humanity>

### **Curatorial Acknowledgments**

This exhibition was co-curated by independent curators **Patrick A. Reed** and Professor **Ben Saunders**. The organizing curator is **Michele Urton**, Museum Deputy Director at the Skirball Cultural Center.

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### **About the Skirball**

The Skirball Cultural Center is a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and

equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

### **Visiting the Skirball**

The Skirball is located at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday, 12:00–5:00 pm; Saturday–Sunday, 10:00 am–5:00 pm; closed Mondays and holidays. Reservations are recommended for General Admission and the permanent exhibition Noah's Ark at the Skirball, which requires timed entry and is ticketed separately. Tickets for *Jack Kirby: Heroes and Humanity* are \$18 for adults, and \$13 for seniors, full-time students, and children 2-17 years old. The Skirball is always FREE for Members and children under 2 years old. For general information, the public may call (310) 440-4500 or visit [skirball.org](http://skirball.org).

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