



RAF & RCAF Aircraft Nose Art in World War II

By Clarence Simonsen

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Military aircraft decorated with gaudy personalized artwork, usually of the ribald and risque variety, are generally associated with American bombers and fighters, most of which flew by day. In contrast, those of their allies in the RAF and RCAF, especially the nocturnal bombers, are usually perceived as being sober and dull. That this was far from being the case is revealed in this photographic study which shows that the men who flew aircraft wearing roundels could be just as imaginative in decorating their machines. The results were as varied as the skills of the mostly untrained artists, who used all manner of sources as their inspiration, but especially pinup pictures by Vargas and Petty. The author not only shows the finished nose (and tail) art of many aircraft, but also pays tribute to many of their crews. To do so he has enlisted the aid of a number of the men responsible for painting the aircraft, as well as the assistance of Walt Disney studios-and the model who was the original 'Petty Girl'. This work includes hundreds of close-up pictures of artwork on many different types of aircraft: Lancaster, Halifax, Mosquito, Beaufighter, Spitfire and Hurricane among them-in many cases accompanied by the story of the aircraft and crew as well. Detailed color artwork by the author and Jon Field show many of these emblems and the rest of the aircraft markings.

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