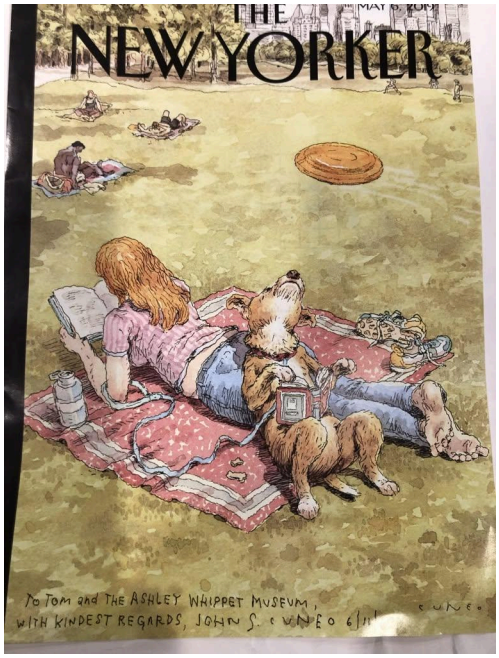

John S. Cuneo sent Tom Wehrli a signed copy of the above cover for the Ashley Whippet Museum

Spring brings New Yorkers outdoors, if only to lie on the grass and read. This week's cover, by John Cuneo, is his tenth for the magazine. Cuneo alternates between biting political satire and charming scenes of the passing seasons. We talked to the artist about his work and the sources for his inspiration.

You seem to enjoy anthropomorphizing animals. Are animals more fun to draw than humans?

I'm not sure if animals are more fun to draw than humans, but I do I enjoy rendering animals on two feet. Conversely, I never pass up a chance to draw people on all fours. Chimpanzees are the perfect middle ground. I like putting clothes on them and having them do very difficult and sophisticated things, like drawing funny pictures.

Do you have a pantheon of dog-drawers?

Many of my early influences were the great pen-and-ink masters of the early ineteen-hundreds. Arthur Burdett Frost [1851-1928] drew a mean dog (and friendly ones as well), and E. W. Kemble [1861-1933] did, too, but for uncannily anthropomorphizing animals of all stripes and species, T. S. Sullivant [1854-1926] was without equal. My friend (and frequent New Yorker contributor) Mark Ulriksen is famous for his distinctive and charming way with canines, but, to my mind, the flat-out funniest dogs in this magazine are George Booth's.

What animal have you never drawn that you'd like to try?

I can't come up with an animal I haven't at least tried to draw. I do have a hard time with cats, and once had an embarrassing experience with an art director and an owl, but I don't want to go into it here. Illustrators often talk about how difficult horses are to draw, which is probably true, and also suggests just how fun illustrators can be at parties.

You live out in the country. How do Central Park's charms match up to your more immersive experience?

I'm very allergic to much of what grows here in the moldy Catskills, and yesterday, after a walk, I pulled five ticks off our dog and two off of me. From up here in the woods, Central Park seems more charming every minute.