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Beatrix Potter, "Mother Rabbit puts Peter to bed," 1927, from *Tale of Peter Rabbit*, 1902. Watercolor on paper. The Charles Collection.

The Artful Memories of Childhood

SBMA Goes Over Rainbows and Down Rabbit Holes to Explore Children's Book Art

On View March 15 – June 15, 2008

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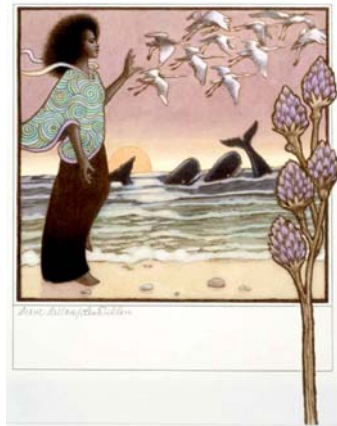
"In the beginning, there was the spoken word. Thousands of years before the first printing press, before Gutenberg and movable type, stories were being told around a fire. The storytellers knew their audience: folks who worked hard through the daylight hours, who struggled to get by, and who longed for a break. It's no wonder that tales from every culture and continent, passed down through generations and centuries, hold common themes. There is the outcast...who passes an impossible test and wins the princess's hand in marriage. There is the trickster...who gets the better of his powerful adversary. Folktales were the original subversive literature, wishfully tipping the balance of power. Small wonder, then, that these stories form the broad foundation of today's children's books."

- Excerpt from essay by Lolly Robinson,
Guest Curator

It is no wonder, then, that these stories are also the focus of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art's upcoming exhibition, ***Over Rainbows and Down Rabbit Holes: The Art of Children's Books*** opening March 15, 2008. This magical presentation features approximately 70 works of art created specifically for children's books. These original works, seen as independent creations while connecting with their literary context, inspire the imagination and celebrate the creativity of making picture books for readers of all ages. The exhibition is drawn from the outstanding collection of picture book art assembled by Zora and Les Charles and is organized by SBMA in collaboration with The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst, Massachusetts, the first full-scale museum in this country devoted to national and international picture book art. It is accompanied by a catalogue co-published by SBMA and The Carle.



E. H. Shepard, "So he went home with Pooh, and watched him for quite a long time," preliminary drawing for ***The House at Pooh Corner***, 1928. Pencil on paper. The Charles Collection.



Diane and Leo Dillon, "Earth Mother smiled and walked on," from ***Earth Mother*** by Ellen Jackson, 2005. Mixed media on canvas. The Charles Collection.

Classics in this exhibition include ***The Tale of Peter Rabbit*** by Beatrix Potter, ***The House at Pooh Corner*** by A. A. Milne and illustrated by Ernest Shepard, and ***The Travels of Babar*** by Jean de Brunhoff. Works by Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, and Kay Nielsen represent the earlier golden age of illustration, while the majority of examples focus on the flowering of the genre by artists and authors working in the post-World War II period. Trina Schart Hyman (***Little Red Riding Hood***), Chris Van Allsburg (***Jumanji***), and husband and wife team Leo and Diane Dillon (***Earth Mother***) are among the contemporary illustrators represented.

The breadth of works featured in the exhibition stems from Santa Barbara resident and collector, Zora Charles's favorite stories. So, instead of limiting the presentation to a particular subject matter, artist, or illustrative or printing technique, the assemblage offers a more human perspective – one that represents a walk through time, from childhood memories to once-again-realized, adult imagination. "I've always loved to read," writes Charles in an excerpt from her essay. "I would always pore over the illustrations as I was reading. Did the pictures coincide with my imagination as I read? Or even better, did the illustrations tell me more about the story than the words did? Did they create a world for the story to live in? That's where the magic begins. Any competent artist can paint a picture to demonstrate what the words say. But the great illustrators use the words as a key to unlock a magical, visual universe."

Her passion for collecting began when she started attending antiquarian book fairs with her husband, Les Charles, an eager collector of rare books, more than 20 years ago. He encouraged Zora to start her own collection of children's books, given her background as an elementary school teacher. She started with the Caldecott Medal winners, such as Robert Lawson and Gerald McDermott – but quickly found inspiration from Peter Glassman and James Carey of Books of Wonder, one of the largest and oldest sources of children's publications. As she was introduced to many of the artists of the works she was collecting, she realized that a children's book illustration is a true art form that can stand on its own, separate from the books that inspire it. The next thing she knew, she had the "collecting disease."

The result of this artful ailment is certainly SBMA's gain. The resulting exhibition is not only a scholarly presentation of some of the finest examples of original illustrative art, but also a source of inspiration and a connection between visual and verbal literacy. The Museum's Education Department is excited by the opportunity to further their ongoing quest to promote visual literacy to children of all ages. The idea that pictures can be "read" is the golden thread that runs through the countless number of education programs that the Museum offers on an ongoing basis. An upcoming project that specifically reflects this goal is the reinstallation in March 2008 of the Robert and Marlene Veloz Children's Gallery, which will be loosely themed around the material presented in the ***Over Rainbows and Down Rabbit Holes*** exhibition.

This exhibition has been made possible in part through generous gifts from Susan and John Sweetland, Arthur and Carolyn Merovick (Farish Fund), and ***snART Families***

Other Exhibition Venue:

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst, MA, November 11, 2008 – March 8, 2009

About The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art:

Founded in part by Eric Carle, the renowned author and illustrator of more than 70 books, including the 1969 classic ***The Very Hungry Caterpillar***; The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is the first full-scale museum in this country devoted to national and international picture book art, conceived and built with the aim of celebrating the art that we are first exposed to as children. Through the exploration of images that are familiar and beloved, it is the Museum's goal to foster connections between visual and verbal literacy and to provide visitors of all ages and backgrounds with the opportunity to explore their own creativity and the confidence to appreciate and enjoy art of every kind.

The Museum—which houses three galleries dedicated to rotating exhibitions of picture book art, a hands-on Art Studio, a Reading Library, an Auditorium, a popular Café, and a Museum Shop—is located in Amherst, MA. For more information about the Museum and its programs visit www.picturebookart.org or call (413) 658-1100.

About the Guest Curator, Lolly Robinson:

Lolly Robinson has spent the past 20 years working with children's books as a critic, reviewer, researcher, and graphic designer. Currently, she is the designer and production manager for the Horn Book, Inc. and teaches children's and adolescent literature at Harvard Graduate School of

Education. She has reviewed children's books for the *Horn Book Magazine* and *Horn Book Guide* since 1991, served on the 2005 Caldecott Committee and is a judge on the 2008 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award Committee. In 2004 Lolly was guest curator for *Batrix Potter in America* at the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, an exhibition of Potter's original art in American collections.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that provides internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA. Open Tuesday - Sunday 11 am to 5 pm. Closed Monday. Free every Sunday. 805.963.4364 www.sbma.net