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**SECOND SPECIAL EXHIBITION AT NEW MUSEUM FEATURES
WORK OF NANCY EKHOLM BURKERT, ILLUSTRATOR OF
ROALD DAHL'S *James and the Giant Peach***

***Nancy Ekholm Burkert: The Art of Illustration* will be on view at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art from January 31 – March 30, 2003**

Amherst, Mass. (January 20, 2003) – The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art announced today that the second of its inaugural year exhibitions opens Friday, January 31 and features the work of Nancy Ekholm Burkert, illustrator of such favorites as Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach*, Edward Lear's, *The Scroobious Pip* (finished by Ogden Nash); Hans Christian Andersen's, *The Nightingale*, and The Grimm Brothers', *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs*, for which she won the Caldecott Honor medal in 1973. Comprising over seventy original works from ten books, this exhibition constitutes the first full survey of the artist's book art.

Trained as a fine artist and printmaker, Burkert entered the arena of book illustration in 1961 with her interpretations for Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach*. While embracing the surreal elements of the story, she also grounded her work in meticulous research. For example, in creating the old green grasshopper, Burkert particularized it as a short-horned grasshopper. This approach permeates all her work as does collaborating with the author. Burkert calls this creative process triangulation, stating, "I share with the author the same response to something in life. We have already reflected upon it separately. I create images only for myself, in parallel, and from a similar perspective. My image does not serve the word. We are equal partners."

"Burkert possesses a reassuring gentility, and this temperament naturally informs her work," says Nick Clark, Founding Director of the Museum. Clark adds, "To encounter one of her drawings or paintings is to envelop oneself in an atmosphere of serenity, where one becomes acutely aware of a visual purity. Nuance—refined through consummate draftsmanship—also contributes to the over-arching sense of elegance that defines Burkert's work."

And this is perhaps most evident in her magnum opus, *Valentine & Orson*, a labor of love that took over seven years to complete. Based on a French medieval folk-tale, *Valentine & Orson* is the classic story of twin brothers separated at birth, better known in recent literature as *The Prince and the Pauper*. Her paintings are informed by the work of the sixteenth-century Flemish artist, Pieter Bruegel. In addition to most of the finished art for this book, the exhibition will display numerous examples of Burkert's preliminary drawings and reference materials to reveal how painstaking her research was.

Each of Burkert's books represents a remarkable depth of investigation, thought, and technical virtuosity. With a seamless blend of reality and fantasy, she weaves her distinctive visual magic. In an era when so many images are ephemeral, she is one of those rare artists who give us reason to pause and reflect on the beauty of her work. States Jane Bayard Curley, author of the catalog essay, "Measured against her contemporaries, the artist's output seems small. Yet in her ten books, Nancy Ekholm Burkert sets the gold standard for excellence in picture book art."

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is a new museum dedicated to exploring the role of visual art in children's literature from around the world. Founded in part by Eric Carle, the renowned author and illustrator of more than 70 books printed in 30 languages, including the 1969 classic *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, the Museum strives to offer exhibitions and programming that encourage inquiry, foster an appreciation for the visual arts, and engage, delight, and inspire children and families.

Nancy Ekholm Burkert: The Art of Illustration will be on view from January 31, 2003 through March 30, 2003 at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, 125 West Bay Road, Amherst, MA. Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday 12 noon to 4 p.m. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children under 18, and \$10 for a family of six. For further information and directions, call 413-658-1100 or visit the Museum's website at www.picturebookart.org.

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