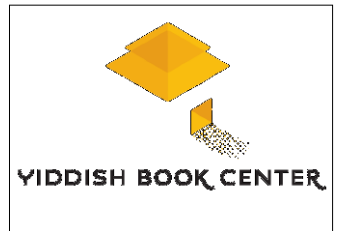


Media Contact:
The Carle:
Sandy Soderberg
Marketing Manager
(413) 658-1105 / Sandys@carlemuseum.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Yiddish Book Center:
Nora Gerard
Program Director
(413) 256-4900 / Ngerard@bikher.org



The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art and the Yiddish Book Center present
MONSTERS AND MIRACLES:
A Journey through Jewish Picture Books
October 15, 2010 – January 23, 2011

Exhibition examines the impact of Jewish writers, illustrators, and cultural traditions on picture book art



Selected illustration from SHREK! © 1990 by William Steig.
Used by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC.

Amherst, MA—The first-ever museum consideration of the Jewish picture book, *Monsters and Miracles: A Journey through Jewish Picture Books*, will travel from Los Angeles to The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art and the Yiddish Book Center from October 15th through January 23rd. This exhibit is co-organized by the Skirball Cultural Center (Los Angeles, CA) and The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, featuring more than 100 original works of art, texts, and related objects from time-honored classics and popular favorites.

Featured authors and artists include Eric Carle, Daniel Pinkwater, Maurice Sendak, Margot Zemach, Mark Podwal, Francine Prose, Lemony Snicket, Art Spiegelman, and William Steig. With historical examples dating as early as the twelfth century, *Monsters and Miracles* also encompasses the work of luminaries Isaac Bashevis Singer, Marc Chagall, and El Lissitzky.

Monsters and Miracles investigates the significant contributions that Jewish art and storytelling have made to children's literature, tracing the development of the Jewish picture book from its early cultural roots to its contemporary innovations. The works represent an array of artistic media, including paintings, drawings, computer-generated images, paper cuts, collages, as well as lavishly illustrated Hebrew manuscripts. While texts are mainly in English, there are also works in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Portuguese.

Children and adults alike will delight as they revisit their favorite stories and encounter new authors and illustrators. In addition to the artworks on display, the exhibition programming includes a presentation by co-curators Neal Sokol and Ilan Stavans, a presentation by Mark Podwal, and a latke breakfast with Lisa Brown. See both the Carle website (www.carlemuseum.org) and the Yiddish Book Center website

(www.yiddishbookcenter.org) for a complete list of programming. Programming is also included at the end of this release.

As with all exhibitions, the books featured in the exhibition will be available for families to read and enjoy. Additionally, from December 8 through January 18, The Eric Carle Museum's Art Studio will offer Monster Mock-Up, where guests can create their own monsters inspired by what they see in the galleries, including William Steig's *Shrek!* and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. These complimentary hands-on activities will further expand the visitor experience.

"The evolution of the picture book in Jewish history is a fascinating story," said Carle Museum Executive Director Alexandra Kennedy. "The art of storytelling is deeply embedded in Jewish tradition and we are pleased to work with the Skirball Cultural Center and Yiddish Book Center to bring this important exhibition to both coasts."

Exhibition Overview

Organized into six sections, *Monsters and Miracles* addresses several storytelling motifs.

The exhibition opens with a number of lavishly illuminated *Haggadoth* dating back to the eighteenth century.

Throughout Jewish history, these illustrated liturgical volumes have been used to recount the Exodus story at the Passover Seder, serving as a lively medium of instruction, much like today's picture books. Also on display is a selection of historical volumes that are set alongside modern versions of the same themes, such as an alphabet primer from medieval Cairo, together with early-twentieth-century and contemporary *aleph-bet* Hebrew alphabet books.

Next, the exhibition presents biblical stories as reconsidered by modern-day authors. Timeless tales provide moral direction to readers and portray ancient heroes in examples such as *Why Noah Chose the Dove* (1974), written by Isaac Bashevis Singer and illustrated by Eric Carle; *Jonah and the Two Great Fish* (1997), by Mordicai Gerstein; and *King Solomon and His Magic Ring* (1999) written by Elie Wiesel and illustrated by Mark Podwal.

The third section features illustrations of monsters, giants, goblins, and other mythical beings.

Drawing inspiration from biblical angels and demons, the Jewish storybook tradition has created a thriving bestiary of creatures, including *golems* and *dybbuks*, the subjects of tales by David Wisniewski, Mark Podwal, Francine Prose and Barbara Rogasky. In many of these modern tales, imaginary figures take on human traits and frailties, such as: the lovable monsters that populate the realm of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), which were modeled after the author/illustrator's own frightening relatives; a misanthropic ogre becomes the hero in William Steig's *SHREK!* (1990), whose name means *fear* in Yiddish; and an angst-ridden latke looks for signs of Hanukkah in Lemony Snicket's *The Latke Who Couldn't Stop Screaming: A Christmas Story* (2007), illustrated by Lisa Brown.

In the fourth section, the exhibition highlights traditional Jewish village life in *shtetls* (a Yiddish term for rural villages once inhabited by the Jews of Eastern Europe), which remain central to the cultural foundation of Ashkenazi Jewish traditions.

Here, stories and illustrations capture the folklore and charm of these communities. Several works represent the early illustration and graphic design efforts by well-known artists Marc Chagall and El Lissitzky, both of whom grew up in a *shtetl*. Contemporary stories harkening back to *shtetl* traditions include Art Spiegelman's "Prince Rooster," from *Little Lit: Folklore and Fairy Tale Funnies* (2000) and *Kibitzers and Fools: Tales My Zayda Told Me* (2005) by Simms Taback, who uses collage and watercolor to portray the colorful residents of *shtetls*.

Here, visitors are also introduced to one of the most popular Arabic folktale characters, Nasreddin Hodja, in Eric A. Kimmel's forthcoming *Joha Makes a Wish: A Middle Eastern Tale* (2010), illustrated by Omar Raayan.

Next, *Monsters and Miracles* examines transitions from the Old World to the New. Several tales use migration as their main theme, including *The Travels of Benjamin Tudela: Through Three Continents in the Twelfth Century* (2005) by Uri Shulevitz and *The Journey That Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H.A. Rey* (2005) written by Louise Borden and illustrated by Allan Drummond. Other stories use their narrative and illustrations to transporting viewers to different destinations around the world, including Israel, Spain, and frequently the United States. Books such as *Haym Salomon: American Patriot* (2007), written by Susan Goldman Rubin and illustrated by David Slonim; *When Zaydeh Danced on Eldridge Street* (1997), written by Elsa Okon Rael and illustrated by Marjorie Priceman; and *The Castle on Hester Street* (2007), written by Linda Heller and illustrated by Boris Kulikov, demonstrate how Jews embraced the American experience and made it their own.

In the final section, the exhibition looks at new trends in Jewish picture books.

The influence of the graphic novel is notable in illustrations from *The Adventures of Rabbi Harvey: A Graphic Novel of Jewish Wisdom and Wit in the Wild West* (2006) by Steve Sheinkin and *Houdini: The Handcuff King* (2007), written by Jason Lutes and illustrated by Nick Bertozzi. Feature film and television adaptations of some of the most beloved picture books—*Curious George* (the original manuscript for which was smuggled out of Nazi-dominated Europe along with its creators), and *Where the Wild Things Are*—are documented by movie stills, video clips, and other memorabilia. Another trend is seen in picture books offering alternative narratives of American Jewish life. Among these are Laurel Snyder's forthcoming *Baxter, the Pig Who Wanted to Be Kosher* (2010), illustrated by David Goldin; Daniel Pinkwater's forthcoming story in Yiddish and English, *Beautiful Yetta: The Yiddish Chicken* (2010), illustrated by Jill Pinkwater; and Lemony Snicket's unconventional holiday tale, *The Latke Who Couldn't Stop Screaming: A Christmas Story* (2007), illustrated by Lisa Brown.

Related Programming:

During the run of *Monsters and Miracles*, The Carle and Yiddish Book Center will present several related public programs:

Friday, October 15 – Exhibition opens, *Monsters and Miracles: A Journey Through Jewish Picture Books* (October 15, 2010 – January 23, 2011)

[The Carle and Yiddish Book Center.]

Sunday, October 17 – Recreating the Golem: A History of Golem Imagery – 1:00 pm

Join artist and author Mark Podwal as he discusses one of the most fascinating Jewish legends – that of the golem, a man-like creature created by use of mystical powers. Numerous ways the golem has been depicted will be shown in a series of slides sure to delight anyone interested in Jewish history, lore, and custom as well as myth and mysticism. Podwal has received awards from the Society of Illustrators and the Jewish Book Council. His drawings have appeared in *The New York Times* for more than thirty-five years, and his work is represented in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum. His most recent book is *Built by Angels: The Story of the Old-New Synagogue*.

[The Carle. Free with Museum Admission.]

Sunday, October 24 – James Sturm in conversation with Christopher Couch – 2:00 pm

James Sturm is the author of *Market Day* and cofounder of the Center for Cartoon Studies. Christopher Couch is a lecturer in Comparative Literature at the University of Massachusetts.
[Yiddish Book Center. Tickets are \$6/general admission; \$3/student.]

Sunday, November 7 – Members Day and Opening of exhibition: *A velt mit veltlekh: The Worlds of Yiddish Culture* – 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

[Yiddish Book Center. Free Admission.]

Sunday, November 7 – The Whole Megilah – 1:00 pm

Meet award-winning writer and storyteller, Rich Michelson as he shares personal life stories and their connections to his work. Both lyrical and literary, his presentation will weave together the connections between story and history.

[The Carle. Free with Museum Admission.]

Sunday, November 14 – Latke Breakfast

9:00 am - 12:00 pm

[The Carle. Ticketed event.. See website for details]

Sunday, November 14 – Presentation and Book Signing with Lisa Brown

12:00 pm

Illustrator Lisa Brown reads from her book *The Latke Who Wouldn't Stop Screaming: A Christmas Story*, and revels in the true meaning of this holiday season.

[The Carle. Free with Museum Admission.]

Sunday, November 14 – Authors talk and storytelling event: Steve Sheinkin and Ann Redisch Stampler – 2:00 pm

Jewish folktales are creatively retold and let loose in the Wild West in the graphic novels *The Adventures of Rabbi Harvey* and *Rabbi Harvey Rides Again*. Author Steve Sheinkin talks about the origins of his Rabby Harvey stories and illustrates the process he uses to turn traditional tales of Jewish ethics into comics. Ann Redisch Stampler reads from her new children's book *The Rooster Prince of Breslov*.

[Yiddish Book Center. Tickets are \$6/general admission; \$3/student.]

Sunday, November 14 – Conversations with Neal Sokol, Uri Shulevitz, Nonny Hogrogian, and Ilan Stavans – Opening Reception – 4:00 pm

In a wide-ranging discussion of the history of illustration for Jewish children's books, the two guest curators will engage in conversation with two venerable artists in the profession—both Caldecott medalists. As well as probing the artistic vision for interpreting text, the participants will also field questions from the audience.

[The Carle. Free with Museum Admission. *Followed by a Member's Reception.*]

Sunday, November 21 – *With All Thine Heart: Love and the Bible* – Ilan Stavans and Barry Moser – 2:00 pm

The author and artist discuss depictions of the Bible and their recent collaboration.

[Yiddish Book Center. Tickets are \$6/general admission; \$3/student.]

Public Art Program - December 8 – January 18 - Monster Mock-Up

Take a look at Shrek and the Wild Things in the exhibition *Monsters and Miracles* and then paint your own imaginary creature; large or small.

[The Carle.]

Catalogue and Merchandise:

Monsters and Miracles is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue, featuring essays by exhibition co-curators Ilan Stavans, Neal Sokol, and Tal Gozani. The 80-page catalog is for sale in The Carle's Museum Shop and the Yiddish Book Center's bookstore for \$24.95.

About The Carle:

Together with his wife Barbara, Eric Carle, the renowned author and illustrator of more than 70 books, including the 1969 classic *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, founded The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art as 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 provide an enriching, dynamic, and supportive context for the development of literacy and to foster in visitors of all ages and backgrounds 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 Café, and a Museum Shop—is located at 125 West Bay Road, Amherst, MA. Museum hours are Tuesday through Friday 10 am to 4 pm, Saturday 10 am to 5 pm, and Sunday 12 noon to 5 pm. Admission is \$9 for adults, \$6 for children under 18, and \$22.50 for a family of four. For further information and directions, call 413-658-1100 or visit the Museum's website at www.carlemuseum.org.

About the Yiddish Book Center:

The Yiddish Book Center is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to rescuing and distributing Yiddish and other Jewish books and opening their contents to the world. Its beautiful 37,000-square-foot headquarters in Amherst, MA, is a *lebedike* velt – a lively world featuring an open Yiddish book repository, exhibitions about Jewish literature, art, film, and music and other resources for visitors. The Yiddish Book Center, located at 1021 West Street, is open Mondays from 10 am to 4 pm and Sundays in the spring to late fall season from 11 am to 4 pm. Admission is free. For more information about the Yiddish Book Center, call 413-256-4900 or visit www.yiddishbookcenter.org.

About the Skirball Cultural Center:

The Skirball Cultural Center is dedicated to exploring the connections between 4,000 years of Jewish heritage and the vitality of American democratic ideals. It welcomes and seeks to inspire people of every ethnic and cultural identity. Guided by our respective memories and experiences, together we aspire to build a society in which all of us can feel at home. The Skirball Cultural Center achieves its mission through educational programs that explore literary, visual, and performing arts from around the world; through the display and interpretation of its permanent collections and changing exhibitions; through an interactive family destination inspired by the Noah's Ark story; and through outreach to the community.

Images are available for reproduction. For additional press information and /or images, please contact Sandy Soderberg, Marketing Manager (413) 658-1105 or sandys@carlemuseum.org. The Carle posts high-resolution images on SmugMug.com which are easy to download and includes all credit information.