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Follow the Yellow Brick Road to The Carle

**Eric Carle Museum presents *The Wonderful Art of Oz* July 11 through Oct 22;
Exhibit to Trace Visual and Political Interpretations of Classic Children's Tale**

Amherst, Mass. (July 5, 2006) – This summer, there's no place like The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art.

The Museum has announced the opening of the exhibition **The Wonderful Art of Oz**. On view July 11 through October 22, 2006, and organized in honor of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Oz series creator, L. Frank Baum, the exhibition will bring together the full range of artistic interpretations of Baum's most famous story, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Guest curated by Michael Patrick Hearn, the noted authority on Baum, who published *The Annotated Wizard of Oz* as a Bard College undergraduate in 1973, the exhibition will trace interpretations from W.W. Denslow's first edition Art Nouveau illustrations down to recent times. Works by his successor, John R. Neill, will anchor the early examples while more recent versions will include Barry Moser, Charles Santore, Lisbeth Zwerger, Robert Sabuda, Trina Schart Hyman, Chris Van Allsburg, Paul Zelinsky, and Eric Carle.

"This is the largest assemblage of Denslow's illustration for the book probably since they were with the printer, and the same holds true for Neill," notes Founding Director Nick Clark. "The work of these two talented artists provided the foundation for the phenomenon of Oz that has captured the artistic imagination, and in certain cases the interpretations have reflected changing political attitudes toward the book."

The Wizard of Oz, the 1939 movie starring Judy Garland in the role of Dorothy, has contributed substantially to the mythical status of the story and the exhibition touches on some of the artistic elements that refer to the movie. Andy Warhol's silkscreen portrait of Margaret Hamilton as the Wicked Witch, and an etching aquatint portrait of Dorothy by Kiki Smith, are examples ranging beyond the illustrative tradition that will be on view.

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L. Frank Baum (1856-1919) was an author, actor, and independent filmmaker best known as the creator, along with W.W. Denslow (1856-1915), of one of the most popular books ever written in American children's literature, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Born in Chittenango, New York, Baum was the seventh of nine children, only five of whom survived into adulthood. His description of Kansas in the book is based on his experiences in drought-ridden South Dakota, where he briefly lived and edited a local newspaper. Baum and his partner, illustrator W.W. Denslow, published *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in 1890 to wide critical and financial success.

Two years after *Wizard's* publication, Baum and Denslow co-produced a musical stage version of the book, with the abbreviated title, *The Wizard of Oz*. Intended primarily for adults, the play differed substantially from the book, with actors making explicit references to President Theodore Roosevelt and oil baron John D. Rockefeller. The movie, starring Garland and Hamilton, aimed for a general audience and lacked the explicit political reference. The story has continued to spawn new stage and film versions.

Events planned in conjunction with the exhibition include *Along the Yellow Brick Road: The Changing Look of Oz*, a lecture with guest curator Michael Patrick Hearn on July 29; the *Oz Summer Film Series* on Sundays in July and August; and on September 28, booksmith and artist Barry Moser will discuss his work on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and his own version of *Oz*.

This exhibition has been made possible in part by support from The International Wizard of Oz Club.

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 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.

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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 at 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 \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under 18, and \$20 for a family of four. For further information and directions, call 413-658-1100 or visit the Museum’s website at www.picturebookart.org.

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