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**EXHIBITION OF RUSSIAN CHILDREN'S BOOK
ILLUSTRATION ILLUMINATES PRE-COMMUNIST ERA**

*From the Silver Age to Stalin: Russian Children's Book Illustration
in the Sasha Lurye Collection* on view at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art
from November 7, 2003 – January 18, 2004

Amherst, Mass. (October 20, 2003) – The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art has announced the opening on November 7 of *From the Silver Age to Stalin: Russian Children's Book Illustration from the Sasha Lurye Collection*. Curated by scholar Michael Patrick Hearn and heralding the Museum's first anniversary, the exhibition explores the beauty and artistry of illustration from the last years of the Czars to the Soviet dictatorship under Stalin.

The exhibition encompasses a rich diversity of artistic expression from Art Nouveau and Constructivism to the politically charged realism that reinforced Soviet dogma. Among the more than seventy original works are examples by Ivan Bilibin, Vera Ermolaeva, and Vladimir Lebedev—whose work strongly influenced Eric Carle's training as a graphic designer—as well as printed books with art by Marc Chagall, El Lissitzky, and Alexandr Rodchenko.

From the Silver Age, as the reign of Nicholas and Alexandra was known, are works by the *Mir isskutsva (World of Art)* artists, Alexandre Benois and Ivan Bilibin, including Bilibin's two lavish picture books inspired by his stage and costume designs for the Rimsky-Korsakov operas of Alexander Pushkin's fairy tales, *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* (1905) and *The Tale of the Golden Cockerel* (1907). Key examples of Yiddish picture books in Neo-Primitivist style include Marc Chagall's *A Mayses mit a Hon, Dos Tsigele (A Story about a Rooster, The Little Kid)*, by "Der Nister" (1917) and the only copy in private hands of El Lissitzky's *Had Gadya, Gekoyft der tate far tsvay gilden ayn tsigele (Father Bought a Kid for Two Zuzim)* (1918). And the Russian avant-garde is well represented with El Lissitzky's, *Suprematicheskii skaz pro dva kvadrata v 6-ti postroikakh (Suprematist Story about Two Squares in Six Constructions)*, (1922); Vladimir Tatlin's, *Vo-pervykh i vo-vtorykh (Firstly and Secondly)*, by Daniil Kharms, (1929); and Aleksandr Rodchenko's, *Detskie i shkolnye gody Ilich (Ilyich's Childhood and School Years)*, by Anna. Iliniclan Ulyanova, (1925).

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Many of the authors and artists highlighted in the exhibition remained non-persons well into the Cold War as politics were always brought up in the discussion of children's books. Only since *perestroika* and the eventual collapse of the Communist state have many of these masters of the picture book been finally restored to their rightful place in the history of children's book illustration.

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 visitors of all ages. The Museum houses three galleries dedicated to rotating exhibitions of picture book art, a hands-on Art Studio, a Reading Library, an Auditorium, and a popular Café and Museum Shop.

From the Silver Age to Stalin: Russian Children's Book Illustration from the Sasha Lurye Collection will be on view from November 7, 2003 through January 18, 2004 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. For further information and directions, call 413-658-1100 or visit the Museum's website at www.picturebookart.org.

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