



Media Contact:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sandy Soderberg

Marketing Manager

(413) 658-1105 / Sandys@carlemuseum.org

**The Fifteen Hundred Pound Red Elephant Has a New Home!
Mo Willems' Premiere Monumental Sculpture to Be Installed at
The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art**

(Amherst, MA – September 14, 2011) The characters adored the world over — Knuffle Bunny, Elephant and Piggie, and The Pigeon — have a new comrade, and it's the biggest one yet. Their creator, author and artist Mo Willems, is unveiling a new character that will be installed at The Carle in Amherst on October 1 - a life-size, 1,500-pound, steel pachyderm named simply, *The Red Elephant*.

To commemorate the day, guests are invited to watch the sculpture's installation and join in special events. The festivities, free with Museum admission, include:

11:30 am – Sculpture Installation outside on the terrace

1:00 pm – Presentation and slide show about the sculpture with Mo
Willems and fabricator Sam Ostroff in the Auditorium

2:00 pm – Book Signing with Mo Willems

Willems, who lives in Western Massachusetts and makes frequent sold-out appearances at the museum, is excited about his new foray into large-scale sculpture. "I began my career making small wire sculptures which somehow led to a life as a children's book maker," says Mo, "So the opportunity of combining my two passions and placing a large sculpture at a picture book museum is too awesome to pass up."

The collaboration between Willems and metal-artist Ostroff began after Willems started learning metal fabrication at Ostroff's Salmon Studios. From there a friendship developed, Willems turned paper drawings into small models, which evolved into a scale prototype for *The Red Elephant*. Finally, the two men collaborated to create the monumental steel work of art. *The Red Elephant* measures 5' high, 14' long and 7' wide, and will be outside on the Museum's granite terrace overlooking the apple orchards.

"We are so grateful to Mo for this opportunity," says Alexandra Kennedy, The Carle's executive director. "While our guests love all of his characters, this elephant is going to be special because it will become part of the life and fabric of our museum every day. Children especially will feel like it is there just for them. This is our second major sculpture by a picture book artist – Leo Lionni's bronze *Imaginary Garden* is in our Great Hall – and we hope that is a sign of more to come."

About Mo Willems

#1 New York Times bestselling author and artist Mo Willems began his career as a writer and animator for PBS' *Sesame Street*, where he garnered 6 Emmy Awards for his writing. During his nine seasons at *Sesame Street*, Mo also served as a weekly commentator for BBC Radio and created two animated series, Nickelodeon's *The Off-Beats* and Cartoon Network's *Sheep in the Big City*. While

serving as head writer for Cartoon Network's #1 rated show, *Codename: Kids Next Door*, Mo began writing and drawing books for children. His debut effort, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* became a *New York Times* bestseller and was awarded a Caldecott Honor in 2004. The following year *Knuffle Bunny: a Cautionary Tale* was awarded a Caldecott Honor. The sequel, *Knuffle Bunny Too: a Case of Mistaken Identity* garnered Mo his third Caldecott Honor in 2008. In 2010, the Kennedy Center commissioned Willems to create *Knuffle Bunny: a Cautionary Musical* based on his work. The musical is currently touring the country.

In addition to picture books, Mo created the *Elephant and Piggie books*, a series of "Easy Readers," which were awarded the Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal in 2008 and 2009 and a Geisel Honor in 2011. For older audiences he has published an illustrated memoir of his year-long trip around the world in 1990-91 entitled *You Can Never Find a Rickshaw When it Monsoons*.

Mo's drawings, wire sculptures, and ceramics (done in collaboration with his father) have exhibited in numerous galleries and museums across the nation and his graphic story about his family experiences during 9/11 for DC comics resides in the Library of Congress' permanent collection.

About Salmon Studios

Located in a Florence, MA in a 19th century factory building, Salmon Studio's owner and artist, Sam Ostroff's work encompasses sculptural furniture, eye catching commercial signage, custom architectural elements and non-functional metal sculpture. Having been exposed to metal and machinery his whole life through the industrial setting of his father's machine shop, Ostroff says his sculptures are alive; alive but frozen in time. "This is one of the only pieces we've done that you can walk up and interact with," said Ostroff. Ostroff has been inspired by many great steel structures because of their immense size; the Eiffel Tower, Golden Gate Bridge and Chrysler Building - metal sculptures on the grandest scale. For more information visit www.salmonstudios.com

About the Museum

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.

IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE FOR REPRODUCTION For additional press information and/or images, please contact Sandy Soderberg, Marketing Manager (413) 658-1105 / sandys@carlemuseum.org

###