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**NEW EXHIBITION CELEBRATES PICTURE BOOK ART
CAREER OF FAMOUS NEW YORKER CARTOONIST**

Heart and Humor: The Picture Book Art of William Steig on view at The Eric Carle Museum
of Picture Book Art from February 8, 2004 – April 25, 2004

Amherst, Mass. (January 26, 2004) – The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art has announced the opening on February 8 of *Heart and Humor: The Picture Book Art of William Steig*. Curated by independent scholar Jane Bayard Curley, this first-ever retrospective exhibition features original art from Steig's key publications as well as select examples of preliminary sources, materials, and studies that offer insight into the conception and production of a Steig picture book. Steig's personal collaboration on the exhibition and his death this past October at the age of 95 have imbued the project with special meaning for its organizers and hopefully, for those who visit the exhibition. Nick Clark, the Museum's Founding Director, stated, "It is a great honor for us to be able to celebrate Bill Steig's life and work in this way."

Steig may be best known for his prolific contributions to *The New Yorker*. In 1924, at the age of seventeen, he sold his first cartoon to the famous magazine. Since then, *The New Yorker* has published nearly two thousand of his drawings, including over one hundred covers. At sixty-one, an age when most men dream of retirement, Steig embarked on a new career as a children's picture book author and illustrator. Here, Steig not only found magic and adventure, he created them, producing a body of work that sets him among the most distinguished picture book artists of the last fifty years. His awards include the Caldecott medal (*Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*), Newbery honors (*Abel's Island* and *Doctor De Soto*), Caldecott honors (*The Amazing Bone*), National Book Award honors (*Amos and Boris*, *Caleb and Kate*, *Dominic*), and a nomination for the Hans Christian Andersen Award for his lifetime contribution to children's literature. *Sbrek!*, the Dreamworks Pictures movie based on Steig's book of the same name, won an Oscar for best animated film in 2001.

William Steig was born in 1907 in New York City, the son of immigrants. Steig's father, mother and three brothers all wrote or painted. Steig remembered this creative seedbed as a place where "art was encouraged." As a result, he grew up loving "the physical act of writing . . . I used to keep a journal – not because I had anything to say but because I liked moving the pen."

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That inspired movement of pen across paper is William Steig's principal gift. His imagination flowed through his pen and onto the page. In an interview before his death, Steig's wife Jeanne said, "When Bill draws, he doesn't sit down with an idea. He sits down, his *hand* draws, and he looks and laughs and he sees what's happening."

Throughout their lives together Bill and Jeanne collaborated artistically. The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is delighted to present examples of Jeanne's own work in an accompanying exhibition ***Trashworks: The Art of Jeanne Steig***. Street finds and other discarded treasures provide inspiration and raw material for Jeanne Steig's whimsical creations. No button or rusty nail is too insignificant to escape her transformative vision. The result is a collection of original works that range from theatrical tableau to mysteriously totemic figures. Jeanne Steig is the author of three books of light verse and two books of prose: *Consider the Lemming*, *The Old Testament Made Easy*, *Alpha Beta Chowder*, *A Handful of Beans*, *A Gift from Zeus: Sixteen Favorite Myths*. All were illustrated by her husband. Her light verse has also been published in *The New Yorker* and in various literary magazines.

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.

Heart and Humor: The Picture Book Art of William Steig will be on view from February 8, 2004 through April 25, 2004 and ***Trashworks: The Art of Jeanne Steig*** will be on view from January 31, 2004 through April 4, 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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