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## **THE POLAR EXPRESS TO STOP IN AMHERST**



### **Eric Carle Museum's Winter Exhibition Celebrates Picture Book Art and Sculpture of *Polar Express* Creator Chris Van Allsburg**

Amherst, Mass. (November 1, 2004) – The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art has announced the opening on Sunday, November 20 of the exhibition **The Mysteries of Chris Van Allsburg**. This mid-career retrospective, on view at the Museum through March 13, 2005, will run in conjunction with the November 10 release of the Warner Brothers movie *The Polar Express*, based on Van Allsburg's book of the same name.

"No doubt many of our visitors will be coming to see the original art that inspired *The Polar Express* movie," states Museum Director Nick Clark, "I think it is safe to say that they will be pleasantly overwhelmed by the full range of Chris' creative genius, and will understand the impetus for the movie's unique style. The exhibition includes not only a selection of art from all 15 of Van Allsburg's books and three by other authors, but also examples of his equally intriguing and exquisitely refined sculpture."

Indeed, many are surprised to learn that this acknowledged picture book master trained first as a sculptor at the Rhode Island School of Design. His picture book career began one winter when the bitter cold of his sculpture studio led him to stay home and sketch. The result was his first book, *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* (1979) which was a recipient of Caldecott Honors.

"The rest is picture book history," states the exhibition's curator, Jane Bayard Curley, "Profoundly informed by the artist's appreciation for such things as German Romanticism, the American Arts & Crafts movement, and classic movies, the art continually challenges the line between reality and possibility. In Van Allsburg's universe, boats sail through clouds; a jungle stone transforms men into monkeys; and entire dramas are captured in a single, striking image."

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Events planned in conjunction with the exhibition include a Sunday afternoon film series in January and February featuring Van Allsburg-inspired movies—such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *Citizen Kane*, and *La Dolce Vita*—and a special February Vacation Week Van Allsburg-inspired sculpture project in the Museum’s Art Studio .

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 offers exhibitions and programming that encourage inquiry, foster an appreciation for the visual arts, and engage, delight, and inspire children and families.

The Museum—which 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—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 \$5 for adults, \$3 for children under 18, and \$12 for a family of six. For further information and directions, call 413-658-1100 or visit the Museum’s website at [www.picturebookart.org](http://www.picturebookart.org).

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