

Connecting with The Eric Carle Museum

Since 2002, The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, based in Amherst, Massachusetts, has worked to inspire a love of art and reading through picture books. Founded by Eric Carle and his wife, Barbara, it is “the only full-scale museum of its kind in the United States.” The museum has welcomed more than 550,000 visitors who have come to see the collection which “preserves, presents, and celebrates picture books and picture book illustrations from around the world.” The Carle, as it is called, also serves as a center for arts integration, education and literacy. Here, the museum’s chief curator, Nick Clark, shares more about their work and invites authors and illustrators who come to New England to get acquainted.

“Ever since museums began mounting special exhibitions, living artists have, understandably, wanted to be recognized with their own shows. Museums and museum curators have to proceed very judiciously. They have to exercise the highest standards of judgment (itself a highly subjective exercise) and they have to be very careful that their process is above reproach to avoid any semblance of conflict of interest. At The Eric Carle Museum, we focus on the historical, cultural, and artistic significance of children’s book illustration. In addition to exhibiting the titans of the 20th century, from Sendak and Steig to Lobel and Zemach, The Carle exhibits many living artists with long established reputations—Chris Van Allsburg and Alice Provensen to name two. These living legends are the pursued rather than the pursuer.

We do make occasional exceptions for younger artists to expand the dimensions of our exhibition program. We have, for example, exhibited the art from Tony di Terlizzi’s *The Spiderwick Chronicles* and from Kadir Nelson’s *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball*. In June, we will mount a retrospective of the work of Mo Willems. The Carle also gets numerous inquiries from artists or their agents or publishers inquiring about exhibition possibilities. We review these and look at them in light of our goals as well as the hard reality that the museum has a very limited number of exhibitions it can mount in a year and is often scheduled four years out.

So, what can the artist do who is published but still early in their career? In an effort to recognize and nurture emerging talent, The Carle now invites published artists and authors both established and new to present story times in our Reading Library followed by a book signing. Sometimes, artists will also visit our art studio to demonstrate or lead art programs. This win-win solution provides the artists and authors with a significant venue for their book and The Carle with a program our guests love. We encourage artists and authors who are vacationing or touring in New England to let us know – and we will do our best to schedule them.”

To find out more about The Carle, go to www.carlemuseum.org. 3:4/13