

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****HIGH MUSEUM OF ART TO PRESENT RETROSPECTIVE OF  
ACCLAIMED CHILDREN’S BOOK ARTIST ASHLEY BRYAN**

*Exhibition is third in a series organized in collaboration with The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art and presented in conjunction with a world premiere play based on the artist’s work by the Alliance Theatre*

**ATLANTA, Aug. 31, 2016** — The High Museum of Art will celebrate the decades-long career of children’s book author and artist Ashley Bryan with “Painter and Poet: The Wonderful World of Ashley Bryan,” on view April 1, 2017, through Jan. 21, 2018.

Bryan (American, born 1923) has published children’s books in a dizzying array of styles that reflect a wide variety of influences, from African folktales to jazz and poetry. The High will be the sole venue for the exhibition, which will introduce viewers to Bryan’s prolific production through more than 70 original artworks from 20 of his books.

Featured works will range from the dynamic ink drawings in “The Dancing Granny” (1977) to the colorful cut-paper collages of “Beautiful Blackbird” (2002), a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award Winner. Also on view will be a selection of paintings from Bryan’s powerful, award-winning title “Freedom Over Me” (Simon & Schuster, 2016), which received a Newbery Honor and Coretta Scott King Author Honor in 2017. In addition to surveying Bryan’s adaptations of poetry, folklore and spirituals, the exhibition will explore the artist’s fascinating biography and the important role that family heritage plays in his work.

Eight of Bryan’s puppets, which are inspired by African art and composed of objects scavenged from the small Maine island where he lives and works, will accompany his book illustrations in “Painter and Poet.” The exhibition will also feature a biographical video produced by the High with footage of Bryan at his island home and studio, providing audiences with an intimate look at the artist’s life.

“Bryan’s deeply moving works captivate audiences of all ages and demonstrate his ability to translate compelling and timeless stories through an impressive range of artistic media,” said Ginia Sweeney, the High’s co-managing curator of the exhibition. “We are delighted to highlight his important contributions to children’s literature and his personal story through this exhibition.”

Nick Clark, curator emeritus at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art and the founding director of the Ashley Bryan Center, said, “Ashley Bryan is truly a painter and a poet, equally agile with a brush as with his powerful words. Over the past nearly half-century, he has contributed significant titles to the picture-book canon, allowing generations of children to connect with important oral traditions from a variety of cultures.”

Key works on view in the exhibition will include:

- 10 paintings from “Freedom Over Me,” which gives life and personality to a group of enslaved people sold at auction in the 19th century through powerful art and poetry.
- Six ink drawings from “The Dancing Granny,” in which Bryan introduces a spider named Ananse, based on the African folktale character, who distracts Granny to raid her garden.
- Three cut-paper collages from “Beautiful Blackbird,” the award-winning adaptation of a Zambian tale that celebrates inner beauty and the importance of personal heritage.
- Two stylized tempera and gouache paintings from “Beat the Story-Drum, Pum Pum,” which presents playful adaptations of traditional African fables.
- A selection of Bryan’s impressive linocut prints from books including “Why the Leopard Has Spots” and “Walk Together Children: Black American Spirituals.”

In conjunction with the exhibition, the [Alliance Theatre](#) at The Woodruff Arts Center, of which the High is also an arts partner, will present the world premiere play with music “The Dancing Granny” in summer 2017. The Alliance will also present a new Theatre for the Very Young production based on Bryan’s book “Beautiful Blackbird” (fall 2017).

This collaboration is the third in a series presented by the High and the Alliance Theatre in partnership with The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art. The Ashley Bryan project follows the successful exhibition and theatre productions based on the work of children’s book authors and artists Eric Carle (2016) and Mo Willems (2015). The presentations are made possible through a grant to The Woodruff Arts Center from the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation to expand programming and increase access for family audiences.

“We are thrilled to welcome families back to the High for a third exhibition featuring a dynamic and accomplished picture-book artist, and we are especially excited to again partner with the Alliance Theatre as they bring Bryan’s vibrant work to life on stage,” said Virginia Shearer, the High’s Eleanor McDonald Storza director of education. “We are incredibly grateful for the collaboration of the Alliance and The Eric Carle Museum and the generous support of the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation. Together we have succeeded in delighting thousands of young children and creating an annual tradition for Atlanta’s families.”

“Painter and Poet” will be presented on the Lower Level of the High’s Wieland Pavilion and will feature a reading area for young visitors to discover Bryan’s stories.

### **About Ashley Bryan**

Born in 1923 in the Bronx, N.Y., Bryan first studied art in classes offered by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression. Triumphant over the widespread racial discrimination of the time, Bryan went on to study at the prestigious Cooper Union School of Art and Engineering, after being denied entry to other art schools because of his race. At the age of 19, Bryan was drafted into the U.S. Army to serve in World War II. After the war, he completed his degree at Cooper Union and later earned a degree in philosophy from Columbia University. From 1957 to 1959, he studied in Europe on a Fulbright Scholarship.

In 1960, Bryan returned to the United States, where he taught art at several schools and universities. His first illustrated book, a selection of poems by the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, was published in 1967, when Bryan was 44. Bryan has published more than 50 books to date.

Bryan retired as professor emeritus of Dartmouth College in the 1980s, at which time he moved to Maine's Cranberry Isles, where he lives and works today.

Bryan's awards include the Coretta Scott King–Virginia Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award, a Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal and the New York Public Library's Library Lions award. Libraries, schools, children's rooms and literary festivals are named for him throughout the United States and Africa.

### **Exhibition Organization and Support**

"Painter and Poet: The Wonderful World of Ashley Bryan" is organized by The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst, Mass.

Support for the High's presentation is provided by the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation and the Inaugural Grandparents Circle of Support: Spring and Tom Asher, Jane and Dameron Black, Lucinda W. Bunnen, Anne Cox Chambers, Ann and Tom Cousins, Shearon and Taylor Glover, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., Joy and Tony Greene, Ellen and Tom Harbin, Mary Ellen and John Imlay, Sarah and Jim Kennedy, Jane and Hicks Lanier, Rene and Jim Nalley, Margaret and Terry Stent, Margaretta Taylor, and an anonymous donor.

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The exhibition is co-curated by Nick Clark, curator emeritus for The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, and Virginia Shearer and Ginia Sweeney, High Museum of Art.

### **About the High Museum of Art**

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 15,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American art; a substantial collection of historical and contemporary decorative arts and design; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk and self-taught art, and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. Through its education department, the High offers programs and experiences that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit [high.org](http://high.org).

### **About The Woodruff Arts Center**

The Woodruff Arts Center is one of the largest arts centers in the world, home to the Tony Award–winning Alliance Theatre, the Grammy Award–winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the High Museum of Art, the leading art museum in the Southeast. Each year, these centers of artistic excellence play host to more than 1.2 million patrons at The Woodruff Arts Center’s midtown Atlanta location, one of the only arts centers in the United States to host both visual and performing arts on a single campus. The Woodruff Arts Center also offers remarkable educational programming through each of its arts partners. Through the combined efforts of its arts partners, The Woodruff Arts Center serves more than 200,000 students annually and is the largest arts educator in Georgia. [www.woodruffcenter.org](http://www.woodruffcenter.org)

### **About The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art**

The mission of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, in Amherst, Mass., is to inspire a love of art and reading through picture books. The only full-scale museum of its kind in the United States, The Carle collects, preserves, presents and celebrates picture books and picture-book illustrations from around the world. In addition to underscoring the cultural, historical and artistic significance of picture books and their art form, The Carle offers educational programs that provide a foundation for arts integration and literacy. For more information, visit [www.carlemuseum.org](http://www.carlemuseum.org).

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