

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**HIGH TO PRESENT ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHILDREN'S BOOK ARTIST
AND AUTHOR MO WILLEMS**

Retrospective exhibition on view in conjunction with a production of Willems' "Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical" presented by the Alliance Theatre

ATLANTA, March 9, 2015 — The High Museum of Art will present "Seriously Silly! The art & whimsy of Mo Willems," a retrospective of illustrations by the best-selling children's book artist and author, from May 23, 2015, through Jan. 10, 2016.

Willems has created more than 40 books for children and won numerous literary awards, including three Caldecott Honors. "Seriously Silly!" features more than 100 works by the artist—from preliminary drawings to completed illustrations—that chronicle the past 12 years of Willems' whimsical world, populated by his beloved characters Knuffle Bunny, Elephant and Piggie, The Pigeon, and many more.

Organized by The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art (Amherst, Mass.), the exhibition gives viewers a glimpse of Willems' creative process and reveals the comedic genius of his books, which culminate in crescendos of emotion highlighted by large and often jagged type and expressive lines.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Alliance Theatre at The Woodruff Arts Center, of which the High is also an arts partner, will present Willems' children's theatre production "Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical" (May 27 – June 21, 2015), directed by Rosemary Newcott, the Alliance's Sally G. Tomlinson artistic director of theatre for youth and families.

This collaboration marks the first time the High and the Alliance Theatre will present concurrent visual and performing art presentations of an artist's work. The project is 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. As part of the collaboration, the Alliance Theatre will also present a new Theatre for the Very Young production "Play the Play with Cat the Cat," based on the Willems' book series, during the fall of 2015. This production is appropriate for children as young as 18 months to early elementary school.

"Willems' books move us through their sharp wit and deep understanding and respect for the emotional life of children," said Virginia Shearer, the Eleanor McDonald Storza director of education at the High and managing curator for the exhibition. "His books effortlessly present the child's perspective, all while transcending the age of the reader in their ability to incite uncontrollable laughter. We are thrilled to share his original illustrations with our visitors—and to collaborate with the Alliance Theatre as they bring Willems' drawings to life on stage."

The High and the Alliance will celebrate the openings of the exhibition and musical during The Woodruff Arts Center's second annual Toddler Takeover (May 29–31, 2015). This one-of-a-kind

experience for children up to 5 years old will feature Stroller Tours and art-making at the High, performances of six original productions of the Alliance Theatre's Theatre for the Very Young, the return of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's Music for the Very Young, and an interactive play space hosted by Arts for Learning.

"Seriously Silly!" will be presented on the Lower Level of the High's Wieland Pavilion and will feature a reading area for young visitors to engage with Willems' stories in the Greene Family Learning Gallery.

Catalogue and Books

The exhibition is accompanied by a 40-page, full-color catalogue featuring Willems' illustrations. A selection of Willems' books and merchandise will also be available for purchase at the High Museum of Art Shop.

About Mo Willems

The New York Times best-selling author and illustrator began his career as a writer and animator for PBS's "Sesame Street," where he garnered six Emmy Awards for his writing. During his nine seasons at "Sesame Street," Willems 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 number one-rated show, "Codename: Kids Next Door," Willems began writing and drawing books for children. His debut effort, "Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!" became a New York Times best-seller 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" earned Willems his third Caldecott Honor in 2008. In addition to picture books, Willems created the "Elephant and Piggie" books, a series of beginning readers, which were awarded the Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal in 2008 and 2009 and Geisel Honors in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. Willems' drawings and sculptures have been 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's permanent collection. Willems wrote the script and lyrics for "Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical," commissioned by the Kennedy Center for its 2010 season. His monumental sculpture, "The Red Elephant," can be viewed in the courtyard of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art. Willems lives in Massachusetts with his family.

Exhibition Organization and Support

This exhibition is organized by The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Amherst, Massachusetts. Support for the organization of the exhibition has been generously provided by Disney Publishing Worldwide. Support in Atlanta is made possible by the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation and Inaugural Grandparents Circle of Support.

High Museum of Art

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 14,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk art and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. For more information, visit high.org.

The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is one of the largest arts centers in the world, home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Arts for Learning. Each year, these arts organizations play host to over 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. Through its work with educators and schools, The Woodruff Arts Center serves over 300,000 students annually and is the largest arts educator in Georgia.

About The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art

The mission for The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, a nonprofit organization 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. Eric and Barbara Carle founded the Museum in November 2002. Eric Carle is the renowned author and illustrator of more than 70 books, including the 1969 classic "The Very Hungry Caterpillar." Since opening, the 40,000-square foot facility has served more than half a million visitors, including 30,000 schoolchildren. For more information, visit www.carlemuseum.org.

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