

The Art and Storytelling of **Claire A. Nivola**

A TRAVELING EXHIBITION

Organized by

The ERIC CARLE MUSEUM OF PICTURE BOOK ART

Star Child is a meditation on the wonder of birth and the mystery of death as informed by the birth of Nivola's son and the passing of her father. In the story, a young star gets the opportunity to experience life on Earth, but only if it is willing to assume the human life cycle of a child.



Star Child, 2014

Watercolor and gouache on paper

About the Exhibition

This exhibition showcases the career of artist-author Claire A. Nivola. Nivola's subjects range from the personal—stories of her family—to chronicles of such prominent women as poet Emily Dickinson, author Emma Lazarus, oceanographer Sylvia Earle, and Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai. As an artist, Nivola combines exquisite color, complex patterning, and attention to detail, all on an intimate scale. She builds her landscapes with delicate, dappled brushstrokes and fills her interior scenes—often viewed through doorways and windows—with endless details to keep readers engaged. In the guise of paintings-within-paintings, Nivola also includes art historical references to Piero della Francesca, Henri Matisse, and others in her illustrations.

About Claire A. Nivola

The daughter of artists, Claire Nivola drew incessantly as a child and developed exceptional skill without the academic regimen of art school. She found her calling as a creator of children's books. Her narratives focus primarily on biography, ranging from poignant stories of family to the chronicles of illustrious individuals, particularly the achievements of women. Nivola has illustrated 19 books, most recently *The House in the Country*.



About the Eric Carle Museum

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is the international champion for picture books. We collect, preserve, and exhibit original illustrations, encourage guests of all ages to read and create art, and foster an ever-growing audience passionate about children's literature.

The late Eric and Barbara Carle co-founded the Museum in November 2002. Since opening, the 43,000-square foot facility has welcomed nearly one million visitors. The Carle houses 9,000 permanent collection illustrations. It has three art galleries, an art studio, a theater, picture book and scholarly libraries, and educational programs for families, scholars, educators, and school children. Bobbie's Meadow is an outdoor space that combines art and nature. Educational offerings include professional training for educators around the country and master's degree programs in children's literature with Simmons University. The Museum offers digital resources, including art activities, book recommendations, collections, exhibition videos, and workshops for online visitors. Learn more at www.carlemuseum.org

Featured Artworks



Elisabeth, 1997
Watercolor and gouache on paper

In her book *Elisabeth*, Nivola chronicles her mother Ruth's escape from Nazi Germany, leaving everything behind, including her beloved doll named Elisabeth. Two decades later, Ruth stumbles on a familiar "vintage" doll in a New York antique store and is shocked to discover teeth marks on the right forearm exactly where her dog Fifi had bitten Elisabeth years ago!

A touching intergenerational account of the Jewish Friday *Shabbat* meal, this story chronicles the preparations undertaken by a grandmother and her granddaughter. *The Friday Nights of Nana* remains one of Nivola's favorites for its warm narrative and rich domestic array of vintage furniture and art.

The Friday Nights of Nana by Amy Hest, 2001
Watercolor and gouache on paper



Featured Artworks

The Mouse of Amherst is a fanciful account of the friendship between a mouse named Emmaline and the poet Emily Dickinson. Nivola illustrates the book in pencil, capturing just the right effects of the diminutive heroine. The intimate narrative also required a more modestly sized book, measuring a mere 7 x 5."

The Mouse of Amherst by Elizabeth Spires, 1999
Watercolor and gouache on paper



Life in the Ocean: The Story of Oceanographer Sylvia Earle, 2012

Nivola happened upon Sylvia Earle on a radio program and gravitated to her deep concern for the environment. From her youth, Earle marveled at the wonders of the natural world and emerged as the first professional female oceanographer, overcoming the predictable obstacles placed in a woman's path. In providing glorious depictions of an unsullied ocean, Nivola calls for greater commitment to conservation issues.

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