



Photographers Make Picture Books

Organized by

**THE ERIC CARLE
MUSEUM OF
PICTURE BOOK ART**
(Amherst, MA)

Curated by Leonard S. Marcus

Nina Crews, Illustration for *The Neighborhood Mother Goose* (Greenwillow Books).
Courtesy of the artist. © 2004 Nina Crews.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Photographs are everywhere: on websites and streaming media, in print ads and magazines, and, of course, on our phones. For more than a century, they have also served as a multifaceted illustration medium for children's picture books, bringing a uniquely persuasive visual dimension not only works of nonfiction but also—more surprisingly—to stories rooted in fantasy, from Cinderella to Alice in Wonderland.

CLICK! Photographers Make Picture Books is a deep dive into the extraordinary—yet largely unexplored—tradition of photographic children's book illustration. Featuring key examples from the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia, this groundbreaking exhibition showcases the work of a broad spectrum of photographers who have

taken up their cameras not only to document aspects of the real world for young readers but also to spark imaginative thinking, introduce early learning concepts, and blur the line between reality and fantasy in all sorts of provocative ways. Nearly one hundred compelling images and a selection of rare first editions tell the sweeping story of how photography continues to expand the visual and narrative horizons of the picture book as an art form.



Featured Artists

While skeptics have sometimes questioned whether photographs, as images plucked from the real world, possess the same power to nourish children's imaginations as drawn or painted illustration art, photographers from Edward Steichen to William Wegman have time and again proven them wrong.

CLICK! features a representative selection of more than 20 rare children's books from the 1890s onward and 97 framed photographic prints by an international roster of notable photographers and photo-based picture book artists. From George Ancona's culturally specific documentary photo essays and Nina Crews's pioneering digital collage compositions to Saxton Freymann's beguiling food-based caricatures and street photographer Tana Hoban's iconic concept books, these artists demonstrate photography's remarkable versatility.

Other highlights include photographs from:

- noted Swiss photo Marcel Imsand's atmospheric interpretation of Hans Christian Andersen's tale *The Fir Tree*
- Susan Kuklin's thrilling stop-action exploration of modern dance
- a surreal photo-dream-fantasy created by celebrated Brazilian artist Roger Mello
- Cuban-American photographer Abelardo Morell's ingenious tabletop re-imagining of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
- Ken Robbins's painterly encounter with the natural wonders to be found at a Long Island pumpkin farm
- a moving, child-centered photo essay by Shelley Rotner about the meanings of love
- the poetry in motion of Charles R. Smith Jr.'s kinetic sports photography
- outsize Polaroid prints from William Wegman's sublimely deadpan all-Weimaraner retelling of *Cinderella*
- Walter Wick's intricately designed and executed puzzle-based visual wizardry
- Mo Willems's mixed-media slyly knowing illustrations for his classic *Knuffle Bunny* series
- world-renowned mid-century photographer Ylla—Camilla Koffler's uncannily intimate animal portraits
- Anthropological slice-of-life documentary images from Mongolia and Italy by China's Peng Yi and globe-trotting American Peter Buckley

Curated by the historian and scholar Leonard Marcus, CLICK! *Photographers Make Picture Books* places this vibrant, under-explored strand of children's book art into eye-opening sharp focus.



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ABOUT THE MUSEUM

Founded in 2002, The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is the international champion of picture book art. Situated on 7.5 acres in Amherst, Massachusetts, The Carle cares for more than 20,000 works of art by than 320 picture book artists, including Eric Carle (creator of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*), and illuminates its collection through exhibitions, education, programming, and art-making, making it a critical resource for picture book artists and authors, and art-loving communities locally, nationally, and abroad. The Carle's mission is to elevate picture book art and inspire a love of art, art creation, and reading. Since opening its doors more than 20 years ago, The Carle has welcomed more than one million visitors—plus more than four million additional museumgoers who have enjoyed its touring exhibitions around the world.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Leonard S. Marcus is one of the world's leading writers about children's books and the people who create them. He is the author or editor of more than 25 critically acclaimed books including *Margaret Wise Brown: Awakened by the Moon*; *Dear Genius: The Letters of Ursula Nordstrom*; *Maurice Sendak: A Celebration of the Artist and His Life*; and *Pictured Worlds*. He is a frequent contributor to the New York Times and commentator on radio and television. A founding trustee of the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, he has curated over 25 major exhibitions. He lives in Brooklyn, New York and lectures about his pathfinding work across the world.



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CLICK! STRUCTURE AND KEY CONTENT

The exhibition is organized into three thematic sections:

1. Real Worlds

Picture books have long showcased documentary photographers who introduce young readers to the subjects they find most compelling. Some artists frame their narratives from a child's-eye perspective; others follow their own curiosity, inviting young viewers along for the journey.

2. Concept Books: The Alphabet and Other Good Ideas

Concept books use photographs as gateways to discovery. These photographs build on the legacy of progressive educators like Maria Montessori, who understood that young children learn best through play. Whether immersive, surprising, or delightfully puzzling, the images invite the youngest readers to engage in visual exploration. The photographs in this section were designed to introduce children to foundational ideas such as letters, numbers, and opposites.

3. Photo Theater

From the earliest days of photography, artists have experimented with ways to disrupt the medium's inherent realism—

through double exposures, staged tableaux, and theatrical scenes. Early photographically illustrated children's books delighted readers by merging the real with the fantastical, creating images that seemed to dissolve the boundaries between photography and imagination.

A selection of “process” materials demonstrates how artists create these images, context that feels newly urgent in an age when AI-generated imagery demands that viewers of all ages learn to look twice.

Interactive and immersive elements:

- Family-friendly labels accompany the exhibition, placed lower for younger visitors
- The Carle's education team will consult with participating venue to develop interactive elements.

Highlights:

- 97 photographs
- Graphic design elements
- Multilingual text in Spanish



Photographers Make Picture Books

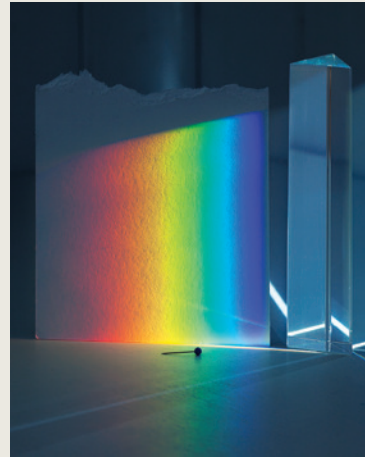
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FEATURED ART AND BOOKS

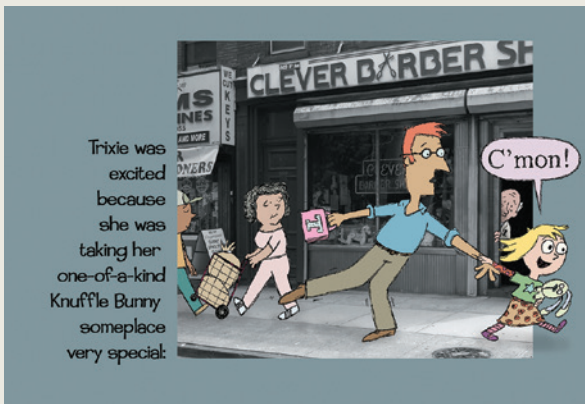
Nina Crews,
Illustration for
*The Neighborhood
Mother Goose*
(Greenwillow
Books). Courtesy
of the artist.
© 2004
Nina Crews.



Walter Wick,
Illustration for *A Ray
of Light: A Book of
Science and Wonder*
(Scholastic). Courtesy
of the artist.
© 2019 Walter Wick.



Walter Wick,
Illustration for *I Spy:
A Book of Picture
Riddles with riddles*
by Jean Marzollo
(Scholastic). Courtesy
of the artist.
© 1992 Walter Wick.



Mo Willems,
Illustration for *Knuffle
Bunny Too, A Case
of Mistaken Identity
(Hyperion)*. Collection
of Mo and Cher-
Willems. © 2007 Mo
Willems.



Roger Mello,
Illustration for
Contradança
(Companhia das
Letrinhas). Collection
of Roger Mello.
© 2011 Roger Mello.

FEATURED ART AND BOOKS

Saxton Freymann, Illustration for *How Are You Peeling?* by Saxton Freymann in association with Joost Elffers (Scholastic). Courtesy of the artist. © 1999 Play With Your Food, LLC.



Peter Buckley, Illustration for *Cesare of Italy: An Around the World Today Book*, 1954. Peter Buckley Papers and Photography Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin. © Estate of Peter Buckley.



Peng Yi, Illustration for *Children of the Tsaatan Reindeer Herders* / 驯鹿人的孩子 / xùn lù rén de hái zi (Jieli Publishing House). Collection of Peng Yi. © 2018 Peng Yi.



Ylla, Illustration for *The Duck* by Margaret Wise Brown, 1953. Courtesy of the Estate of Camilla 'Ylla' Koffler. © Pryor Dodge.



William Wegman, Illustration for *Cinderella* (Hyperion). Courtesy of the artist. © 1993 William Wegman.



Shelley Rotner, Illustration for *Love Is a Big Feeling* (Holiday House) Courtesy of the artist. © 2025 Shelley Rotner.

Tana Hoban, Illustration for *Exactly the Opposite* (Greenwillow). Collection of The University of Southern Mississippi, Special Collections, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection. © 1990 Tana Hoban.

INSTALLATION IMAGES



AUDIENCE AND INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS

Visitors to CLICK! will gain a deeper appreciation for photography's role in picture books and its power to shape how children see and understand the world. By exploring documentary, conceptual, and fantastical photographic art, audiences of all ages will sharpen their visual literacy skills, learning to look closely, question what they see, and recognize how images are constructed, especially in an era

of AI-altered visuals. The exhibition also introduces viewers to diverse global artists and cultural perspectives, enriching their understanding of storytelling across borders. Ultimately, **CLICK!** invites visitors to rediscover the joy and curiosity of looking, encouraging them to celebrate photography as both a creative art form and a meaningful narrative tool.





EXHIBITION CONTENTS

The exhibition comprises 97 photographs and 20 books from 1890 onward. All artwork is professionally framed and includes hanging hardware and security plates for installation. Exhibition text in English and Spanish is provided as a Word document; it is the borrower's responsibility to print labels and exhibition graphics. Gallery cases are not included, though object mounts can be sent on request.

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Shipping and Insurance: All artwork must travel crated via a fine arts shipper approved by The Carle. A Carle courier may be required to oversee unpacking, condition checks, installation, and lighting. It is the borrowing institutions' responsibility to cover all transportation and insurance costs (insurance values will be provided). A certificate of insurance is required.

Minimum space requirement: A gallery of approximately 1500 square ft (to be determined in consultation) is suggested.

Gallery Requirements: Borrowing institutions must send an AAM Standard Facility Report and meet the following requirements: ability to control and maintain a stable gallery environment (temperature of 70 degrees F +/- 2, relative humidity of 50% +/- 5%); ability to control and maintain light levels at five-to-seven-foot candles; and 24-hour security monitoring. Ideal gallery size is 1,000 square feet, or approximately 100 linear feet.

Media: The Carle will provide 10-12 high resolution images with cleared permissions to use for publicity and exhibition graphics.

Dates: The exhibition is on view at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art through July 2026 and is available to travel beginning September 2026.

Participation Fee: \$50,000 for three-month venue. Crating, shipping, insurance, curatorial travel and courier expenses are separate from the Participation Fee.

Contact: Jennifer Schantz,
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