

**FIRST CAREER-SPANNING EXHIBITION FOR ED EMBERLEY,
ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S FOREMOST PICTURE BOOK ARTISTS,
OPENS NOVEMBER 16 AT THE WORCESTER ART MUSEUM**

Kahbahbloom: The Art and Storytelling of Ed Emberley Draws on Thousands of Never-Before-Exhibited Original Works To Showcase the Artist's Skill, Styles, and Teaching Methods

Worcester, MA—October 15, 2016—Opening this fall at the Worcester Art Museum is the first comprehensive retrospective for artist Ed Emberley, among the most prolific and respected illustrators of children's literature of the last 60 years. Among his most notable works are the Caldecott Honored *One Wide River To Cross* (1965), the Caldecott Medal-winning *Drummer Hoff* (1967), and the bestselling *Go Away, Big Green Monster* (1992). He also created the teaching book *Ed Emberley's Drawing Book of Animals* (1970), which launched a series and remains one of the bestselling books of its kind. [***KAHBAHBLOOM: The Art and Storytelling of Ed Emberley***](#) draws on the Massachusetts-based artist's personal archive of original hand-drawn sketches, woodblock prints, final proofs, and first edition books to survey Emberley's career and examine his influence on generations of readers and nascent artists. The exhibition opens November 16, 2016, and will run through April 9, 2017, and is curated by artist, writer, and historian Caleb Neelon, in partnership with the Museum's Audience Engagement Division.

Reflecting Emberley's decades of work, *KAHBAHBLOOM* will be an interactive exhibition for intergenerational audiences—parents and grandparents who may have enjoyed his books when they were kids, and a current generation of young readers and artists who continue to learn from him. *KAHBAHBLOOM* will be organized into sections that represent the primary media and methods of Emberley's work as a picture-book artist, including over 100 works of art from Emberley's own archive, and the largest collection of Ed Emberley's 100+ books ever assembled for display.

The exhibition explores different themes and features a number of highly participatory elements:

- Emberley's *Drawing Books* series were his most influential and bestselling, with multiple variations but all based on a simple "alphabet" of shapes and marks. The exhibition will explore the artist's original idea and the subsequent evolution of the series, including original mock-up pages he created for his editors. Among these are ***Thumbprint Drawing Book* mockups with Emberley's own thumbprints.**
- To carry forward Emberley's mission to help new artists learn to draw, the exhibition includes a drawing desk, where participants of all ages can try their hand at his techniques. Visitors can **make their own postcards and mail them right from the gallery.**
- It was important to Emberley's development of a book that the final, mass-produced item retain the look of his original print. Thus, his use of printmaking tools, such as woodblocks, focused on achieving a single, perfect print that could be reproduced with the best impact. Included here are a number of the artist's original woodblocks and their corresponding prints, **such as his famous print of Paul Bunyan, which stands 90" x 30" tall.**
- Another section focuses on Emberley's story books, exploring the artist's lyrical and imaginative hand-drawn works, **including both the fold-out mockups shared with publishers and finished products.** Also included are a range of other sketches that Emberley experimented with but that never made it into

print. The section will provide insight into his techniques as an artist and the process of developing illustrations to accompany a story.

- To help visitors understand Emberley's process, an **interactive light table** will provide a variety of shapes and colors that can be used to experiment with different aspects of design and color mixing.
- To celebrate the books themselves, the exhibition will include **an extensive reading room, featuring Emberley's books, anchored by a giant replica of Paul Bunyan's Bunk House**, inspired by Emberley's *The Story of Paul Bunyan*.

"It only took two of Ed Emberley's Drawing Books to change me forever and set me on a path as an artist," said guest curator Caleb Neelon. "He is so restlessly creative that he worked in radically different ways, changing styles and media from book to book, and that's quite unusual. *Kahbahbloom* allows viewers to experience all of Ed's diverse output and artistic energy, going beyond the books and into his entire creative process."

KAHBAHBLOOM: The Art and Storytelling of Ed Emberley is supported in part by The Donald and Mary Melville Contemporary Art Program Fund and The John M. Nelson Fund. Sponsorship support is provided by Cole Contracting, Inc. and Imperial Distributors, Inc. Media Partner is Artscope Magazine.

The following events and programs will be held in conjunction with the exhibition:

- **Opening Reception: Thursday, November 17, 5-8pm.** The public is invited to meet the artist and view the exhibition at a special opening reception. The event includes live music, light refreshments, and a cash bar. Free with Museum admission. Free for all college students.
- **Ed Emberley Family Weekend: Saturday, November 19, 10am to 5pm, and Sunday, November 20, 11 am to 5pm.** This family-focused weekend includes art making, Art Cart activities, tours, and more. Free with Museum admission.
- **Helmutt's Drop-in Studio: Beginning November 16: Wednesdays – Fridays, 11am to 12pm and 1 to 3pm, Sundays, 2 to 5pm.** Visitors of all ages are invited to try out some of the techniques Ed Emberley uses to create his colorful picture books. Free with Museum admission.

For high resolution press images for *KAHBAHBLOOM*, visit worcesterart.org/exhibitions/ed-emberley/press/

About Ed Emberley

Emberley's career as an artist for children began in 1961 with *The Wing on a Flea: A Book About Shapes*, which was on the list of the top 10 *New York Times* illustrated books of the year, and was an American Library Association (ALA) Notable Book. He was and remains unusual for a children's book illustrator, with a style and approach that varied radically from book to book. As a result, some of his books have become out-of-print cult classics, such as *Suppose You Met a Witch* (1973) and *The Wizard of Op* (1975), respected more now than they were at the time they were first published.

In 1970, Emberley published his first teaching book in what would become a bestselling series, *Ed Emberley's*

Drawing Book of Animals. Focused on teaching children and young adults an ‘alphabet’ of simple shapes and marks, the books show step-by-step ways to draw faces, dragons, boats, devils, outer-space scenes, and more. These books—including *Ed Emberley’s Thumbprint Drawing Book* (1977), *Ed Emberley’s Big Green Drawing Book* (1979), and many more—have had an enduring impact on a generation of professional artists and illustrators working today.

Edward R. Emberley was born in Malden, Massachusetts, in 1931. He received a BFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in painting and illustration. In 1955, he married Barbara Collins, who became his partner in life and work, along with their two children, Michael and Rebecca, who continue in the family business of books for children. Ed and Barbara have lived in the same 300-year-old house in Ipswich for more than fifty years.

“The art of the picture book may just be the most important art form there is, because it is the picture book that introduces most of us to art when we are children,” said Adam Rozan, director of audience engagement at the Museum. “Ed Emberley’s art engages on multiple levels. His use of line and color, and his evolving styles, demonstrate that illustrators are as much a part of art history and culture as photographers, painters, and sculptors. At the same time, by creating an exhibition that is as inviting as a ‘book nook’ at school or in a library, Emberley’s work inspires and cultivates the next generation of art lovers, artists, and museum visitors.”

KAHBAHBLOOM: The Art and Storytelling of Ed Emberley is guest curated by artist, writer and historian Caleb Neelon and is co-curated by the Worcester Art Museum’s Audience Engagement Division, including: Adam Rozan, Director of Audience Engagement; Marcia Lagerwey, Curator of Education; and Katrina Stacy, Associate Curator of Education. Neelon—an international public artist — has authored or collaborated on more than twenty books on urban history and art, including the landmark *The History of American Graffiti*, co-authored with Roger Gastman (HarperCollins, 2011), and *ED EMBERLEY*, a retrospective he co-authored with Todd Oldham (AMMO Books, 2014).

About the Worcester Art Museum

Founded in 1896, the Worcester Art Museum’s encyclopedic 37,500-piece collection covers 51 centuries of art. Highlights include the Medieval Chapter House, Renaissance Court, and Worcester Hunt Mosaic, as well as the recently integrated John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection of arms and armor. The Museum is internationally known for its collection of European and American art. It was the first in America to acquire paintings by Monet and Gauguin and one of the first to collect photography. As the first U.S. museum to focus on collaborating with local schools, it has been at the forefront of engaging audiences and giving them a meaningful and personal experience.

The Worcester Art Museum, located at 55 Salisbury Street in Worcester, MA, is open Wednesday through Friday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and every third Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission is \$14 for adults, \$6 for children 4-17, \$12 for seniors 65+, and \$12 for college students with ID. Members and children under four are free. Parking is free. For more information, visit worcesterart.org.

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