

Media Contact:

Nora Maroulis
Director of Development & Marketing
(413) 658-1111 / nora@picturebookart.org

**NEW EXHIBITION FEATURES WORK OF MITSUMASA ANNO,
EMINENT JAPANESE PICTURE BOOK ARTIST**

***The Art of Mitsumasa Anno: Bridging Cultures* will be on view at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art from April 15 – June 29, 2003**

Amherst, Mass. (April 8, 2003) – The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art announced today that the third of its inaugural year exhibitions will open on April 14, 2003. *The Art of Mitsumasa Anno: Bridging Cultures* will constitute the first retrospective of this eminent Japanese artist in America. Anno, the winner of the Hans Christian Andersen Medal and numerous other national and international awards, is best known in this country for *Anno's Alphabet*, *Anno's Counting Games*, and *Anno's U.S.A.* Comprising nearly seventy works from his most beloved children's books, as well as art for older audiences from *The Unique World of Mitsumasa Anno* and *The Tale of the Heike*--a reinterpretation of one of Japan's most famous works of classical literature--the exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalog with an essay by Anno's American editor, Ann Beneduce.

Initially an elementary school teacher in Tokyo, Anno left this profession to concentrate on his own art and book designs. But he never lost sight of the importance of helping shape a child's vision, noting, "All beautiful things encourage a child's sense of wonder . . . and everything that encourages a child's sense of wonder is beautiful." Anno's art draws heavily on both Asian and Western aesthetic principles. Early on, he was particularly influenced by the illusionist prints of the Dutch artist, M. C. Escher. This admiration is manifest in examples from *The Upside Downers* (1969), and visitors will have the opportunity to compare them to Escher's own works.

Anno's Alphabet appeared in America in 1974 and enchanted readers with the precise, delicate renderings in watercolor and ink of letters seemingly crafted out of solid oak blocks. These *trompe l'oeil* letters were paired with slightly surreal paintings of a related object such as an anvil with "A." The book was described as, "an adventure in imagination which encourages the reader to use his own eyes and mind joyfully and creatively." (continued)

This statement applies to all of Anno's books and no more so than to *Anno's U.S.A.* which was based on the artist's travels throughout the United States in 1983. This visually rich work is a delightfully unconventional tale of our country's history. Told in reverse—from West to East and from the 20th-century to the 17th—the book reveals a subconscious influence of Anno's Japanese training; in order to follow the usual chronology in this wordless book, one would need to read it from back to front.

In homage to Anno's Japanese heritage, the exhibition contains ten of the eighty illustrations for *The Tale of the Heike*—the story of the epic conflict that arose in Japan at the end of the 12th century between the two great warrior clans: the Genji (or Minamoto) and the Heike (or Taira). These breathtaking paintings are executed in watercolor on silk, leaving no margin for hesitation or correction. Thus, the deftness of this remarkable artist shines through—whatever the medium and whatever the subject.

The exhibition is made possible in part through the generosity of The Anno Art Museum, the Asahi Shimbun, ANA, and Mr. Motoo Ito and the Book Globe Company.

The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is a new museum dedicated to exploring the role of visual art in children's literature from around the world. Founded in part by Eric Carle, the renowned author and illustrator of more than 70 books printed in 30 languages, including the 1969 classic *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, the Museum strives to offer exhibitions and programming that encourage inquiry, foster an appreciation for the visual arts and engage, delight and inspire children and families.

The Art of Mitsumasa Anno: Bridging Cultures will be on view from April 15, 2003 through June 29, 2003 at The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, 125 West Bay Road, Amherst, MA. Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday 12 noon to 4 p.m. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children under 18, and \$10 for a family of six. For further information and directions, call 413-658-1100 or visit the Museum's website at www.picturebookart.org.

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