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On the Trail of Peter Rabbit

Eric Carle Museum to exhibit original works of Beatrix Potter, creator of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, one of the most beloved children's stories of all time.

Amherst, Mass. (August 10, 2005) – The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art has announced the opening of the exhibition **Beatrix Potter in America**. On view at the Museum August 16 through December 4, 2005, this exhibit includes original art by Beatrix Potter from private American collections as well as the Cotsen Children's Library (Princeton University) and the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Beatrix Potter (1866 - 1943) led a typically sheltered upper-class childhood in Victorian England. She and her younger brother Bertram kept a menagerie of animals which they drew and studied. Potter excelled at drawing from nature and attempted to publish her scientific drawings with little success. Some years later, after being rejected by several publishers, *Peter Rabbit*, her first book, was published in 1902 and was an overnight success. Potter went on to write and illustrate 23 other books. All of her books were published in a small format, easy for a child to hold and read. She dedicated her later years to preserving the ecology and natural beauty of the Lake District, farming sheep, collecting antiques, and preserving the countryside she has become so firmly associated with through her books.

The exhibit will feature preliminary drawings and studies for Potter's book illustrations from 1902 to 1930, including *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggly-Winkle*, *The Pie and the Patty-Pan*, *The Roby-Poly Pudding*, and *The Tailor of Gloucester*; natural history paintings from the 1880s and 1890s—including studies for spiders, bats, and fungi; spectacular "animal fantasies" created before her first book (*Peter Rabbit*, 1902); and illustrated letters, sketches, family photos, first editions, and original zinc blocks for the privately printed edition of *Peter Rabbit*.

Events planned in conjunction with the exhibition include *The World of Beatrix Potter*, a lecture with guest curator Lolly Robinson on October 8; *Creature Couture: Animals and*

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Their Clothes in Picture Book Art, a workshop and presentation by author/illustrator Jane Dyer on September 24; and Beatrix Potter-inspired art activities in the Museum's Art Studio - *Drawing from Nature*, Sept 17 - Oct 16, and *Make it Big, Make it Small: Experimenting with Scale*, Oct 18 - Nov 13, as well as other exhibition-related classes and workshops.

*This exhibition has been made possible in part by generous support from
F. Warne & Co. and The Beatrix Potter Society.*

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 Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is the first full-scale museum in America devoted to national and international picture book art, conceived and built with the aim of celebrating the art that we are first exposed to as children. Through the exploration of images that are familiar and beloved, it is the Museum's goal to foster connections between visual and verbal literacy and to provide visitors of all ages and backgrounds with the confidence to appreciate and enjoy art of every kind.

The Museum—which houses three galleries dedicated to rotating exhibitions of picture book art, a hands-on Art Studio, a Reading Library, an Auditorium, a popular Café, and a Museum Shop—is located at 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 \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under 18, and \$20 for a family of four. For further information and directions, call 413-658-1100 or visit the Museum's website at www.picturebookart.org.

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