

## GREENVILLE COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

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# News Release



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## Shrek, Gorky & Other Amazing Stories

Parents and children can enjoy art and storytelling together as the Greenville County Museum of Art presents *William Steig: The Man Who Never Grew Up*, an exhibition of children's book illustration, on view through January 3, 2010.

Born in Brooklyn, Steig (1907–2003) was a celebrated cartoonist who published some 1600 cartoons and 120 covers for *The New Yorker* before he tried his hand at children's picture books. Born into a creative family, he was the son of a house painter who dabbled in fine art and encouraged his children to pursue careers in art and music rather than labor or business. Steig took his first lessons in drawing from a brother and began cartooning for his high school newspaper. He spent two years at City College of New York, three years at the National Academy of Design, and five days at the Yale School of Fine Arts before dropping out. When his father went broke during the Depression, twenty-two-year-old William began selling his art to support the family. In those early days as a freelancer, he also earned some money in advertising, but it was a field he disliked. He is also known for carved wooden sculptures that are owned by several museums in New England.

Steig began his career as children's author and illustrator at sixty, when a colleague asked him for a submission to the newly organized Windmill Books imprint at Harper & Row. Just three years later, he won

his first Caldecott Medal for *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, the tale of a donkey who found a pebble that grants wishes. A charming story, the book became controversial in some parts of the country because it satirically depicted police officers as pigs.

Steig was also a masterful storyteller. His cast of characters is filled with mice who help elephants, frogs who fly, and a farmer who pulls his mule in a wagon when the animal hurts an ankle. In 1990, he created the great green ogre named Shrek, who teamed with a donkey (named Donkey) to rescue the princess Fiona. It is a story that became part of pop culture when DreamWorks brought the characters to the screen, featuring the voices of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, and Cameron Diaz.

Organized by the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, *The Man Who Never Grew Up* features illustrations, sketches, watercolors, and hand-lettered texts. It's an opportunity to examine the artistry of the author/illustrator but also to follow his process of creation.

Thousands of school children from the Upstate will enjoy tours of the exhibition in the coming weeks, led by volunteer docents who will read to them and provide gallery activities that help the children assimilate Steig's work as both entertainment and education. Families can run their own tours using activity sheets found in the galleries. Free tours for groups of ten or more are available by appointment. For information about these tours, call Museum Educator Terri Steck at 864/271-7570, ext. 17, or send an email to [tsteck@greenvillemuseum.org](mailto:tsteck@greenvillemuseum.org).

The Museum's annual Holiday Party for Children will also feature ties to the exhibition of William Steig's work. The event, which takes place on Saturday, December 12, from 2:00–4:00, is designed for children aged four through 10. It is free and open to the public.

The Greenville County Museum of Art is located at 420 College Street, on Heritage Green in downtown Greenville, South Carolina. The Museum opens Tuesday through Saturday at 11:00 and on Sunday at 1:00. Galleries close at 5:00 except on Thursdays, when they remain open until 8:00.