



NEWS RELEASE

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Zen Tales: The Art of Jon J Muth

January 14 through April 16 at Joslyn Art Museum; Free Admission!

Come for KickstART Saturday on February 11!

(Omaha, NE) — Jon Muth grew up visiting art museums; studied painting, drawing, and printmaking; and later visited Japan to practice stone sculpture and brush calligraphy. He has had a lifelong interest in Asian studies, including tai chi chuan; sumi ink drawing; and chado, "the way of the tea." Muth's career in children's books grew out of a desire to explore what he was feeling as a new father. He had been successfully working in comics, which he described as a natural forum for expressions of angst, until the births of his children caused a "seismic shift that made it important to say other

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Zen Tales: The Art of Jon J Muth at Joslyn Art Museum

things about the world." The first book he authored and exquisitely illustrated, *The Three Questions*, based on Leo Tolstoy's story of timeless and universal truths, was called "quietly life-changing" by *The New York Times Book Review*. His version of *Stone Soup*, an inspiring folk tale about the strength of community, received critical acclaim, including a National Parenting Book Award.

And then there is the *Zen* series, beginning with *Zen Shorts*, named a Caldecott Honor book, with its quiet meditations that challenge readers to reexamine their habits, desires, and fears. Followed by *Zen Ties*, *Zen Ghosts*, and *Zen Socks*, all feature the character Stillwater, a spiritual teacher who happens to be a giant Panda. The stories also introduce Koo, Stillwater's haiku-speaking nephew, who is featured in a collection of poems called *Hi, Koo!*. Muth partnered with Caroline Kennedy to illustrate the compilations *Family of Poems* and *Poems to Learn by Heart*, and he illustrated Bob Dylan's beloved lyric, *Blowin' in the Wind*.

Nearly seventy watercolor, ink, and pastel illustrations from these and nine other children's books comprise *Zen Tales*, on view in Joslyn Art Museum's Mind's Eye Gallery January 14 through April 16. The exhibition is organized by National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature (Abilene, TX) and sponsored at Joslyn by Fran and Rich Juro and Wiesman Development. Admission is free.

Exhibition Extras

KickstART Saturday

On **Saturday, February 11, from 10 am to noon**, kids and families are invited to celebrate the work of award-winning author/illustrator Jon Muth at Joslyn's KickstART Saturday. This event is FREE!

- Visitors will see examples of Muth's original art for many of his books, including his Caldecott Honor book *Zen Shorts*.
- Inspired by Stillwater, the giant Panda at the center of Muth's *Zen* stories, guests will learn to use Asian brushes to paint Chinese characters.
- Participants will enjoy a re-telling of Muth's *Stone Soup*, then help to make "stone soup" and enjoy a taste of their creation (chicken noodle soup, provided by Joslyn's Café Durham staff).

Story Adventures

Preschoolers and young readers, accompanied by an adult, are invited to this artful reading program on **Tuesday, February 21, at 10:30 am**. Presented in the Museum galleries by Joslyn and Omaha Public Library, the February 21 program features *Zen Tales*. This event is FREE!

Museum Shop

Books by Jon Muth are available for purchase in Joslyn's Hitchcock Museum Shop (open during all regular Museum hours).

For exhibition images, contact Amy Rummel, director of marketing and public relations, at (402) 661-3822 or arummel@joslyn.org.

Image Credit (page 1): "Karl and Koo drew several pictures together," from *Zen Ties*, 2008, watercolor and ink, © Jon Muth



Our Mission — Joslyn Art Museum collects, preserves, and interprets the visual arts of the highest quality, fostering appreciation and enjoyment of art for the benefit of a diverse audience.

Our Vision — To be cherished and respected as a premier art museum.

Joslyn Art Museum showcases art from ancient times to the present. The Museum was a gift to the people of Omaha from Sarah Joslyn in memory of her husband, George, who made his fortune as president of the Western Newspaper Union. The Museum's original 1931 building is one of the finest examples of Art Deco architecture in the nation, with 38 types of marble from seven countries. The Walter and Suzanne Scott Pavilion, a 58,000-square-foot addition built in 1994, was designed by renowned British architect Norman Foster as his first U.S. commission. The Museum features galleries, a 1,000-seat concert hall, fountain court, education technology gallery, lecture hall, classrooms, sculpture garden, café, shop, and Art Works, an interactive space for art exploration.

General Museum Admission: Free [the *Zen Tales* exhibition is included in free general Museum admission].

Regular Museum Hours (includes exhibition): Tuesday through Sunday, 10 am–4 pm; late 'til 8 pm on Thursday; closed Monday and major holidays.

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