



Fun / No Fun: Children's Book Art by James Stevenson

December 13, 2020 – April 18, 2021
Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut



James Stevenson (American, 1929-2017), *A Village Full of Valentines*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1995, pages 38-39. Courtesy of the Estate of James Stevenson. Photo credit: Paul Mutino.

GREENWICH, CT, November 24, 2020 – The Bruce Museum is pleased to announce an exhibition of children's book illustrations from the archives of artist, illustrator, and author James Stevenson (American, 1929-2017). ***Fun / No Fun: Children's Book Art by James Stevenson*** will be on view to the public beginning Sunday, December 13, 2020, through Sunday, April 18, 2021.

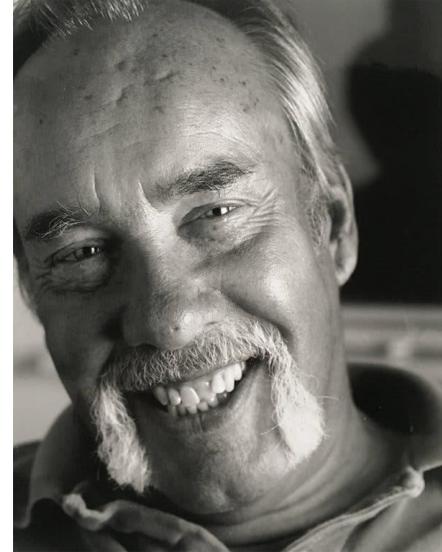
Adults know Stevenson as the witty and prolific *New Yorker* cartoonist—there was hardly a magazine issue in five decades that did not include a Stevenson gag. Kids know him as the author and illustrator of hundreds of children's books that induce fits of giggles with silliness voiced with a simple honesty. Deftly drawn with an assured line and colored with soft watercolor washes, Stevenson's whimsical sketches evoke a sense of memory and nostalgia.

While this exhibition spotlights the books he both wrote and illustrated, Stevenson often collaborated with admired children's book authors such as Judy Blume, Helen Griffith, Jack Prelutsky, and Dr. Seuss. He not only authored the award-winning storybooks, but also wrote Young Adult novels and poetry.

Fun / No Fun will explore the seasonal delights to which kids of all ages can relate—building a snowman in winter, tormenting your friends with springtime skunk cabbage, summer camp camaraderie, and leaping into an autumn leaf pile.



James Stevenson's Connecticut roots run deep. While Jim grew up in Croton-on-Hudson in Westchester County, he was educated at Yale University, raised his family of nine children in Old Black Point on the Connecticut shore, and settled in Cos Cob with his second wife Josie Merck. In a 2019 documentary, *Stevenson: Lost and Found*, (named after his Op-Ed in *The New York Times*) his family describes how the self-taught artist was always sketching and that the familial soundtrack was accompanied by the constant scratching sound of his pen on paper.



American artist, illustrator, and author
James Stevenson (1929-2017).
© Edwina Stevenson

Throughout the holiday season, *Fun / No Fun* will bring together generations of Stevenson art lovers—the readers and the read-to—who will be fascinated by the dexterity of his hand, sensitivity of his execution, and marvelous sense of humor. Curators Kathleen Holko and Kathy Reichenbach are especially proud to shine a light on a local art icon. As Josie Merck Stevenson, Honorary Chair of the *Fun / No Fun* Committee of Honor says, “Jim would be so pleased to have this exhibition here at the Bruce Museum, a place he truly appreciated over many decades.”

Showcased will be original illustrations from a multitude of beloved books authored by Stevenson, who populated his tomes with a cast of characters in settings that he conjured precisely to suit the story. Visitors will recognize their favorite Stevenson characters, from the anthropomorphic denizens of Mud Flat, to the mustachioed Grandpa and his little brother Wayne; from goodhearted witch Emma and her nemeses Lavinia and Dolores, to the perennially grouchy Mr. Worst, and many more.

A 1990 *New York Times* article articulated how movies, a favorite entertainment, were his inspiration in the development of children's books: "You cast, write the script, set design, find the right actors, people you care about, have them say the right things, find locations, the right stove for the kitchen."

These lively, colored sketches will be shown alongside the softly nostalgic watercolors he employed in his series of autobiographical books, such as *Fun / No Fun* (1994), from which this exhibition borrows its title.

“In my 50 years of publishing children's books, there was no one like Jim Stevenson,” says Susan Hirschman, Founder of Greenwillow Books, which published many of Stevenson's works. “He was extraordinarily prolific yet never repeated himself. He was clever, witty, subtle, funny, tender, and smart—and yet he never talked down to children. His black line had an unmistakable personality, and his use of blank white space was a strong fifth color in all his art.



BRUCE MUSEUM
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Press Release

You think of Jim's books, and lines and pages and individual pictures crowd your mind. The books are bursting with emotion—awaiting their readers with enthusiasm.”

The Bruce is hosting two special exhibition preview days for Museum members only on Friday and Saturday, December 11-12, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. To reserve a timed ticket to attend the limited-capacity preview days for members, or to join as a member, visit brucemuseum.org or call 203-869-0376, ext. 311. Members can also enjoy a double discount (20%) in the Museum Store during these preview days (the new official Greenwich Monopoly game not included).

Fun / No Fun: Children's Book Art by James Stevenson is generously supported by a Committee of Honor co-chaired by Patricia and John Chadwick, Maryann Keller Chai, Anne Hall Elser, Erin Glasebrook, Catherine Ladnier and Mickey Robinson, and Cricket and Jim Lockhart. The Bruce Museum is grateful for exhibition support from Rockefeller Capital Management, Greenwich, and the Connecticut Office of the Arts.

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About the Bruce Museum

The Bruce Museum is a community-based, world-class institution highlighting art and science. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Bruce has been voted the best museum in Fairfield County by area media in recent years. Located in a park setting just off I-95, exit 3, at 1 Museum Drive in Greenwich, Connecticut, the Bruce Museum is a 5-minute walk from the Metro-North Greenwich Station. The Bruce Museum is open in accordance with current state and local guidelines and with advance reservations for timed ticketed entry. To make a reservation or for additional information, call the Bruce Museum at 203-869-0376 or visit brucemuseum.org.

Media Contact: Scott Smith, Director of Marketing and Communications, 203-413-6735 or ssmith@brucemuseum.org.

Please see the following page for an image sheet of select Stevenson artwork featured in the exhibition and available for editorial use.

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The following high-resolution jpg images are available by contacting
ssmith@brucemuseum.org; 203-413-6735.



James Stevenson (American, 1929-2017), *Mud Flat Spring*, New York: Greenwillow Books, 1999, page 10.
Courtesy of the Estate of James Stevenson. Photo credit: Paul Mutino.



James Stevenson (American, 1929-2017) *Grandpa's Too-Good Garden*, New York: Greenwillow Books, 1989, page 25. Courtesy of the Estate of James Stevenson. Photo credit: Paul Mutino.



James Stevenson (American, 1929-2017), *Mud Flat Spring*, New York: Greenwillow Books, 1999, page 28.
Courtesy of the Estate of James Stevenson.
Photo credit: Paul Mutino.



James Stevenson (American, 1929-2017), *Brrrr!*, New York: Greenwillow Books, 1991, page 3. Courtesy of the Estate of James Stevenson. Photo credit: Paul Mutino.