

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Linda Cegelis
407 896 4231 x239
lcegelis@omart.org

Knuffle Funny: The Art and Whimsy of Mo Willems at the Orlando Museum of Art, May 22 through August 29, 2010

ORLANDO, Fla. (March 2, 2010) — *The New York Times* best-selling author and illustrator, Mo Willems, has been dubbed “the biggest new talent to emerge thus far in the ‘00s.” His animated sketches and drawings featuring engaging characters, along with quirky story lines, produce a fun-filled reading experience for his audience. Willems is known for his Caldecott Honor winning picture books *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* and *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*.

The original sketches from these books and many other favorites are presented in a new exhibition at the OMA, *Knuffle Funny: The Art and Whimsy of Mo Willems*. The show opens May 22, 2010 and is the 7th exhibition in the OMA’s annual Art of the Picture Book Series, a summer tradition for many Central Florida families. This exhibition was organized by the National Center for Children’s Illustrated Literature, Abilene, Texas.

A native of New Orleans, Willems attended New York University’s Film School where he studied animation. He began his successful career as a writer for PBS’ *Sesame Street*, where he accumulated six Emmy Awards. He also served as head writer for Cartoon Network’s #1 rated show *Codename: Kids Next Door*. The creator of over 100 short films and TV shows, Willems’ stories have appeared on MTV and HBO.

In 2003, Willems launched his picture book career with the best-seller *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* Willems’ popular early reader picture book series *Elephant and Piggy* was awarded the Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal in both 2008 and 2009. Lively illustrations capture the personality and emotions of his unforgettable characters that range from the boisterous Pigeon to the endearing young heroine Trixie of the *Knuffle Bunny* books.

In speaking of his career, Willems notes, “Books are permanent and allow a freedom of expression that TV...does not. With a book, I can focus on the illustrations with an attention to detail that animation schedules could not accommodate.” Willems has also been heard on NPR’s *All Things Considered*, where he serves as a “Radio Cartoonist.” In addition to writing more upcoming children’s books, Willems is currently working on his first musical. Contributing both lyrics and a script, his *Knuffle Bunny* legacy will turn into a children’s musical play premiering at the Kennedy Center in May 2010.

Schedule of Events at the OMA:

March 9, May 11, June 8, July 13, August 10

Art Adventures

9:30-10:30am

Pre-registration is required. For more information, call 407 896 4231 x258.

Join us every month or for just one fun play date that uses all your senses to explore the Orlando Museum of Art! Specially designed gallery hunts, games, and stories make art come alive. Ages 3-5 with grown-up.

Orlando Museum of Art

2416 N Mills Ave.
Orlando, FL 32803
www.omart.org



Hours: Tuesday – Friday 10 am – 4 pm, Saturday – Sunday noon – 4 pm, closed major holidays

Accredited by the American Association of Museums, the Orlando Museum of Art is supported by earned income, the Council of 101, donations from individuals, corporations and foundations, and sponsored in part by United Arts of Central Florida with funds from the United Arts campaign, State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

March 29- April 2
Spring Art Camp

Full-day classes are from 9am-4pm.

Pre-registration required. For information, call 407 896 4231 x262.

Celebrate American art as you enjoy projects inspired by nature! Explore traditional landscape paintings and photographs, as well as contemporary American art, as you create collages, paintings, assemblages and more with “eco art” in mind.

May 8
Daddy-O

1:30-2:30pm

Pre-registration required. For more information, call 407 896 4231 x258.

Shhhh! Don't tell mom! Dads, bring the kids to the OMA to make something extra-creative and sweet for Mother's Day. Farris and Foster's will be on hand to help you decorate the most fabulous chocolates and Mrs. Cross will guide you in making the perfect hand-made gift for mom. Chocolates and unique art are sure to put a smile on your mom's face! The cost is \$20, \$18 per OMA members; 1st child free, \$5 per additional child.

June 12
Target Family Day

10am-noon

Free admission to the galleries and art activities

Bring your family to the OMA for a morning of fun with art activities including gallery hunts, music by Mr. Richard, storytelling by Bill Cordell, and more! So put a red target on your calendars for June 12 and don't miss this morning of creative fun!

June 19
mOMArt

1:30-2:30pm

Pre-registration is required. For more information, call 407 896 4231 x258.

Moms, this is your chance for you and your children to create a masterpiece for the special man in your lives. Father's Day is June 20, so come the day before to create that one-of-a-kind gift. The cost is \$20, \$18 per OMA members; 1st child free, \$5 per additional child.

The OMA is located in Orlando Loch Haven Park at 2416 North Mills Ave., Orlando, Fla. From I-4 take the Princeton Street exit 85. Drive east on Princeton Street, and at the corner of Princeton and Mills (US Highway 17 / 92), turn left. Go one block to east Rollins Street and turn left. The entrance is the first driveway on the left. Parking is free. For further information, call 407 896 4231 or visit www.omart.org.

###

Contact: Linda Cegelis
PR & Marketing Manager
lcegelis@omart.org
407 896 4231 x239

Orlando Museum of Art
2416 N Mills Ave.
Orlando, FL 32803
www.omart.org



Hours: Tuesday – Friday 10 am – 4 pm, Saturday – Sunday noon – 4 pm, closed major holidays

Accredited by the American Association of Museums, the Orlando Museum of Art is supported by earned income, the Council of 101, donations from individuals, corporations and foundations, and sponsored in part by United Arts of Central Florida with funds from the United Arts campaign, State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.