

# I SEE A STORY The Art of Eric Carle

Guide to the Books in This Exhibition



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# The Artist Who Painted a Blue Horse

2011

“There isn’t any wrong color.... In art, you’re supposed to be free!” Carle’s philosophy resonates throughout *The Artist Who Painted a Blue Horse*, a story that encourages expression over realism. The book pays homage to Franz Marc (1880–1916), a German artist who painted animals and landscapes in bright and unusual colors. He is particularly famous for his magnificent blue horses.

Of his school in Germany, Carle recalls the “small rooms, narrow windows, hard pencils, small sheets of paper, and a stern warning not to make mistakes.” His schooling between 1940 and 1945 was fragmented as Stuttgart became a major target of the Allied forces. Despite the devastation, Carle continued to draw and paint and looked forward to an occasional class with his high-school art teacher, Fridolin Krauss.

Aware of Carle’s promise as a young artist, Herr Krauss showed Carle a box of banned art by the so-called degenerate artists. These artists—Picasso, Klee, Matisse, and Kandinsky—were strictly forbidden by the Nazi regime. “Their strange beauty almost blinded me,” said Carle. His teacher warned him not to tell anyone what he had seen. “But, for this act of defiance,” says Carle, “Herr Krauss ... opened my eyes to the beauty of German Expressionism and abstract art.”









# Walter the Baker

1972 and 1995

Carle moved with his parents to Stuttgart, Germany, when he was six years old. They lived on the second floor of an apartment house owned by Carle's maternal grandfather. On the ground floor lived Carle's Uncle Walter, a baker who doted on his nephew. He bought young Carle comic books and enthralled him with his storytelling. *Walter the Baker* is Carle's tribute to his beloved *Onkel* as well as a nod to a rich German folklore tradition.









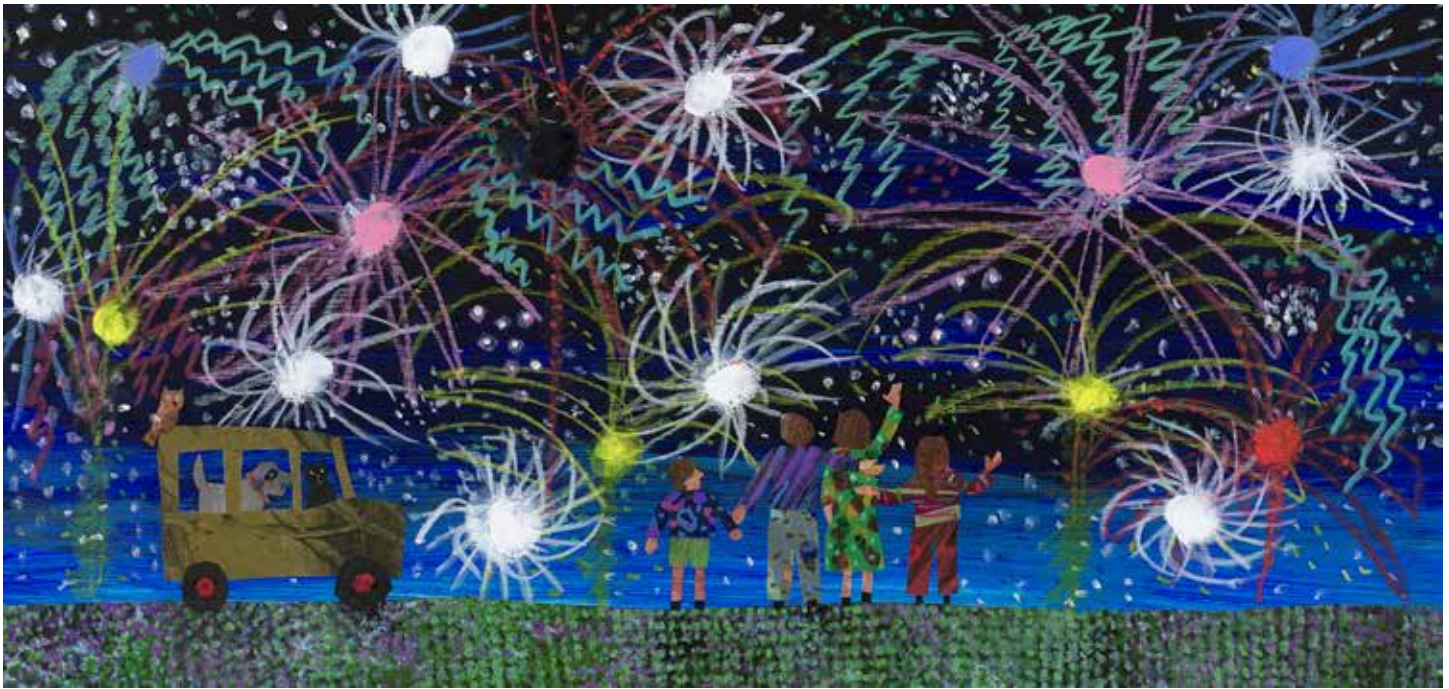
# Friends

2013

*Friends* is arguably Eric Carle's most personal narrative. It conveys a young boy's sadness when separated from his best friend and follows his subsequent quest to find her. The story was inspired by Carle's own real-life longing for his home and friends in America after moving to Germany.

On the book's final page, Carle includes a childhood photograph of himself embracing his best friend in Syracuse. The inscription reads: "When I was six, I moved far away. We never saw each other again. I often think about my long-ago friend, and I wonder what happened to her." After the book's publication, a dogged reporter located Carle's lost friend—Flo Trovato of Florida—leading to a "miracle" reunion eighty-two years later.







# The Very Lonely Firefly

9

1995

*The Very Lonely Firefly* is about belonging. The story follows a newborn firefly and his search for firefly friends. As Carle notes, “We all want to belong to a group, a family, our own fellow creatures.”

Although the story occurs at night, Carle’s use of complementary oranges and blues creates visually bright scenes. The final page of the book reveals a twinkling display of electric lights.









# Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

1967

Before transitioning into the world of picture books, Carle enjoyed a successful career in advertising. Interestingly, he often depicted animals in his advertisements. Carle's red lobster in a Chlor-Trimeton ad caught the eye of Bill Martin Jr., a respected educator and author. "The art was so striking," recalled Martin, "that I knew instantly I had found the artist to illustrate my next book." That book was *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*

The 1967 publication of *Brown Bear* launched Carle's career in children's picture books. He created new art for four different editions of the beloved story, which has been translated into thirty-one languages. The three artworks on display may be unfamiliar to most viewers—they are from a 1984 British edition.







# 1, 2, 3 to the Zoo

13

1968

*1, 2, 3 to the Zoo* is the first picture book that Carle both wrote and illustrated. Published in 1968, it is the perfect combination of an early counting book and an “I spy” game (can you find the mouse in each picture?). Carle’s amazing animal-train ride concludes with a magnificent foldout zoo illustration.









# The Very Clumsy Click Beetle

15

1999

Carle's *Very* series is composed of five classic books: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1969), *The Very Busy Spider* (1984), *The Very Quiet Cricket* (1990), *The Very Lonely Firefly* (1995), and *The Very Clumsy Click Beetle* (1999). Each story carries an important message for readers. *The Very Clumsy Click Beetle* is about persistence and the importance of never giving up.

Like all of Carle's *Very* books, this one has an added sensory feature: the audible click on the final page broadcasts the beetle's hard-earned success.







# The Grouchy Ladybug

1977

17

One of Carle's smallest protagonists is the Grouchy Ladybug, whose bad behavior teaches children the importance of good manners. Readers also learn about time, as Carle includes a small clock on each page to track the passing hours.

The pages and type grow progressively larger as the ladybug encounters bigger and bigger animals. Carle's four-piece collage of an enormous blue whale—rarely on public display—is showcased in this exhibition.









# Mister Seahorse

19

2004

As in many of his stories, Carle simultaneously creates endearing characters in *Mister Seahorse* while also imparting interesting factual information. The story follows a male seahorse as he encounters fellow fish fathers who also care for their soon-to-hatch offspring. Carle's thin washes of color and stylized wave patterns create a beautiful underwater world.







# Have You Seen My Cat?

21

1973

Cats are Carle's favorite animals. In *Have You Seen My Cat?* a boy sets out to find his lost pet. His search leads him around the world, where he meets different species of cats and people of different cultures. The book's simple repetitive question—"Have you seen my cat?"—elicits enthusiastic responses from young readers.







# From Head to Toe

23

1997

Children wiggle, stomp, thump, and bend in the playful question-and-answer book *From Head to Toe*. “I can do it!” is the confidence-building message of this book. Carle dedicated the book to his three favorite instructors, including Miss Frickey, his beloved kindergarten teacher.









# Pancakes, Pancakes!

25

1970

A crowing rooster on the opening page of *Pancakes, Pancakes!* announces morning time on the farm. Young Jack wants pancakes for breakfast, but first he must gather eggs from the chickens, wheat from the farmer, flour from the miller, and milk from the cow. The tasks are arduous yet lead to a delicious reward. Carle extols the benefits of hard work, while his pastoral illustrations suggest an earlier time.







# Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me

27

1986

Beautiful night skies abound in Carle's book *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me*. The story literally unfolds as pages open dramatically, extending both outward and upward. It is a tale of fatherly devotion, inspired by Carle's daughter Cirsten, who once asked him to get the moon for her. Fittingly, Carle dedicated the book to her.









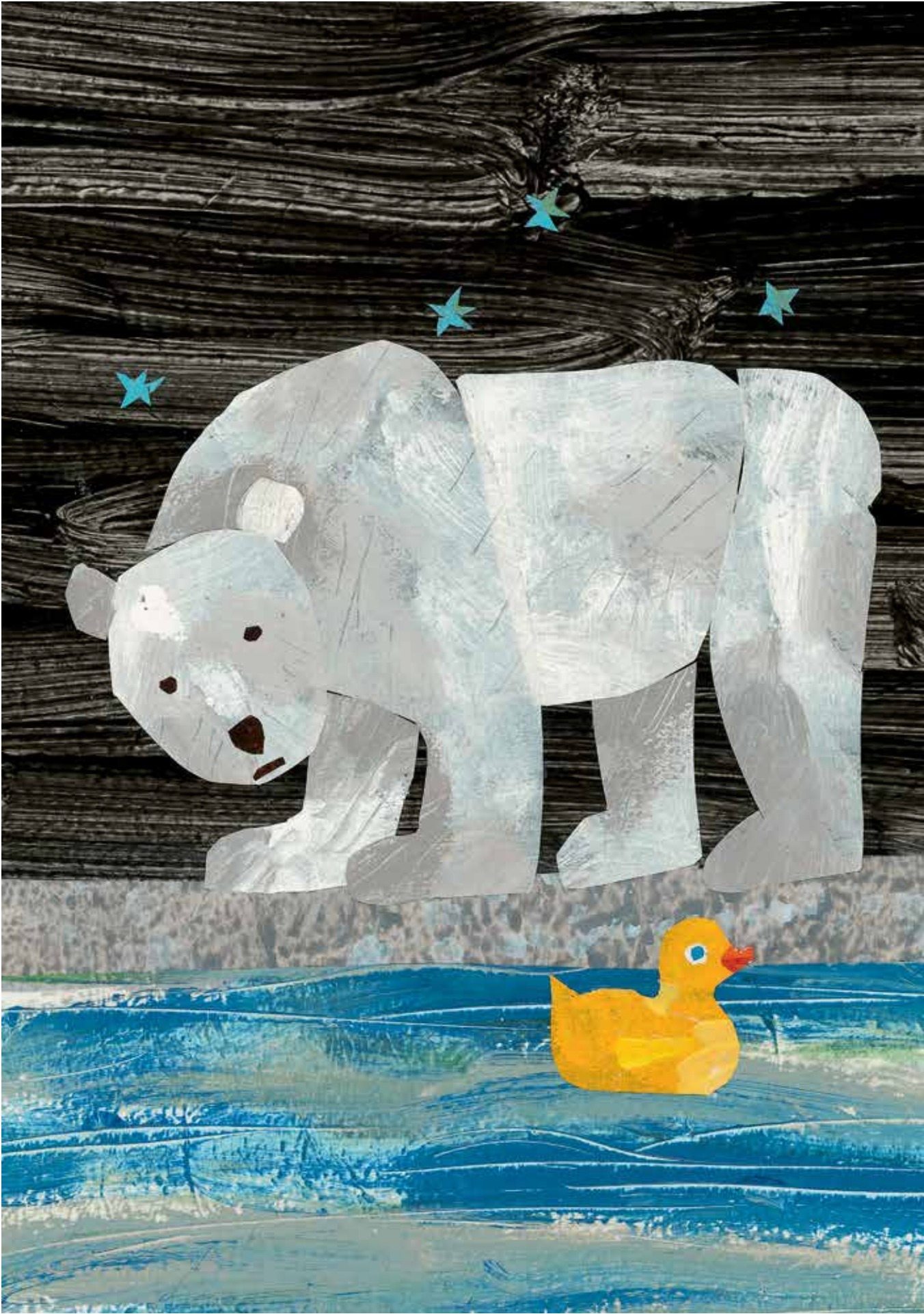
# The Very Hungry Caterpillar

1969

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* is Carle's most famous book—despite its somewhat humble beginnings. Carle initially proposed the story *A Week with Willi Worm*, the tale of a little green worm that eats its way through books and other indigestible fare. Unsure about the worm as a central character, his editor Ann Beneduce suggested a caterpillar. "A butterfly!" exclaimed Carle, and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* was born.

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* was published in 1969. The first edition was produced in Japan because printers in the United States could not carry out the complex project of die-cut holes and irregularly sized pages. The book has been translated into sixty-two languages, most recently Mongolian. A copy of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* is sold somewhere in the world every thirty seconds.







# 10 Little Rubber Ducks

31

2005

Though many characters in Carle's tales embark on journeys, it was the real-life travels of 29,000 rubber bath toys capsized from a container ship in the Pacific Ocean that Carle could "not resist" illustrating in *10 Little Rubber Ducks*. While scientists studied their astonishing transcontinental migration, Carle took a more poetic approach, imagining the adventures of ten little rubber ducks and the colorful sea creatures they encounter.









# The Tiny Seed

33

1970

*The Tiny Seed* follows the life cycle of plants as one small seed grows into an enormous sunflower that produces more seeds in turn. The story is also a journey through the seasons.

*The Tiny Seed* was originally published in 1970. Carle made the artwork on display here for an updated 1987 edition. His hand-torn strips of speckled paper add abstract patterns and color to the scenes.





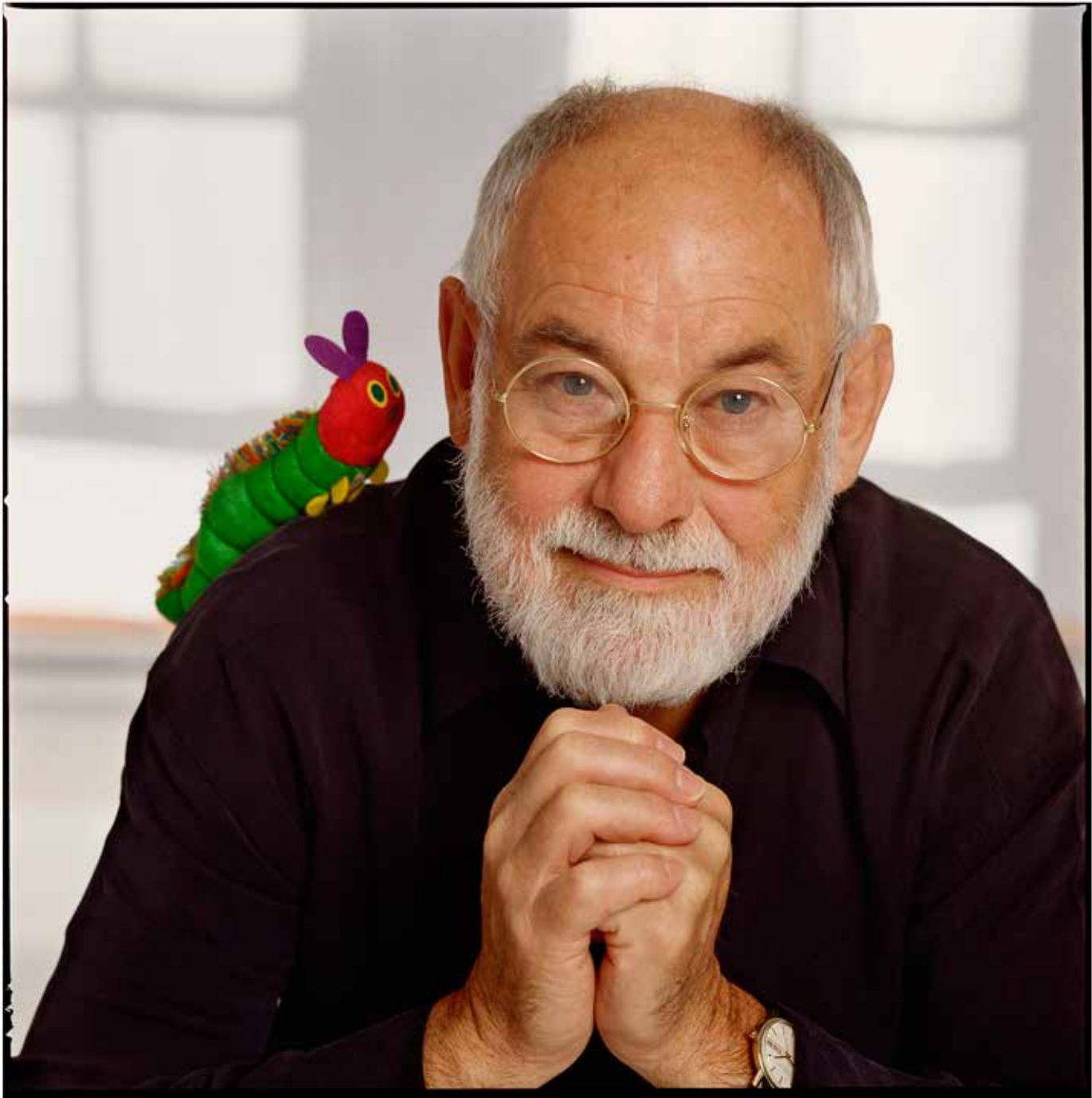


Photo by Sigrid Estrada.

