

MUSEUM OF ART

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

CONTACT

Matt Montgomery

401/454-6793

mmontgom@risd.edu

**The RISD Museum of Art Presents
Building Books: The Art of David Macaulay
Saturday, September 27, 2008 through Sunday, February 1, 2009**

Providence, RI—The RISD Museum of Art presents *Building Books: The Art of David Macaulay*, an exhibition that spans the artist's thirty-five years of book creation, from *Cathedral* (1973) to the forthcoming *The Way We Work* (October, 2008.) The show features not only original drawings but also sketchbooks, models, manuscripts, correspondence, and travel mementos—the joists and girders of his books. *Building Books* is the first comprehensive traveling exhibition of Macaulay's work and, as such, offers a unique opportunity to admire the broad scope of his interests and the evolution of his artistry.

Macaulay is the author and illustrator of nearly two dozen books—many of them on architecture and design, all of them evincing a fascination with the mysteries of the world around us. “He has stated that “As a child, I was very aware of process and how things get made, and that they do get made. I knew that things didn't just appear.”

The show is divided into three sections, the first of which is devoted to his books which help us understand the workings and origins of everything from simple gadgets to monumental architectural structures and the human body. Macaulay's best-known book may be *The Way Things Work* (first published 1988), in which he humorously yet clearly illustrated the concepts behind a wide range of machines—from the stapler to the steam engine. *Cathedral* describes the construction of an imaginary, if typical, Gothic cathedral; *Mosque* (2003) is similarly focused on the design, symbolism, and engineering ingenuity of a monumental edifice.

The second section is an in-depth examination of the creation of his book, *Ship* (1993) an engaging work of fiction based almost entirely on fact. Recounted by the artist in two distinct parts, the first is a modern day story of maritime archaeologists in their underwater search for a sunken caravel and the second is told through a merchant's diary from the year 1504 and offers a detailed account of the building of the ship. The focus on artistic process includes everything from concept, research, and preliminary layouts to the finished art and text.

The third section of the exhibition contains Macaulay's “journey books” which reveal his love of travel and comment on life's ironies and complexities. These flights of fantasy often explore the ways in which people's lives intersect without their even knowing. Macaulay's Caldecott Medal winning book, *Black and White*, (1990) tells four stories simultaneously without ever explicating their subtly suggested relationships. In *Rome Antics* (1997), Macaulay takes us on a tour of Rome, the artist's “favorite place in the world.” With the help of a homing pigeon from the Italian hills, the reader soars over terracotta rooftops and hurtles down narrow cobblestone streets, passing some of the city's most ancient structures, from the Arch of Constantine to the Colosseum and the Pantheon.

Macaulay (born England 1946) has had a long and distinguished relationship with RISD. He graduated in 1969 with a bachelor's degree in architecture, having spent his fifth and final year in Rome on the College's European Honors Program. His first of many RISD teaching positions was in 1969. He joined the Illustration Department in 1976 and served as Department Head from 1977-79 and 1991-94. He was an Alumni Trustee from 1996-99, and will complete a ten-year term as an Honorary Trustee in 2009. In 2004, RISD awarded him an Honorary Doctorate. He remains active in the RISD community and served as the National Co-Chair of the Future by Design Campaign, 1998-2006, which was in part responsible for the funding of the Chace Center opening at the same time as *Building Books*.

Building Books: The Art of David Macaulay, was organized by the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

PROGRAMMING

The Thirty-Third Annual Gail Silver Memorial Lecture:

Wednesday, October 29, 6:15 pm

RISD Auditorium, Canal Way, Providence, RI

Author/artist Macaulay (RISD BArch 1969; former RISD Faculty) presents this year's Gail Silver Memorial Lecture. His books, including *The New Way Things Work*, *Cathedral*, *Ship*, *Rome Antics*, and *Mosque*, have demystified the workings and origins of everything from simple gadgets to elaborate architectural structures. They have won him a gold and two silver Caldecott medals, and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 2006. His soon-to-be-released book, *The Way We Work*, explores and explains the human body. The lecture is free and open to all.

Gallery Conversation: Thursday, October 16, 6:00 pm

RISD professor Jean Blackburn leads a discussion about illustration in the *Building Books* exhibition.

Sunday Family Workshop, *Ship*: Sunday, October 12, 3-4:30 pm

Using David Macaulay's *Ship* as a model, visitors design and illustrate their own books about ships.

Sunday Family Workshop, *Ocean Floor*: Sunday, October 19, 3-4:30 pm

Visitors use the story of the sinking of a Spanish galleon to inspire their own depictions of the very bottom of the ocean.

The RISD Museum of Art, a world-class museum in Providence, RI, was founded as part of Rhode Island School of Design in 1877. Its permanent collection of more than 84,000 objects includes paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, costume, furniture, and other works of art from every part of the world, including objects from Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and art of all periods from Asia, Europe, and the Americas, up to the latest in contemporary art. In addition, the Museum offers a wide array of educational and public programs.

###