### Conservation Report

**Acclaimed author and illustrator, Rosemary Wells, has written many endearing children’s books including* Noisy Nora* (a story about a mischievous young mouse) as well as an entire series about the bunnies Max and Ruby. As part of Ms. Well’s initiative, Real Art for Young Artists, in 2019, Rosemary Wells generously donated more than a dozen original illustrations for long-term display at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. The opening for the exhibition is September 15th, 2019 at 2pm at the Children’s Library in the Main building downtown.

The newly acquired illustrations are drawn in pen and India ink. There are 16 drawings (26 x 38 cm or smaller) and one booklet containing 8 pages (16 x 12 cm). They are richly hand colored in watercolor,
colored pencils, acrylic ink and gauche pigments. The collection was received by the Preservation Lab directly from the artist as a group within a folder. Many illustrations were received attached to illustration boards with translucent overlays wrapped around from behind, taped into place, giving the feeling as though they were just recently mocked up for production. The boards were packaged within a non-archival clear plastic that was taped to itself with pressure sensitive tape. Most drawing were taped to the blue illustration boards with a white pressure sensitive tape. Graphite notes to publishers were written on transparent papers to inform the size the images should be enlarged or reduced for printing.

To prepare the materials for long-term exhibition, the Preservation Lab worked with numerous colleagues to carefully balance preservation standards with viewer’s needs, while also striving to maintain the artist’s intended interpretation of their work. Since the spring of 2018, the Preservation Lab assisted the Programming department with preservation and exhibition planning. Between the two departments, we have collaborated with Digital Imaging at UC, Cataloging, and Facilities staff, as well as the artist herself to approve treatment and exhibition preparation. There is a blog post on the Preservation Lab blog that highlights some of the behind the scenes actions carried out to prepare the materials for display. The blog is titled, Exhibit Prep for Upcoming Show: Real Art for Young Artists.

The nook in the Children’s library was selected for display for a few reasons.
1) Accessible for kids. The artist requested the pieces be displayed at a child’s eye level.
2) A great spot to add tables and chairs for arts and crafts programs. The artist conveyed the stipulation that the artwork must not be in a case.
3) Comparatively low light levels. Outside of the library’s wall cases in the stairwell, this spot was the most appropriate environmentally. However, the space still measured an average of 110 lux. Conservation exhibition standards permit watercolors to be displayed at 50 lux for six months or less before noticeable fading occurs. This means exhibition of the original materials can only recommended in 3-month intervals.

Additionally, it was highly recommended to rotate the artwork. Recommendations included displaying only a small portion of the original artwork at one time and rotating the original illustrations. Alternatively, it was recommended to replace the original artwork with matted high quality archival surrogates after a period of three to 6 months. Despite recommendations, as one of the stipulations set by the artist, the library agreed to display all original artwork indefinitely and forgo surrogates created by the Preservation Lab at this time.

Since the timeline for display is yet to be determined, the following light damage precautions were suggested: UV filtered glazing within the frames, LED lighting, as well as replacing UV filters on the exterior windows of the library. Finally, since a photocopier was noticed sitting next to the nook, it was recommended to move the copier since ozone emitted during printing will contribute to watercolor discoloration.

The drawings were carefully removed from the illustration boards using heat and mechanical techniques. The pressure sensitive tape was still tacky throughout and did not present much of a challenge. After removal from the boards, the drawings were digitized at the Digital Imaging Lab at the University of Cincinnati to document their condition prior to exhibition. Should surrogates be created in the future, these files would be an excellent source.
Two unique features were discovered on the verso of two illustrations. On the verso of “And then she dropped her sister’s marbles on the floor” there is an impression of a Windsor and Newton watermark. On the verso of “No Nora in the Mailbox, No Nora in the Shrub” there is a prior sketch crossed out on the back.

The collection of 16 drawings and one booklet were matted and framed at the Preservation Lab within 16 x 20 inch Colori Medium Black wood frames that were purchased from Frame USA. To give an impression of how the artwork was mounted on the original presentation boards (preserving the artist’s intent), the work was matted with captions from the children’s book pasted below. The artwork was mounted with Kozo (mulberry) tissue hinges that were pasted to the back of the artwork and the back mat board with V-hinges and Zen Shofu wheat starch paste. To maintain a 45% relative humidity environment, the matted artwork was preserved within a sealed archival framing package.

The framing package contains (top to bottom):

1. UV filtered Tru View Museum glass (purchased to size from our local art supply-framing store, Plaza).
2. Matting package with window and back mat. A window was cut both for the artwork as well as for the caption. Captions were printed on a laser printer onto Permalife paper and adhered to the back mat with Jade 403 PVA. The artwork was float mounted with two Usu gami v-hinges applied with Zen Shofu wheat starch paste. The window mat was hinged to the left edge of the back mat with P90 filmoplast tape.
3. Blue corrugated cardboard used as a backing board behind the matting package.
4. Conservation note loosely set into place on the back of the corrugated backing board for future reference (in case it is ever removed from the frame).
5. Sheet of Polyester film added behind the corrugated board as a moisture proof barrier.
6. To seal the entire package, all edges were sealed with pressure sensitive P90 filmoplast tape. A second foil backed framing tape from University Products (part of the Perma/Seal label line) was applied as a barrier to prevent moisture and gas exchange.
7. A Dove Gray dust cover was attached to the back of the frames with 3M 415 double stick tape. Barcode labels and an additional conservation note were adhered to the dust cover.
8. Lastly, three security hangers were attached to the back of the frames; two at the top and one at the bottom.

With the exception of one frame, the original metal prongs were reused to secure the matting packages within the frame. The one exception includes the booklet mounted with a sink mat, this thicker package required nailing brads secured to the inside of the frame rabbet to hold the matting package in place.

The key to unhook the frames from the wall is kept with Security at PLCH. To learn more about the security hangers, please inquire with the Preservation Lab.

All removed parts and original illustration boards are housed in a corrugated clamshell and stored in GLH.
Folder as received

Hinges adhered to verso of art with wheat starch paste

After mounting

Pressing stacks with light weight after artwork is mounted to mat with v-hinges

Sink mat with open window that hinges on the left

Preservation Lab

Treatment Report Cont'd

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Photography By: Ashleigh Schieszer
Group of completed mats

Objects are float mounted in mats

Group of completed mats before framing

Example of the only object with an over mat that crops the object

An open window that hinges along the top edge

Mock ups experimenting with margin sizes

Photography By: Ashleigh Schieszer
Preservation Lab

Front of sealed package

Back of sealed package

Verso Of Frame

During Framing, backing boards are replaced

During Framing

Nook before remodeling

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Photography By: Ashleigh Schieszer
Before Treatment, As received from artist

Before Treatment, As received from artist

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i10450366x_2037_A02N
Before Treatment

During Treatment, parts adhered with wheat starch paste

After Treatment

Photography By: Jessica Ebert and Sidney Gao
Photography By: Jessica Ebert and Sidney Gao
Preservation Lab

Before Treatment

Verso of illustration board,

Before Treatment,

lifted overlay

During Treatment,

Verso of watercolor

After Treatment

Photography By: Jessica Ebert and Sidney Gao
Before Treatment

During Treatment

After Treatment

Photography By: Jessica Ebert and Sidney Gao