

MONTSERRAT GALLERIES, SEPT 8-NOV 14, 2026



SUNDAY AT THE NUT HOUSE 🌰

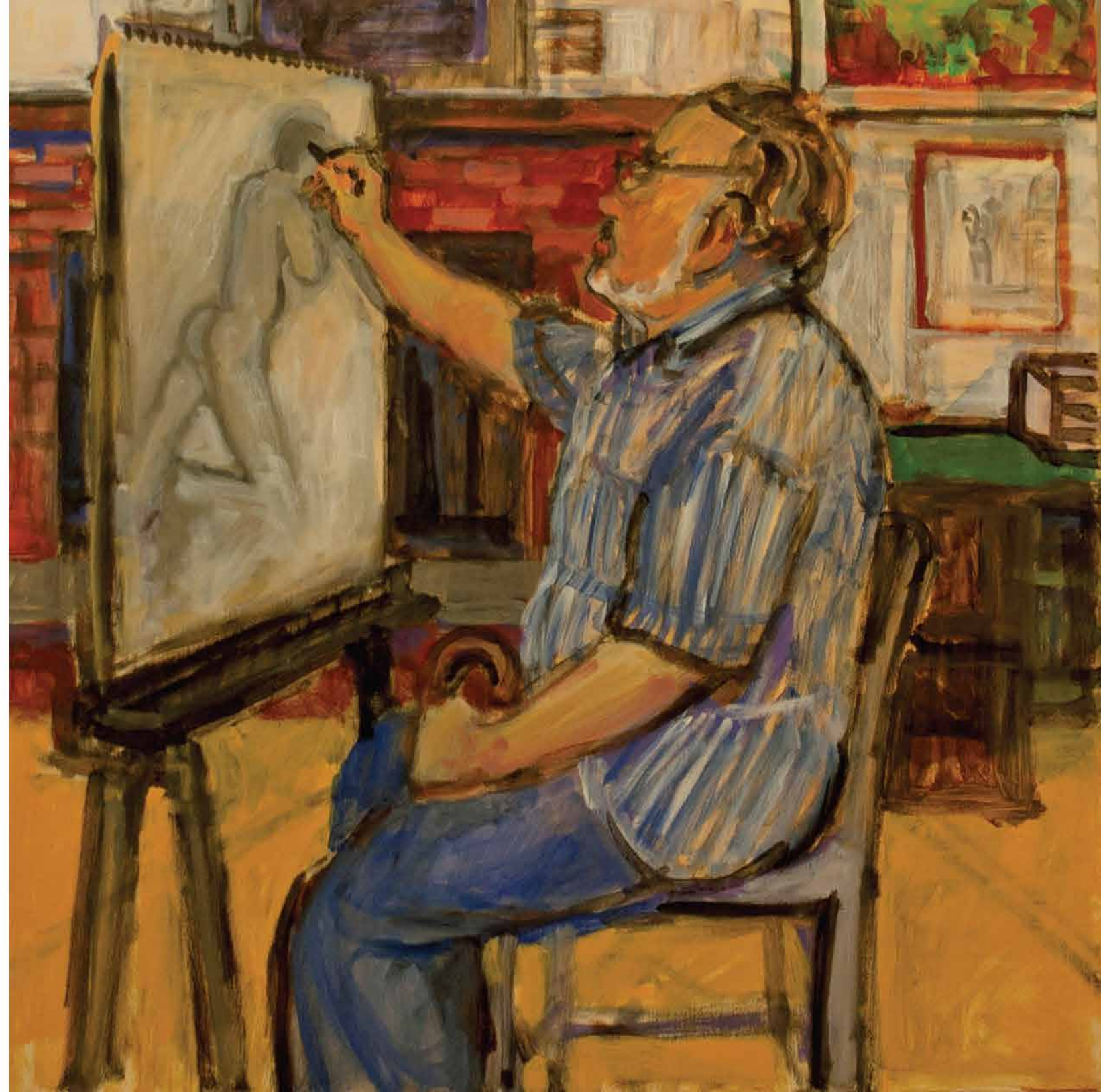
SUNDAY AT THE NUT HOUSE

Maurice Sendak
Jonathan Weinberg
Marc McChesney
Jamison Odone

This exhibition celebrates a brief period in the development of three artists who came together with Maurice Sendak on Sundays in Ridgefield, Connecticut in 2004-7 to draw from the model. They were brought together by the renowned artist, who wanted an occasional break from working long hours in his studio on such projects as the illustrations and sets for the opera, *Brundibar*. He gave Jonathan Weinberg the task of forming the drawing group.

At the time, Weinberg, who is both a painter and an art historian, and his husband, Nick Boshnack, lived next door to Sendak in a house Sendak owned. The house where these early drawing sessions took place was affectionately known as "the Nut House," not because of the mental capacity of its inhabitants, but because squirrels frequently dropped acorns on its roof. Weinberg invited Marc McChesney, a young local artist whom he had briefly mentored, to join the group. Marc, in turn, suggested that his best friend, the illustrator Jamison Odone, come to draw with them as well. The quartet was augmented by Herman, Maurice Sendak's enormous and beautiful German shepherd, who provided emotional support.

Right: Jonathan Weinberg
*Maurice Sendak Drawing at the
Nut House, 2004*
Acrylic on canvas



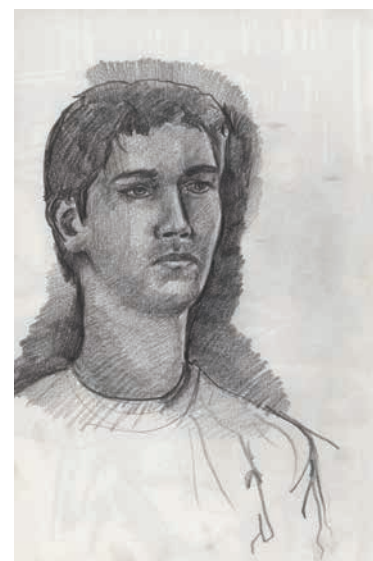


Jonathan Weinberg
Marc McChesney, 2015
Acrylic on canvas

After Weinberg moved to New Haven, “the Nut House” was used for a few years as the residence for The Sendak Fellowship, a residency that encourages, teaches, and supports artists who tell stories with illustration. Sendak enlisted the help of his long-time friend and assistant, Lynn Caponera, and the photographer and community activist Dona Ann McAdams, to realize his vision for the residency, and though Sendak was only able to greet and mentor two groups of Fellows before his passing in 2012, his legacy continues to be carried on through the residency each year.

The paintings, drawings, and posters in the exhibition provide a sense not only of what the work of the drawing sessions was like, but also an introduction to the art the four artists made in the years before, during, and after the Nut House days.

Sunday at the Nut House was originally conceived and organized by participating artists Jonathan Weinberg and Jamison Odone in 2025 for the Stephanie Ann Roper Gallery at Frostburg State University. The exhibition’s second iteration for the Montserrat Galleries was organized in collaboration with Lynne Cooney, Director of Exhibitions and Galleries. Lynne extends her deep gratitude to The Maurice Sendak Foundation and to Jonathan and Jamison for sharing this touching and thoughtful exhibition with the Montserrat College of Art community and its larger public. Lynne extends gratitude to Montserrat College of Art President Brian Pellinen and Dean of Academic Affairs Stacy Thomas-Vickory for their continued support of gallery programming. Jonathan and Jamie also wish to thank Nicholas Boshnack, Lynn Caponera, Tyler Fallas, Nathan Flis, Chloe Giroux, Leah McCloskey, Jeffrey and Diann McChesney, Suzanne Murphy, and Doug Salati for their immeasurable support and enthusiasm for the exhibition.



Marc McChesney
Jamison Odone, 2006
Conte crayon



Jamison Odone
Jonathan Weinberg, 2005
Ink on paper

DRAWING TOGETHER

by Jonathan Weinberg, Ph.D.

I first met Maurice Sendak in 1967 when he was forty, and I was just ten years old, at a party my mother threw for her New York intellectual friends. I imagine Maurice must have felt fragile, since he had only just recovered from a massive heart attack. Instead of socializing with the grownups, he let a little kid talk his ear off for over an hour. I even managed to charm him into drawing a beautiful drawing of a lion, that looks like he was plucked from Sendak's just published book *Higglety, Pigglety, Pop!*

My mother, a widow, was a close friend of Maurice's longtime companion, the psychiatrist Eugene (Gene) Glynn. As I grew into my teenage years, I saw Gene and Maurice almost every weekend and when five years later my mother died of cancer, Gene became a surrogate father to me, and Maurice something of a favorite uncle.

And so, growing up I had the privilege to watch Maurice work on some of his most important books, including *In the Night Kitchen*, and *Outside Over There*. But it was only in 2003, when my husband, Nicholas Boshnack and me came to live on Maurice's property, in the so-called "Nut House," that I really had the chance to know Maurice as an artist colleague. It was at this time that I first began to do paintings that focused on the human body, the portraits and male nudes that still occupy me to this day. Living next door to Maurice, I often had the opportunity to have long conversations with him about his work and the artists he loved like Winsor McCay and Vincent van Gogh and composers like Wolfgang Mozart, and Gustav Mahler.



Jonathan Weinberg
R. on the Couch, 2003
Acrylic on panel



Maurice Sendak
Lion (for Johnny), 1967
Ink on paper



Left: Maurice Sendak
Male Nude, 2004
Charcoal on paper



Right: Maurice Sendak
*Illustration for Heinrich
von Kleist, Penthesilea*
(New York: Harper/Collins, 1998)



Marc McChesney
Nude, 2006
Ink on paper



In 2004 Maurice asked me to form a figure drawing group. Since he was in his twenties, and studying at the Art Students League in New York, drawing from the nude had been a part of his practice, and essential to such projects as his illustrations for Randall Jarrell's *Fly by Night*, Herman Melville's *Pierre*, and Heinrich von Kleist's, *Penthesilea*.

Although Maurice liked to think of himself as a misanthrope, who only wanted to work and be left alone, he could be quite gregarious. At times he longed to talk with other artists and connect with young people. I had recently been asked to mentor a local artist who had just graduated from high school, Marc McChesney. I asked Marc to join the group and he in turn invited his best friend, the illustrator, Jamison Odone. From 2004-7, on occasional Sundays, we had three-hour sessions, drawing from a male model. Maurice was always the last one to arrive. He was torn between his desire to be alone working on his latest picture book like *Brundibar*, or the excitement of drawing directly from the human form, and the conversation that would ensue as we all drew together.

When Maurice's friend and longtime assistant, Lynn Caponera and I recall Maurice, the greatest challenge is conveying his humor and mischievousness. If his mood was right, he lit up the room and made the most banal bit of gossip or newspaper headline seem extraordinary. When he met someone new, he had a quality of empathy and curiosity that made them feel special. When we drew together at the Nut House, Maurice would invariably charm and engage the model in conversation so that he became a collaborator in the process of us making our sketches.

That first session with Maurice, I think we were all feeling intimidated to be drawing alongside the most celebrated illustrator of our time, but he immediately broke the ice when he said to the model "please move your hand to the side—that is way too difficult for me to draw it like that." The great artist Sendak told us right at the onset that he didn't find figure drawing easy, and also that it should be fun rather than some test of our skills. At the same time, we came to appreciate how much this artist who was so famous for creating fantasy creatures in



Jonathan Weinberg
Addison Self Portrait, 2006
Acrylic on panel

Where the Wild Things Are, valued working directly from life so that his imagined world would seem real, or in his words “true.”

If Maurice were someone who thought of himself as a hermit, Marc McChesney was literally agoraphobic, and he suffered from extreme OCD. Participating in the drawing group took enormous courage, but he was rewarded with Maurice’s mentorship. It profoundly changed his art, and he came to follow his footsteps to become an inspired illustrator, who unfortunately died before his masterpiece, *Tommy Thumb’s Song Book* was published. I don’t remember Marc ever being as happy as he was when he was drawing alongside Maurice.



Marc McChesney
*Illustration for Tommy Thumb's
Song Book*, 2019
Watercolor and ink on paper

Finally, Sunday in the Nut House brought me into the orbit of Jamison Odone, who became a lifetime friend and kindred spirit. I will let Jamison speak for himself about what the group meant for him, but for me it transformed into what had been in school a frustrating chore of having to finish a figure drawing in a few minutes to please a teacher, into an exhilarating process of learning to see that was also communal. We were not trying to make great art as we came under the spell of the beauty of the human form, and Maurice Sendak’s charisma. The paradox is that in sharing such an intense and joyful collaborative experience we found ourselves.

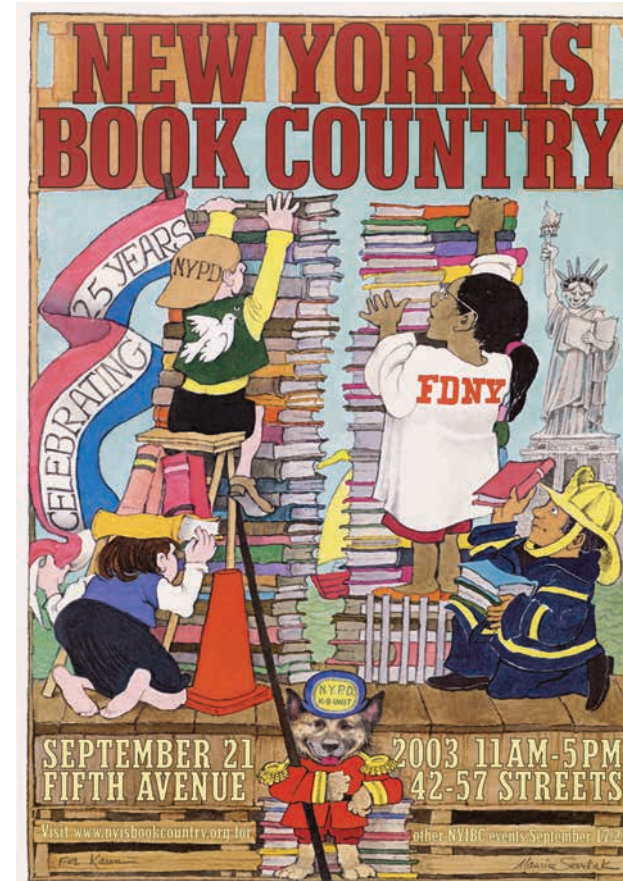
HAPPY HAPPENSTANCE 🍁

by Jamison Odone

When I moved from Boston to Ridgefield, Connecticut on December 23rd, 2003 I made some profoundly important friends. I had recently graduated college from The Art Institute of Boston where I met my girlfriend (now my wife) Erica Fabrizio. Had Erica not attended this school, then the story of my life would not have brought me to this small town in the most western part of New England where she grew up. I would not be the me that I am today.

My goal was to become an illustrator, but I had no idea when I moved to Ridgefield that I was sharing a zip code with one of the greatest living artists, Maurice Sendak. Maurice once described our meeting that led to such a great friendship and mentorship as a “happy happenstance.” I’ve always loved that description of how we met and came to be friends. How we came to spend evenings in his studio talking art, weekday afternoons taking long walks through the Sendakian wooded roads of this mysterious corner of Connecticut, and of course, Sundays at the Nut House for our figure drawing sessions.

I was first introduced to Marc McChesney by my wife’s sister, Allison while he was still a high school student. Marc had been recently been taken under the mentorship of Jonathan Weinberg, who was also a lifelong friend of Maurice. Almost immediately Marc and I discovered we were kindred spirits dedicated to our art. We would spend hours on the phone deep into the night, talking about favorite artists, while we worked on our pictures.



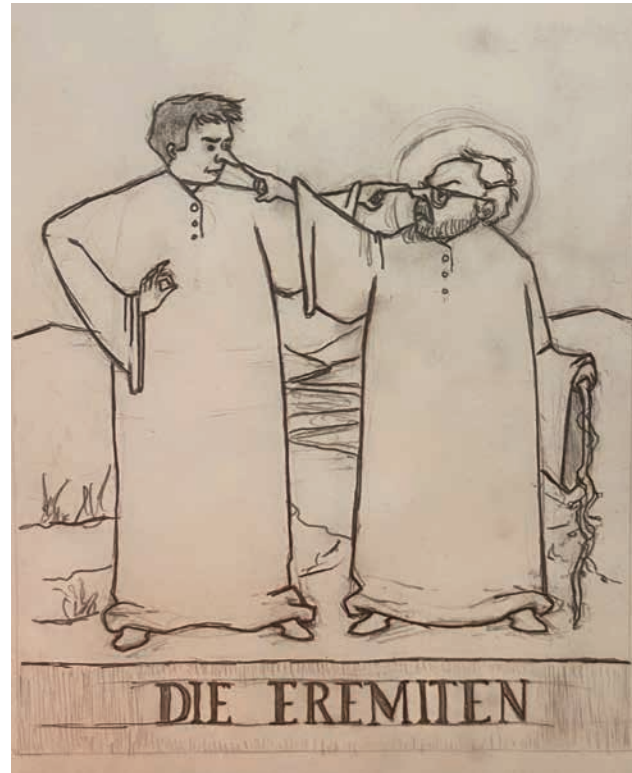
Maurice Sendak
New York is Book Country, 2003
Poster



Jamison Odone
Last Starry Night, 2018
Pen and ink with digital color



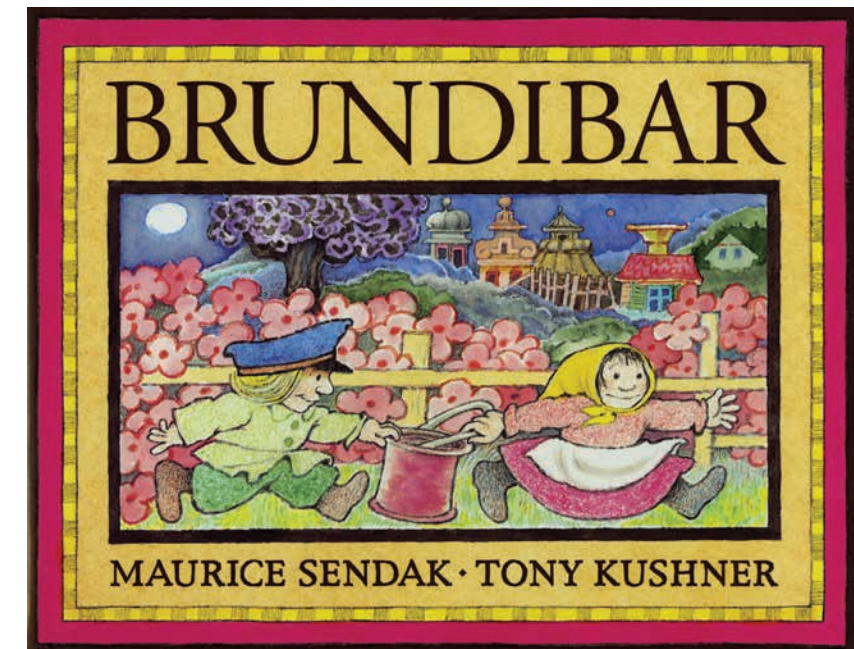
Marc McChesney
For Maurice, *Tommy Thumb Song Book*, 2013
 Watercolor and ink on paper



Marc McChesney
Die Eremiten (The Hermits), c. 2014
 Ink and pencil on paper

I soon began illustrating for the local newspaper, *The Ridgefield Press*. I gathered up a pile of my recently published works for the paper, found Maurice Sendak's mailing address, and sent him a package in the mail expressing my intent to write and illustrate picture books. A few weeks later, I met Maurice and Jonathan at our first Nut House drawing session. Maurice said something to me to the effect of, "You're the one who sent me your work. I'll call you." It was about a day or two later, around 10pm that he called and we chatted for a few hours.

I cannot overstate the influence Maurice had on my career. My first published book, *Honey Badgers* was conceived while taking him to a doctor's appointment and reading a story about honey badgers in a *National Geographic*. Maurice's viewing of my progress and painted pages always felt like such a splendid gift that I did not deserve.



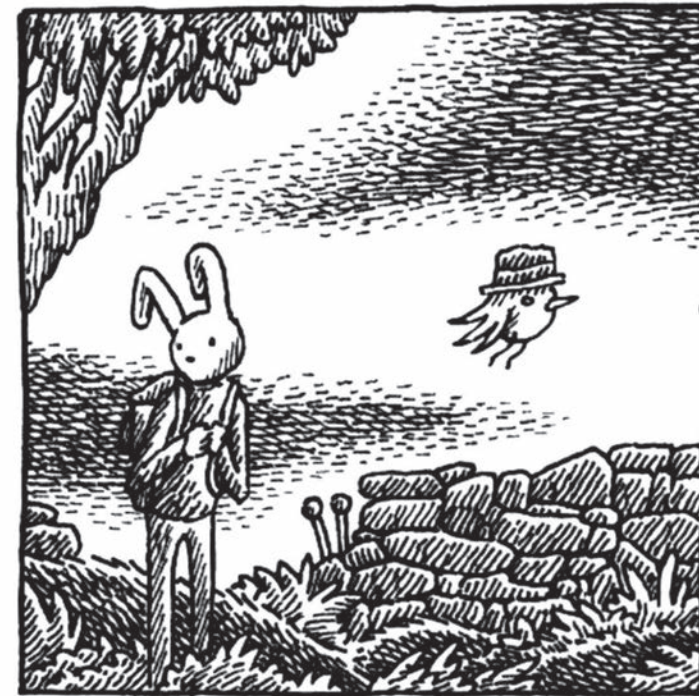
Maurice Sendak
 Cover, Maurice Sendak and
 Tony Kushner, *Brundibar*
 (New York: Hyperion, 2003)



Jamison Odone
The Last Starry Night, 2018
Pen and ink with digital color

My friendship with Jonathan spanned two decades and weathered the deaths of our two Nut House compatriots. Jonathan is also a supremely dedicated artist and truly a part of my history. We too met by “happy happenstance” and have enjoyed each other’s wit and wisdom over the years.

One thing that Maurice and I shared was that we both dwelled deeply upon death. This obsession is constantly in my mind and in my work and obviously, it hangs over this exhibition. Jonathan and I conceived of *Sunday at the Nut House* as a way to honor our two friends and to celebrate our experience of drawing together. But it is not just about the past. The exhibit includes works that I have created recently from my book *The Last Starry Night* about the final few months of the life of Vincent Van Gogh and it includes a set of



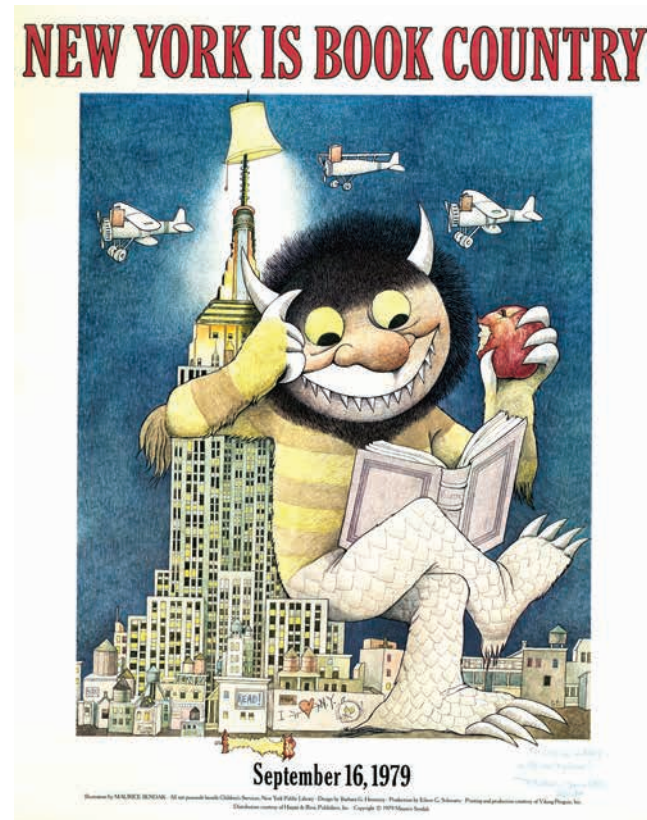
Jamison Odone
The Poison Tree
(Poem by William Blake), 2023
Pen and Ink

illustrations for William Blake’s “A Poison Tree.” In these illustrations you will see a rabbit and a bird. The rabbit represents me and the bird, Marc who had recently passed away when I made this publication.

When Maurice took ill in 2012, I was able to say my goodbyes at his hospital bedside. I quietly read him a few poems from William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. When Marc passed, it was sudden and unexpected. No goodbyes, no silly texts, nothing. Making illustrations based on his Blake poem felt like a “so long friend” in the way I know how to do it best, drawing.

MAURICE SENDAK 🍁 (1928-2012)

Maurice Sendak
New York is Book Country, 1979
Poster



Maurice Sendak was born on June 10, 1928, in Brooklyn, New York, to Jewish immigrant parents from Poland. A largely self-taught artist, Sendak illustrated over one hundred books during his sixty-year career.

The books he wrote as well as illustrated include *Kenny's Window*, *Very Far Away*, *The Sign on Rosie's Door*, *Nutshell Library* (consisting of *Chicken Soup with Rice*, *Alligators All Around*, *One Was Johnny*, and *Pierre*), *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, *In the Night Kitchen*, *Outside Over There*, *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy*, *Bumble-Ardy*, *My Brother's Book*, and *Presto and Zesto in Limboland* (co-authored by Arthur Yorinks). He has collaborated with such cele-

brated authors as Meindert DeJong, Tony Kushner, Randall Jarrell, Ruth Krauss, Else Holmelund Minarik, and Isaac Bashevis Singer. And he has illustrated classics by, the Brothers Grimm, Herman Melville, and Leo Tolstoy.

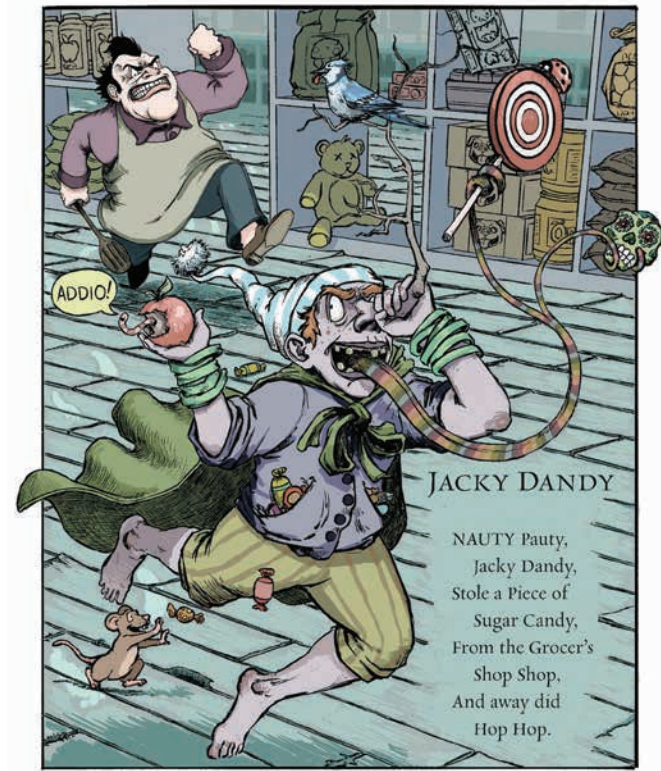
Sendak began a second career as a costume and stage designer in the late 1970s, designing operas that included Krása's *Brundibar*, Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*, and Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, as well as Tchaikovsky's ballet, *The Nutcracker*. He also designed the sets and costumes, as well as wrote the book and lyrics for the musical production of *Really Rosie*.

Maurice Sendak is the most honored children's book artist in history. He was the recipient of the 1964 Caldecott Medal, the 1970 Hans Christian Andersen Award, the 1983 Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, and the 2003 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. In 1996 President Bill Clinton presented him with the National Medal of Arts in recognition of his contribution to the arts in America.

In 1972 Sendak moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut with his partner of fifty years, the psychiatrist Dr. Eugene Glynn (1926-2007). Since Sendak's death in 2012, The Maurice Sendak Foundation has been overseeing the publication of virtually all of his picture books in new and faithfully rendered editions.

MARC M^CCHESNEY 🍌 (1985–2021)

Marc McChesney
Illustration for Tommy Thumb's
Song Book, 2013
Watercolor and ink on paper



Marc McChesney
Self-portrait, 2021
Ink and watercolor on paper



Marc McChesney was born in Bilthoven, The Netherlands to an American military family in 1985. A typical military brat hardened by a transient lifestyle, he learned to eschew long-lasting relationships and embraced the life of the introvert. He took up drawing at an early age, influenced by the standard American repertoire of comics and cartoons of the 1980s and 90s.

By the time he reached adolescence, he had replaced the influence of cartoons with that of fine art. His interest turned to abstract painting, with Jackson Pollock, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Egon Schiele, Oskar Kokoschka, Pablo Picasso, and Michelangelo as heroes. He was an apprentice to Jonathan Weinberg at age 18 in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

When he was in his twenties, McChesney was an assistant to master print-maker Gary Lichtenstein where he worked with several major artists including Robert Cottingham. Mentored by Maurice Sendak, their friendship grew, and McChesney shifted the major focus of his art from large scale painting to picture book illustration. In 2015 he was awarded The Sendak Fellowship. He illustrated M.T. Coffin's, *Grave Humor*, and the posthumously published, *Tom Thumb's Story Book*. At his untimely death, he was also working on a picture book based on Edward Lear's *Jumblies*.

JONATHAN WEINBERG, PH.D. 🍷

Jonathan Weinberg
Sacrifice of Isaac, 2021
Letterpress



Jonathan Weinberg, is an artist, art historian and Curator and Director of Research at The Maurice Sendak Foundation. Over the years, Jonathan has taught art history and art theory at Yale University and The Rhode Island School of Art. He has been the recipient of an artist-in-residence at The Getty Research Center, and The Addison Museum of American Art, and he is a Guggenheim Fellow. In the Spring of 2026 he gave Vassar College's Belle Krasne Ribicoff Lecture and Seminar on the art of Maurice Sendak and the picture book.

He is the author of several books, including *Ambition and Love in American Art*, and *Pier Goups: Art and Sex Along the New York Waterfront*. He was the lead curator of the 2019 award-winning touring exhibition, *Art After Stonewall: 1969-89* and he co-curated and edited the catalog for the 2023-24 touring retrospective, *Wild Things Are Happening: The Art of Maurice Sendak*. His paintings are in many important private and public collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Belkin Art Gallery, and The Montclair Art Museum.

JAMISON ODONE 🍷

Jamison Odone
Self-portrait, 2021
Pen and ink



Accomplished author and artist residing in Maryland. Jamison Odone is currently Professor of Illustration at Frostburg State University, where he shares his expertise with budding talents. Odone's imaginative creations have graced the pages of numerous publications and exhibitions including an early-career retrospective at New York's St. John's University in 2015 titled, *A Life Out Of Lines*.

Odone's recent publications include the graphic novels, *The Last Starry Night* (Black Panel Press 2024) and *My First Pandemic* (Black Panel Press 2022), as well as a collection of illustrated poems entitled *Mill Town Sonnets* (Bottlecap Press 2023) and *No Moon, No Beams* (Bottlecap Press 2024). In a *Publisher's Weekly* review of *The Last Starry Night*, they wrote, "The sweeping landscapes and minimalist, crosshatched drawings, with simple dialogue and narration, recall Tomi de Paolo's picture book art—which serves to highlight van Gogh's tenderness. In the crowded field of comics biographies, this stands out."



Maurice Sendak Drawing at the Nut House, August 30, 2007
Photo by Jonathan Weinberg

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Monday-Friday, 11am-5pm
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LYNNE COONEY, PHD

Director of Exhibitions & Galleries
Associate Professor of Art History

IAN COOPER

Exhibitions and Programs Manager

ARTISTS

Maurice Sendak
Jonathan Weinberg, Ph.D.
Jamison Odone
Marc McChesney

BOOKLET DESIGN

Heather Ferreira

Cover art: Jonathan Weinberg and Jamison Odone
Sunday at the Nut House, 2026, Digital

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