WILMINGTON, DE (May 29, 2012) – The Delaware Art Museum is pleased to present *Once Upon a Time in Delaware/In Quest of the Perfect Book*. On view June 23 – September 16, 2012, this exhibition explores decorative book covers through the eyes of contemporary artist Nina Katchadourian and long-time local collector Mary G. Sawyer.

Throughout her varied art-making practice, Nina Katchadourian has explored systems, codes, language, and communication. *Sorted Books* is an ongoing project, begun in 1993, in which the artist surveys a collection of books, selecting and arranging particular titles so that they can be read in sequence as stories or poems. The book clusters are photographed to shed light on the unique nature of any private or public library.

In 2009, Mary Sawyer donated her rare collection of over 2,000 decoratively bound books to the Museum’s Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives. Katchadourian worked primarily with the M.G. Sawyer Collection of Decorative Bindings to create her installation, which marries Sawyer’s interest in the book’s exterior with her method of grouping book covers to create works of art that explore the content of the collection as a whole.

*Once Upon a Time in Delaware/In Quest of the Perfect Book* provides a portrait of the Sawyer Collection and a look at United States history and culture between 1870 and 1920. At this time, fiction was dominated by romance, science, the automobile, the West, and stories about Native American, rural, and agricultural life. Novels about knights, kings, and adventure were also
popular during this period, which included the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the great north-western gold rush.

The “Golden Age” of book cover design coincided with this era of fiction. A true American design style developed in the mid-1840s, and by the 1890s, publishers began hiring well-known artist-designers, and fine arts movements—such as Art Nouveau—began to influence cover illustration. Maxfield Parrish, Jessie Wilcox Smith, Edward Penfield, and a host of other artists contributed to this new art form. Cover designs gradually became simplified after 1910, and by 1930 the decorated cloth cover was largely replaced by illustrated paper dust jackets. This exhibition traces the history of book cover designs and the history of the United States at the turn of the century through the ubiquitous form of the book.

About Nina Katchadourian

Nina Katchadourian (born 1968) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York and grew up spending every summer on a small island in the Finnish archipelago, where she still spends part of each year. She received Bachelor of Arts degrees in Visual Arts and Literature and Society from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California, San Diego.

Katchadourian’s work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions domestically and abroad at such venues as the Museum of Contemporary Art (San Diego), the Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia), MoMA PS1 (New York), and the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art. She has received commissions for public works of art by the Public Art Fund in New York and the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in Arizona. In 2006, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, presented Opener 11: Nina Katchadourian: All Forms of Attraction, a 10-year retrospective with an accompanying monograph. In February 2010, she was the artist in residence at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in New Zealand, where she presented a solo exhibition entitled Seat Assignment. Katchadourian has received multiple grants and awards—including Anonymous Was a Woman and Tiffany Foundation awards—and her work is included in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Hood Museum at Dartmouth
College, and the Wanås Foundation (Sweden), among others. Katchadourian is represented by Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco.

Organizers and Sponsors

*Once Upon a Time in Delaware/In Quest of the Perfect Book* is made possible by the Emily du Pont Memorial Exhibition Fund.

Additional support is provided by grants from the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency dedicated to nurturing and supporting the arts in Delaware, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts.

About the Delaware Art Museum

The Delaware Art Museum, located at 2301 Kentmere Parkway, Wilmington, DE 19806, is open Wednesday through Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and Sunday noon – 4:00 p.m. Admission fees are charged as follows: Adults (19 – 59) $12, Seniors (60+) $10, Students (with valid ID) $6, Youth (7 – 18) $6, and Children (6 and under) free. Admission to the Museum is free to all visitors on Sundays. The admission fee is waived thanks to generous support from Jessie Ball duPont Fund.

For more information, call 302-571-9590 or 866-232-3714 (toll free), or visit the website at [www.delart.org](http://www.delart.org)

Founded in 1912, the Delaware Art Museum is best known for its large collection of British Pre-Raphaelite art, works by Wilmington-native Howard Pyle and fellow American illustrators, and urban landscapes by John Sloan and his circle. Visitors can also enjoy the outdoor Copeland Sculpture Garden and a number of exhibitions throughout the year.

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