

# The New Criterion

## Art

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### Exhibition note

by [Molly McQuade](#)

On *The Wonderful Art of Oz* at the Eric Carle Museum.

*The Wonderful Art of Oz*  
at The Eric Carle Museum  
of Picture Book Art,  
Amherst, Massachusetts.  
July 11, 2006-October 22, 2006

William Wallace Denslow's illustrations for *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) bleed pictures across full pages and taunt the frame with chiseled, lacy, intervening images. His pen led him, at the turn of the twentieth century, to places other children's illustrators wouldn't go. So did his liking for asymmetry and for the unfettered use of color at a time when the children's genre did less with little.

The sardonic wit of Denslow—a sometime dandy and hard drinker—shod the doleful Tin Woodman with spats (look closely) and gave the important oilcan double duty as a cocktail glass. He was brave enough to make Dorothy, the heroine, appear ugly. He had the gall to compete with the author himself on many a page of *Oz*, where a ...

**Molly McQuade** recently co-judged the New Criterion Poetry Prize.

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