

UCSD receives original works of century's most important children's book writer/illustrator, Theodor Seuss Geisel

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Original material, valued at nearly \$2.3 million, from the estate of the late Theodor Seuss Geisel -- better known to the world as Dr. Seuss -- has been donated to the University of California, San Diego, by his widow, Audrey Stone Geisel of La Jolla.

The collection of creative work contains drawings, sketches, notebooks, books, tapes, records and memorabilia generally dating from the early 70s until the early 90s, although some earlier works also are included.

"The Dr. Seuss Collection" will be housed in UCSD's Central Library. A limited number of articles from the collection will be on display in the lecture hall of the Central Library, which will be named The Theodor S. and Audrey S. Geisel Room. The remainder will be located in the Special Collections section of the library.

In announcing the donation, UCSD Chancellor Richard C. Atkinson noted, "Ted Geisel is the most important children's author and fabulist of the 20th century; the gift of his Dr. Seuss collection will greatly enhance the prestige of UCSD."

"Ted would be tickled to know his whimsical Cat has moved uptown and is now in such rare and erudite company in the library," said Audrey Geisel, who serves on the boards of a number of UCSD support groups. "The incongruity of having the Cat ensconced next to a book stack with the works of Jonas Salk would delight him. When the first shovel was turned at UCSD, we talked about having his work here. I'm thrilled that his memorabilia will be preserved in such a magnificent building, and available to interested scholars."

Lynda Claassen, head of the Special Collections Department, noted that "the collection offers splendid documentation of the creative process as well as the creative genius of Ted Geisel. It's a collection that will enrich the resources available to serious scholars, and continue to delight children of all ages through displays and other library activities."

The Special Collections Department at UCSD is widely recognized for its collections of Pacific Voyages, Contemporary American Poetry, Baja California, Spanish Civil War, California History, and 20th Century Science.

The Dr. Seuss Collection at UCSD contains much of the original material found in the artist's studio at the time of his death in 1991 -- most importantly, drawings and manuscripts in many different forms relating to all of the Dr. Seuss books published after the late sixties.

The one exception is material for *The Lorax*, which he and his wife donated to the Lyndon B. Johnson Library in Texas, at the specific request of President Johnson, because it deals with environmental issues. Some very early works also were donated to UCLA and Dartmouth.

Also included in the UCSD donation is original material for television specials based on Dr. Seuss books, as well as original material from throughout the artist's career, on never-realized projects for television, the stage, film and other media.

The collection also contains notebooks from Geisel's college days, documents relating to his service during World War II, proofs of ad campaigns, academic honors, awards and correspondence.

Ted Geisel was born in Springfield, Mass. in 1904 of German- born parents. His talent for drawing was evident early on, as was his sense of humor. He graduated in 1925 from Dartmouth College, where he was editor-in-chief of the college comic monthly, and attended Oxford University, 1925-26.

His early career was in creating art for advertising (he designed the "Quick Henry! The Flit!" campaign -- the first major advertising campaign based entirely on cartoons) and writing and illustrating magazine stories. During the war (1943-46) he served in France and Germany and was decorated for his educational and informational films. He received Academy Awards for war-related documentaries in 1946 and 1947.

But it was in 1937 that the publication of his first children's book, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, launched the career which has tickled and enchanted generations of children and adults. *Horton the elephant*, *Thidwick the Moose*, *Yertle the Turtle*, *the Grinch and the Lorax* all followed over the decades, up to his last work, the wildly successful *Oh, the Places You'll Go*, published in 1990. But the *Cat in the Hat* probably is the character most closely associated with Dr. Seuss, and the *Cat* is probably the best-known character in American children's literature.

Geisel wrote *The Cat in the Hat* in 1957 for beginning readers, and its success was such that his publisher, Random House, created a new division called *Beginner Books*, of which he was president. He later wrote the *Bright and Early Books*, based on a 50-word vocabulary for preschool readers. Dr. Seuss books have been translated into languages as diverse as Hebrew and Afrikaans. Random House has established a scholarship in his name.

In all, 47 books, 10 television specials, a feature movie that has become a cult classic (*The 5000 Fingers of Dr.T*) numerous books written as Theo LeSieg (Geisel spelled backwards) and other pseudonyms, tracts on the environment, ideas for ballets, musicals and poems, came from this talented, creative genius.

In the final writing stage is a cable television show, *In Search of Dr. Seuss*, documenting the famed author-illustrator's life.

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