

Woodson Art Museum

in your classroom

Illusions and Illustrations
Mystery, Magic, & Mayhem
Winter 2014



Top: *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, 2007, digital reproduction, © 2001 and 2007 by Brian Selznick; Bottom: Harry Bouton, *Blackstone Oriental Nights*, ca. 1930, hand-drawn, four-color lithograph

Introduction

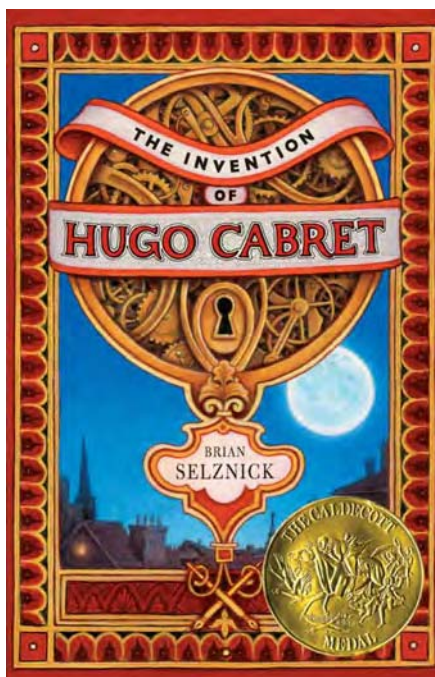
Wondrous and whimsical artwork transports Woodson visitors to a Parisian train station, the White House, Victorian England, and great American theaters through two exciting new exhibitions: *From Houdini to Hugo: The Art of Brian Selznick* and *Mystery, Magic, and Mayhem: Wonders from the American Museum of Magic* on view January 25 – April 6, 2014. Captivating stories and eye-catching graphics spark curiosity and invite imagination by way of dynamic illustrations and theatrical posters featuring famous American magicians.

Complementing the *Selznick* and *Magic* exhibitions will be a ten-foot snow sculpture of a rabbit springing from a top hat at the entrance of the Museum's Twelfth Street parking lot, to be completed Saturday, February 1 – see this magical monument before it melts! Finally, don't miss the opportunity for a magical residency visit with your class during magician Lou Lepore's early March residency; for details see the concluding page of these materials.

From Houdini to Hugo: The Art of Brian Selznick

Acclaimed children's book author and illustrator Brian Selznick made a name for himself through his innovative artistic style and keen ability to acquaint young audiences with historic figures in a fresh and thoughtful manner. *From Houdini to Hugo* features ninety-eight drawings and paintings, spanning Selznick's career as an illustrator for others and his later work writing and illustrating his own books. Artwork in the exhibition reveals the challenges and triumphs of a successful illustrator and Selznick's flexibility as an artist adapting illustrations to unique stories, styles, and authors. Eighteen books are

represented including *Frindle*, *Amelia and Eleanor Go For a Ride*, *The Boy of a Thousand Faces*, *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins*, *When Marion Sang*, *Walt Whitman: Words For America*, and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*.



Selznick gained international fame when his groundbreaking 526-page book *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* was adapted for the screen in the 2011 Academy Award-winning film *Hugo* directed by Martin Scorsese. The dynamic backdrop of a bustling 1930s Paris train station, the inventive and determined protagonist Hugo Cabret, and rich history of early cinema proved to be a winning combination for readers and movie-goers alike. Selznick's distinct ability to combine his passions for natural history, film, antiquity, and the arts into immersive narratives and detailed visuals sets his work apart.

Influences

Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is a love letter to turn-of-the-century French filmmaker George Méliès whose elaborately staged films took audiences on fantastical

journeys underwater, across battlefields, and to the moon. Early cinema is just one passion of Selznick's that informs his work as an author and illustrator. As a boy, Selznick built imagined worlds for action figures and trolls in his backyard – a fitting precursor to his academic career at Brown in set design. Next door at the Rhode Island School of Design, Selznick studied illustration where the artist's talent for drawing was honed. Selznick's interest in children's literature grew following his graduation and in an effort to learn more about the field, he began working at Eeyore's Books for Children in Manhattan. Over three years Selznick gained invaluable exposure to the world of children's literature exploring the works of artists and authors he admired while observing the ins and outs of the publishing world. Selznick's first book, *The Houdini Box*, was published in 1991, while he was still working at the bookstore.

Brian Selznick gained a reputation as a talented up-and-coming illustrator and earned awards for illustrating books written by authors Andrew Clements, Pam Muñoz Ryan, and Barbara Kerley. In 2002, Selznick's illustrations for *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins* earned him a Texas Bluebonnet and Caldecott Honor and a Robert F. Sibert Honor for *When Marian Sang*. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* quickly rose to the top of *The New York Times* Best Sellers List and the book was awarded the 2008 Caldecott Medal, which honors exceptional work in illustration.

Selznick is a great admirer of the works of his fellow authors and illustrators, including Remy Charlip – who served as the model for George Méliès in the *Hugo* illustrations, Maurice Sendak, and Arnold Lobel. Sendak's work and friendship served as major influences in the development of *Hugo Cabret*; Selznick explains how in a 2011 interview with author Michelle Aldrege:

“I've always loved the wild rumpus in *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak because the words disappear, the pictures take up the whole page, and we move forward in the story by turning the pages. The more I thought about this idea, the more I thought how interesting it would be to have part of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* told with pictures, because the story involves the early history of cinema. The pictures would be like a series of silent movies running throughout the book, helping to tell the story. When I got this idea, I had to go back and take OUT all the text that I was going to replace with pictures.”

Check out this link (http://www.theinventionofhugocabret.com/slideshow_flash.htm) to a slideshow, that documents the opening illustrations of *Hugo* without text, proving that a picture is truly worth a thousand words.

Selznick's interest in the enigmatic world of magic makes the companion exhibition *Mystery, Magic, and Mayhem* a perfect complement to the artist's illustrations. George Méliès began his creative career as a French illusionist and stage magician whose vast collection of automata inspired Méliès and, nearly a century later, Brian Selznick. Automata are self-operating machines, which through a complex series of carefully engineered gears and mechanisms are able to perform an array of repetitive actions or tasks. Clockmakers were natural designers of automata and used their knowledge of “complications” and intricately crafted machines to create fascinating automata in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Automata dazzled audiences with their independent movements, which from afar on stage, appeared to be truly magical. “The Father of Modern Magic,” Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin, Houdini's stage name namesake, was famous for his automata. Houdin worked as an accomplished watchmaker in Paris before indulging his passion for illusion and becoming a stage magician. His costar was Antonio, an

automaton of a small man who performed acrobatic feats “taught” to him by Houdin during the act. Of course, the elaborate routines and subsequent instruction all had to be carefully designed by Houdin in his workshop. Victorian audiences were bewildered by this machine brought to life by Houdin’s magic, and automata became a mainstay for magicians throughout the golden age of magic.



Brian Selznick, *Hugo and Isabelle with the Automaton*, pencil on watercolor paper, 2007

Process and Design

Brian Selznick’s illustrations are defined by their detail, textures created with tight graphite lines, and acute compositions. Selznick’s drawings and paintings are evocative and encourage readers to place themselves within the scenes and circumstances of the characters. The artist comfortably works in acrylic, watercolor, ink, and pencil almost exclusively on fibrous watercolor paper. His exacting use of hatching and crosshatching gives his work dramatic value or light/dark intensity, depth, and texture. [Hatching is a drawing technique involving rows of parallel lines used to add tone and quality to a subject. Crosshatching is the layering of lines in a crisscross pattern, which darkens tones and increases contrast in a drawing.] In discussing his illustration process for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, Selznick explains his desire to create a cinematic quality in the work:

“I work on this very small scale with an HB pencil, often with a magnifying glass. Part of what I was doing was to get the tone of black-and-white early French film. There was this richness in the textures of early cinema. It’s a way to achieve a certain kind of shading I want. I like drawing light, but of course to do that, you are drawing darkness. I’ve always crosshatched.”

Selznick creates detailed dummy books, or small-scale mockups, of a book he is working on and creates his finished drawings for recent works at one quarter their print size. By working tightly and on a small scale, Selznick achieves the control and intimacy he desires for an illustration and when blown up to the book’s intended print size, the drawings and paintings have a looser quality. Selznick wants readers to be able to see the artist’s hand in his work and enjoys the airy, sketch-like style the drawings take on.



Brian Selznick, *Houdini was a Magician*, Bic pen on watercolor paper, 1991

Classroom Connections

Selznick’s work as an illustrator and author draws upon a variety of historic subjects and events. A number of books featured in the exhibition can serve as introductions to an array of subjects.

- *Amelia and Eleanor Go For a Ride*: On a clear April evening in 1933, two outspoken and strong-minded friends slipped away from a formal dinner party to have a little unconventional fun. What made this event remarkable was that the two were Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt, dining at the White House; their entertainment of choice was to fly an airplane on a loop from Washington D.C. to Baltimore. Pooh-poohing Secret Service agents’ concerns that this activity hadn’t been “approved,” the celebrated aviator and the First Lady stole away before dessert was served, and took to

the sky. Brian Selznick lived in Washington D.C. while researching the graphite and colored pencil drawings for this book, which include authentic wallpaper and china patterns.

- *When Marian Sang*: This is a story about gifted black contralto Marian Anderson (1897-1993), undoubtedly one of America's greatest singers. The book traces the African-American diva's journey from her beginnings as an eight-year-old church choir wonder, through years of struggle to rise above the racism that would delay her debut with the Metropolitan Opera until she was 57! Anderson was hardly known in her own country because of her race – music schools ignored her applications and even after she began singing professionally, many venues only featured white performers. The author recounts Anderson's overwhelming success in Europe, and the book reaches its climax with a wordless, deep brown two-page spread from Selznick, a crowd's-eye view of Anderson singing at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939, an historic concert that drew an integrated audience of over 75,000. Selznick worked with a sepia-toned palette, and the paintings shimmer with emotion. This book would be a great anchor point to start a discussion on the issues of race and color that persisted in our country at that time.
- *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins*: Waterhouse Hawkins was a British sculptor of the mid-nineteenth century who teamed up with paleontologist Richard Owen to create life size models of the dinosaurs known to exist at that time. Hawkins' dinosaurs were to the mid-nineteenth century what Spielberg's movie *Jurassic Park* has been to the late-twentieth – they brought dinosaurs to the center of the public eye.
- *Walt Whitman: Words for America*: The biography of famous American poet Walt Whitman is explored through his passions for language, democracy, America, and the common man. Whitman served as a nurse during the American Civil War and honored the lives of soldiers through his writings by giving voices to those who had none during the war. Original poems by Whitman invite young students to experience gripping American history through a poet's lens.
- *Wingwalker*: This book is for students who love science and airplanes! The chapter book opens in 1933, when the young narrator wins an airplane ride with a stunt pilot at the Oklahoma Air Races. After the dreaded wild ride, Reuben swears he will never go higher than his attic window; but Reuben's sights are to be radically expanded. When dust storms turn the green prairies into what the author calls the color of meal crackers, Reuben's parents lose their jobs. His father, answering an ad for a "wing walker" who "must be brave and light on the feet" (the job entails standing on the wing of a plane as it circles above paying onlookers), moves the family to join a carnival in Minnesota. *Wingwalker* is set during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. How are the times we live in different? This book also can be used as tool to introduce the invention of planes, or to talk about overcoming fear.

Brian Selznick educational materials were developed in part with information provided by the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature (NCCIL), the organizer of From Houdini to Hugo.

Mystery, Magic, and Mayhem: Wonders from the American Museum of Magic

Mystery, Magic, and Mayhem features thirty-one large poster prints of great magic acts throughout history. The rare historic prints feature highly stylized and theatrical renditions of magicians and the awe-inspiring themes and feats of their performances.

Masters of American Magic

Many famous magicians are featured in *Mystery, Magic, and Mayhem*, including Harry Houdini, Harry Blackstone, and Howard Thurston. The stories of these magicians paint a social and artistic landscape of popular entertainment and culture in American history, during which the art of illusion was a mainstay.

Harry Houdini (1874 – 1926)

Houdini's name is synonymous with American magic – a lasting reputation this larger than life performer fought tooth and nail to preserve. Born Ehrich Weiss in Budapest, Hungary in 1874, Weiss came from a large and very poor family. The Weiss family immigrated to America while Weiss was a young boy, settling in Appleton, Wisconsin. Later in life, Houdini claimed he was from the Midwest, ashamed of his family's immigrant background. As a teenage acrobat in a traveling circus, he was drawn to magic and the stage. At seventeen, he took the name Harry Houdini in honor of his idol, the legendary magician Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin. The newly minted Houdini, along with his brother Theo, who called himself Hardeen, performed together at Coney Island where Houdini met his future wife, Bess, a vaudeville singer and dancer. Soon Bess replaced Theo as Houdini's counterpart on stage and the two toured the European theater circuits after lukewarm bookings and reception in the United States. While abroad, Houdini's reputation grew rapidly and the duo became known for a variety of illusions, including a trick called "The Metamorphosis," involving a substitution trunk in which one person is replaced with another in seconds; the art of mentalism; and complex and dangerous handcuff escapes.

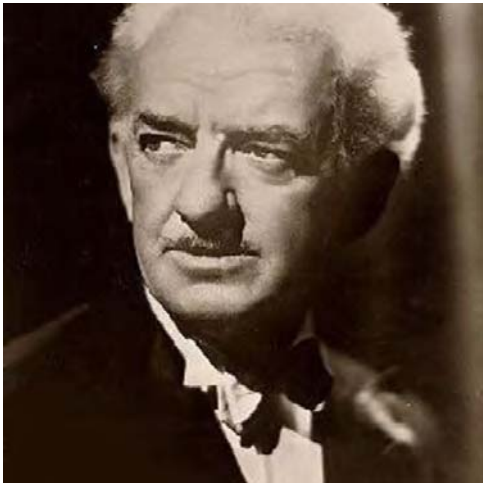
Houdini was and remains America's greatest escape artist, who brought magic to the masses from packed theaters to bustling city streets. For Houdini, all the world truly was a stage. He tapped into America's psyche – in a time of mass industrialization, when people felt as if they were becoming cogs in machines. Houdini represented the indomitable spirit of the individual who could accomplish greatness. Houdini became somewhat of a "sex symbol" in Europe and America, performing feats nearly naked to prove he wasn't hiding anything that may have aided him



in his escapes and to show off his muscular physique to adoring fans. Houdini's larger-than-life stunts were only outdone by his giant ego. The magician was determined to stamp out any and all competition and felt slighted whenever he wasn't in the spotlight. Houdini's career has stood the test of time due to his remarkable talent, ruthless competitive nature, and the fact that he did nothing without a camera present.

Harry Blackstone, Sr. (1885 – 1965)

The Blackstone name can be likened to American magic royalty. Harry Blackstone, Sr. was one of the most popular magicians during America's golden age of magic (the early twentieth century) and is believed by many, including his contemporaries, to be history's best all-around magician. Born Harry Bouton in 1885 in Chicago, his first job was working as a cabinetmaker's assistant. As a young man he saw a performance by magician Harry Kellar and knew he had found his calling. Bouton's early exposure to cabinetry proved invaluable as he designed and built illusions for his stage performances, which included sawing a woman in half, a dancing



handkerchief, a levitating and illuminated light bulb, and floating assistants who rose parallel above the stage. Blackstone also was famous for his magic geared toward children and during his sixty-five career gave away over 153,000 white rabbits to children in his audiences.

Blackstone's performances ranged from intimate crowds to sold-out theaters and from overseas USO shows during WWII to national television programs.

Blackstone's gentle humor, stately manner, and grand illusions reached millions of Americans in love with magic. Blackstone's son Harry Blackstone, Jr. (1934 – 1997) went on to become a great magician in his own right, honoring some of his father's most famous

illusions and classic, grand style.

Howard Thurston (1869 – 1936)

Howard Thurston was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1869. An unhappy child, Thurston ran away at a young age to join the circus, where he performed in a sideshow and became hooked on magic. Also performing in the traveling circus was Harry Kellar, who was to become an equally renowned magician whom Thurston would succeed. Billing himself as "The King of Cards" Thurston's initial fame came from his outstanding reputation for card manipulations although his illusions – like his ambitions – grew by leaps and bounds. Like many other American magicians of his time, Thurston found eager audiences in Europe, only returning to the US when a large traveling show – requiring ten train cars to transport large illusion props and floods of assistants – could be ensured to compete successfully with contemporaries like Harry Houdini. Thurston's most famous illusions included making a car filled with beautiful women among many other things disappear.

Before Your Visit

- With your students, review these vocabulary words, which explore the tools of the trade used by book illustrators including Brian Selznick.

Dummy

A rough mock-up of a book.

Early Reader

Books intended for children to read to themselves with minimal help, as opposed to picture books, which are usually meant to be read to children by an older reader.

Font

A typeface style.

Full-Bleed

An illustration in which the printing goes all the way to the edge of the page. Full-bleed illustrations are more expensive because the book must be printed larger than the illustrations and trimmed.

Front Matter

The pages preceding the main text of a book: title page, author, illustrator, copyright page, colophon (explanation of materials and derivations authors/artists use), ISBN number, and disclaimers.

Gutter

The “valley” formed between the left- and right-hand pages. A bit of the illustration placed there is lost unless the book is forced to open flat.

Half-Title

The first page of some books displaying only the title.

Picture Book

Illustrations support or extend the text. Picture books are generally of a vocabulary and interest level appropriate for primary-grade readers.

Running Manuscript

The text of a book presented as a standard double-spaced manuscript, not showing the page breaks of the finished book.

Selvage

The edge of a sheet of paper.

Signature

A folded group of pages that is one unit of a book.

Spot Illustration

A smaller illustration, which floats on the page or is inserted in the midst of text or at the start of a chapter.

Storyboard

A one-page layout of the whole book, often very rough, with minimal sketches; it usually includes some indication of text.

Thumbnail

A small, rough sketch to determine layout and element positioning.

Title Page

A first or second page of a picture book, including the title, author's name and illustrator, publisher and often an illustration.

Activities

- Invite students to develop a short, two-to-four page story they would like to expand into an illustrated book. Have students draft thumbnail sketches of plot points they feel could be successfully communicated through illustrations – with minimal or no text, just like Selznick! Ask students to storyboard or layout a series of these thumbnails to see their stories unfold.
- If a student were to create a poster of themselves, showcasing a special talent or interest they have, what would it look like? Use these examples from *Mystery, Magic, and Mayhem* to draw inspiration.



Harry Kellar, *The Witch, the Sailor, and the Enchanted Monkey*, ca. 1905, hand-drawn, four-color lithograph



Charles Carter, *Carter the Great – The Secrets of the Sphinx*, 1926, hand-drawn, four-color lithograph



Karl Germain, *Germain The Wizard*, ca. 1910, lithograph

@ The Woodson

During your visit to the Woodson Art Museum, a docent will lead your group through the galleries, offering insights and encouraging thoughtful dialogue inspired by the artworks. All docent-led Art Museum Experiences involve opportunities for hands-on artmaking inspired by an artwork or idea discussed. Inspired by the resourceful Hugo Cabret, students will work in the Museum's classroom to design and create an invention of some kind using everyday tools and materials. When working to repair his automaton, Hugo relies on easily accessible objects and his own imagination; similarly, students will receive a small kit of materials, a piece of paper, and a pencil and will be challenged to design an invention – a new tool, a repair to an existing object, or even an automaton – inspired by what's in their kit. Be creative. Happy inventing!

Each kit will include:

- 1 clothespin
- 1 rubber band
- 1 large brad
- 1 small brad
- 1 paperclip
- 1 small piece of paper
- 1 cotton swab

Activity Guides

Each student receives an Activity Guide to extend learning in the classroom and at home. When students leave the Museum with an Activity Guide in hand, they are able to share their Museum visit with friends and family outside the gallery walls, along with their newfound expertise and enthusiasm.

Woodson Art Museum Information

Please encourage your students to visit the Museum with their families and share what they've learned. Admission is ALWAYS FREE! The Museum is open 9 am – 4 pm, Tuesday – Friday, and Noon – 5 pm on Saturday and Sunday. On the first Thursday of every month – Night Out @ the Woodson – the Museum offers hands-on art for all ages from 5:30 – 7 pm. Call the Museum or visit the website for more information:

Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum

700 N. Twelfth St.
Wausau, WI 54403

lywam.org

715.845.7010

Now You See It – Now You Don't

Magician Lou Lepore in Residence

Tuesday – Sunday, March 4 – 9

Lou Lepore champions the power of magic to break down barriers and help people – especially children – overcome inhibitions. Practitioners gain confidence as they discover that performing magic tricks helps them interact with, amuse, and mesmerize others.



During a six-day residency, Lou presents the art of stage magic – teaching introductory card tricks and illusions to students during class visits to the Museum, sharing his enthusiasm for the legendary masters of American magic, and demystifying tricks of the trade in programs for all ages.

March 4 Tuesday 4:30 – 6 pm

Little Masters & Young Artists

Children, 5-12 years, take inspiration from the magic-themed artwork in the galleries and learn insights from Lou. ☎

March 6 Thursday 5:30 – 6:30 pm

Art History 101

Masters of American Magic

Magician-in-residence Lou Lepore surveys the theatrical origins of legendary magicians whose careers are explored in *Mystery, Magic, and Mayhem*.

March 6 Thursday 6:30 – 7 pm

Sleight of Hand

Puzzling Performances

How do magicians captivate audiences by fooling the eye? See one ace practitioner demonstrate his expertise.

March 8 Saturday 1 – 3 pm

Family Magic Day

Bring family and friends to unlock your inner magician. Join Lou to explore how learning and performing magic tricks can boost confidence. Gain insider tips during this drop-in, intergenerational program.

March 8 Saturday 3 – 5 pm

Elusive Illusions

Lou meanders through galleries, demonstrating sleight-of-hand and card tricks galore.

March 9 Sunday 1 – 2 pm

Wizard's Gallery Walk

Join Lou for insights into the performers represented in *Mystery, Magic, and Mayhem*, many of whom billed themselves as the demigods of illusion and mentalism and captivated American audiences with grandiose theatrics.



Charles Nicol (1871 – 1959), Von Arx

"Now You See It – Now You Don't" funding comes from a Community Arts Grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin, with funds from the Wisconsin Arts Board, Community Foundation, and the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation.

