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Edward Koren: The Capricious Line Press Release

Bellarmino Museum of Art

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New Yorker cartoonist exhibition “Edward Koren: The Capricious Line” at Fairfield University’s Bellarmine Museum of Art February 5 – April 8, 2016

FAIRFIELD, Conn. (January 5, 2016) — Fairfield University’s Bellarmine Museum of Art presents its new exhibition, “Edward Koren: The Capricious Line,” a major survey of the work of the artist best known for his cartoons and cover illustrations for *The New Yorker* magazine, on view from Friday, February 5, through Friday, April 8, 2016. An opening reception, free and open to the public, will take place in Bellarmine Hall on Thursday, February 4 from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

The exhibition explores the full range of art that Koren has produced during the past five decades, including original drawings for cartoons and illustrated books as well as prints and independent drawings, many never before displayed. The show examines Koren’s continuing experimentation with ideas and forms through a variety of finished drawings, many surprisingly large.

The artist’s “capricious line” consists primarily of short strokes that create remarkably descriptive and expressive images. Koren’s work brings us into the realm of fantasy based firmly in reality, such contradiction being one source of the works’ humor. One section of the exhibition is devoted to inventive and whimsical sketches in the grand tradition of the *capriccio*, a group of theatrical figures offering idiosyncratic variations on the venerable characters of the *commedia dell’arte*. Another section explores Koren’s fascination with the natural world and its inhabitants, depicting creatures generated more by the momentum of artist’s graphic imagination than by the laws of Darwinian evolution. Four dramatic panorama drawings, inspired by dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History, introduce audiences to new and imaginary species in Koren’s bestiary. In the series *Hôtel de Paris*, he populates imagined architectural spaces with his own fantastic creatures, furry beings scuttling along on two or more legs.

A primary focus of the exhibition is Koren’s drawings for cartoons, which highlight his role as observer of contemporary society and as a gently acerbic critic of a cultural scene that seems to demand his graphic commentary. The artist himself has defined his objective intimacy with that world: “Clichés or ritual acts that annoy or amuse me or intrigue me are points of entry that allow me to construct small dramas,

frozen in time and space, that people will laugh at (because they might have recognized themselves), and that *I* do laugh at (because I have recognized myself).”

Edward Koren: The Capricious Line is curated by Diana Fane and the late David Rosand, developed by the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Gallery, New York, and organized for tour by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC. This exhibition is made possible, in part, by the National Endowment for the Humanities, with additional support from the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation. The Westport Library is a community partner, and *TownVibe* is the media sponsor for this exhibition.

Prior to the opening reception on February 4, the public is invited to a free talk, “The Art of The New Yorker: Drawing and Decision — A Conversation with Cartoonists Lee Lorenz and Edward Koren,” in Fairfield University’s George F. Diffley Board Room in Bellarmine Hall. Koren and Lorenz will speak at 5 p.m. about their years as cartoonists and their time together at *The New Yorker*.

In conjunction with this exhibition the museum will present “Family Day: Cartoon Art” on Saturday, February 20, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Family Day will be held at the Bellarmine Museum of Art and will feature two sessions of drop-in craft activities and child-friendly tours. Family Days are designed for children ages 4-10 and are free and open to the public. The museum will be open to the public from 1-4 p.m. that day. Family Days are made possible by a grant from the Maximilian E. and Marion O. Hoffman Foundation. Please pre-register for one of the two sessions at bellarminewag.eventbrite.com, as space is limited.

Award-winning illustrator and teacher of visual thinking, Sean Kelly, will speak on Tuesday, April 5 from 5-6:30 p.m. on “A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: The Power of Symbols in Political Cartoons.” Please pre-register for this and all of the events related to this exhibition at bellarminewag.eventbrite.com. All events are free, but space is limited.

Very Semi-Serious (HBO, 2015), an offbeat documentary about humor, art and the genius of *The New Yorker* cartoon will be shown at The Westport Library on Wednesday, March 16 at 7 p.m., in the McManus Room. The Bellarmine Museum will sponsor the film, which will be introduced by the museum’s Director and Chief Curator, Dr. Linda Wolk-Simon.

The Bellarmine Museum of Art is located on the lower level of Bellarmine Hall on the Fairfield University campus at 200 Barlow Road, Fairfield, Conn. It is free and open to

the public Monday to Friday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., when classes are in session. Please consult the museum website for details at fairfield.edu/museum.

Image credit: Edward Koren, 24 - Hour Banking, 1990. Mixed media on BFK Rives paper. Photo courtesy of the artist.

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