

the spark of an icon:

A Behind-the-Scenes Look at
Dr. Seuss's Concept Drawings



introduction

It is nearly impossible to imagine a world without Dr. Seuss's characters. They have been woven into the fabric of popular culture for over three quarters of a century. However, there was a time when they only existed in the far reaches of one man's mind.

With simply a pencil, paper, and his trusted drawing table, these never-before-seen characters passed from the ethereal to the tangible in a series of frenetic, bold, and highly impulsive concept drawings. These were dress rehearsals. They were the first spark of an idea and marked the inception of such iconic characters as The Cat in the Hat, Horton, and Sam-I-am.

The concept drawings included in this historic exhibition offer a rare, behind-the-scenes view into Theodor Seuss Geisel's (aka Dr. Seuss) artistic process. They exemplify the transformative power of ideas and how, in one quick stroke of a pencil, ideas can change the world.

Theodor Seuss Geisel (aka Dr. Seuss) in his studio in La Jolla, CA circa 1949.



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the concept drawings of dr. seuss

The thrill of going behind-the-scenes to view the artistic process is an opportunity very few people ever get. In the case of Dr. Seuss, we can no longer visit his studio or see his creative process in action. These concept drawings, however, transport us to the moment of creation and allow us to peer over his shoulder as they come to life. We can feel the spark of creation as we follow the curved and dippy lines, and watch as they form the icons that have now become so familiar in our everyday lives.

Do You Like Green Eggs and Ham? concept illustration for the 1960 book, *Green Eggs and Ham*.



Ted Geisel (aka Dr. Seuss) drew each page for every Dr. Seuss book published during his lifetime. What many people don't realize is that for each final-line drawing, he would create multiple concept drawings leading up to the final published image.

In the early pencil sketches, we see the frenetic energy of someone trying to work out his ideas as quickly as possible, almost as if he is going to lose the inkling if he doesn't work fast enough. The remarkable outcome of such impulsive

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Ted Geisel sitting in front of the concept drawings for *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* circa 1990.

“Ted’s tireless reworking of these drawings, in many cases over the course of an entire year, was an effort to get his characters and compositions to be more powerful, more insightful, and closer to the lessons he endeavored to convey.

energy is that, in these tangled lines, he captures the entirety of a character’s personality.

In the more refined pen and ink concept drawings, we see the nuanced changes that push the story forward. Ted’s tireless reworking of these drawings, in many cases over the course of an entire year, was an effort to get his characters and compositions to be more powerful, more insightful, and closer to the lessons he endeavored to convey. He would draw each page multiple times, beginning with the rough pencil sketches and evolving to the final pen and ink drawings. If unsatisfied, he would begin again.

Each new series of drawings would be tacked up on the corkboard walls of his studio. Simultaneously, he would rewrite text passages, cut them out and paste them onto the new drawings until he was surrounded by the developing story. He would repeat this process multiple times in his quest to perfect the narrative. The magic of Dr. Seuss was that, while he never felt he achieved perfection, he always left us feeling as if he did.

The works in this exhibition are a shining example that perfection is illusive, that perseverance in achieving one’s goals is a worthy pursuit, and that passion for one’s craft is more important than achieving the perfect outcome.



the pencil sketches

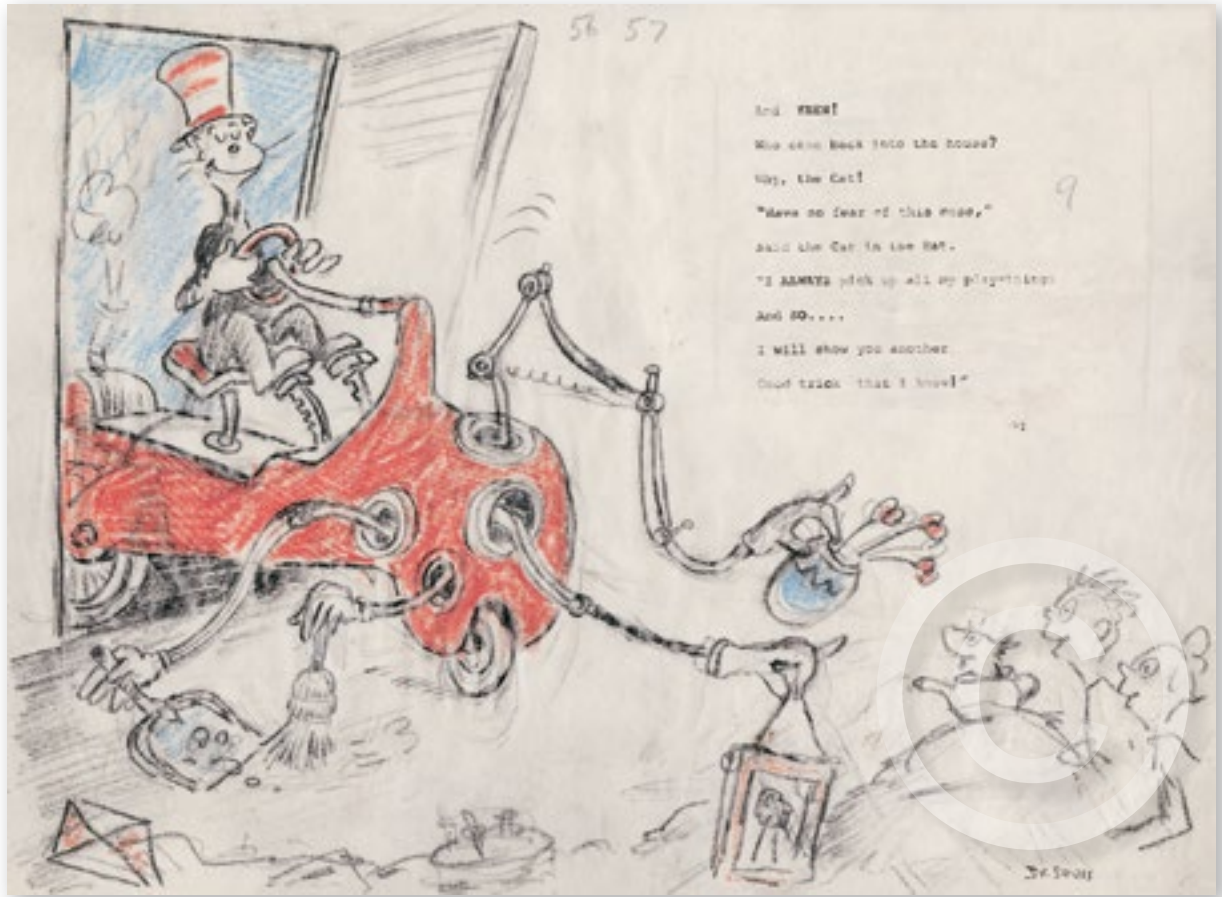
Ted's early pencil sketches capture the creative impulse of the artist just as his ideas are tumbling from his mind to the drawing page for the first time. The spirit of the final images are intact, the details have been roughed-in, character personalities have taken shape and the path toward a final-line drawing has been mapped out. Ted was less worried about the quality of the line at this stage and seemed more focused on the energy and personality of the scene.

Some of the world's most iconic characters and memorable compositions were born during this stage, with the spark of creation changing the face of children's literature forever.

“Ted was less worried about the quality of the line at this stage and seemed more focused on the energy and personality of the scene.”



Out of the Box Came Thing One and Thing Two (detail) concept illustration for the 1957 book, *The Cat in the Hat*.



I ALWAYS PICK UP ALL MY PLAY-THINGS

Fine Art Pigment Print with Collage on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 14" x 19"

Limited Edition of 1500 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, and 5 Hors d'Commerce



OUT OF THE BOX CAME THING TWO AND THING ONE - TRIPTYCH

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper

Image Size: 11" x 14" Paper Size: 14.5" x 48.75"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs

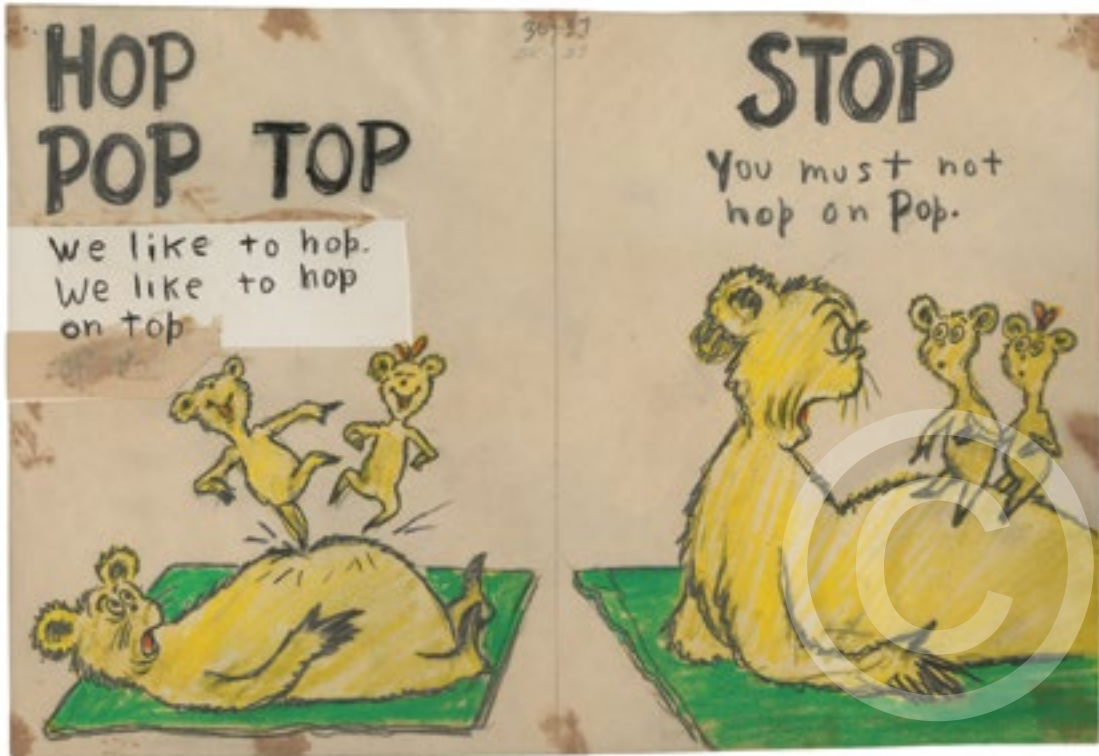


DR. SEUSS'S ABC

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper

Image and Paper Size: 23" x 32"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs



Dr. Seuss

HOP POP TOP

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image Size: 14" x 22" Paper Size: 18.5" x 25"

Limited Edition of 1500 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, and 5 Hors d'Commerce



JUST NORTH OF WHO-VILLE

Mixed-Media Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 36" x 31.75"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs



ALL I NEED IS A REINDEER...

Fine Art Pigment Print with Collage on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 20" x 17.5"

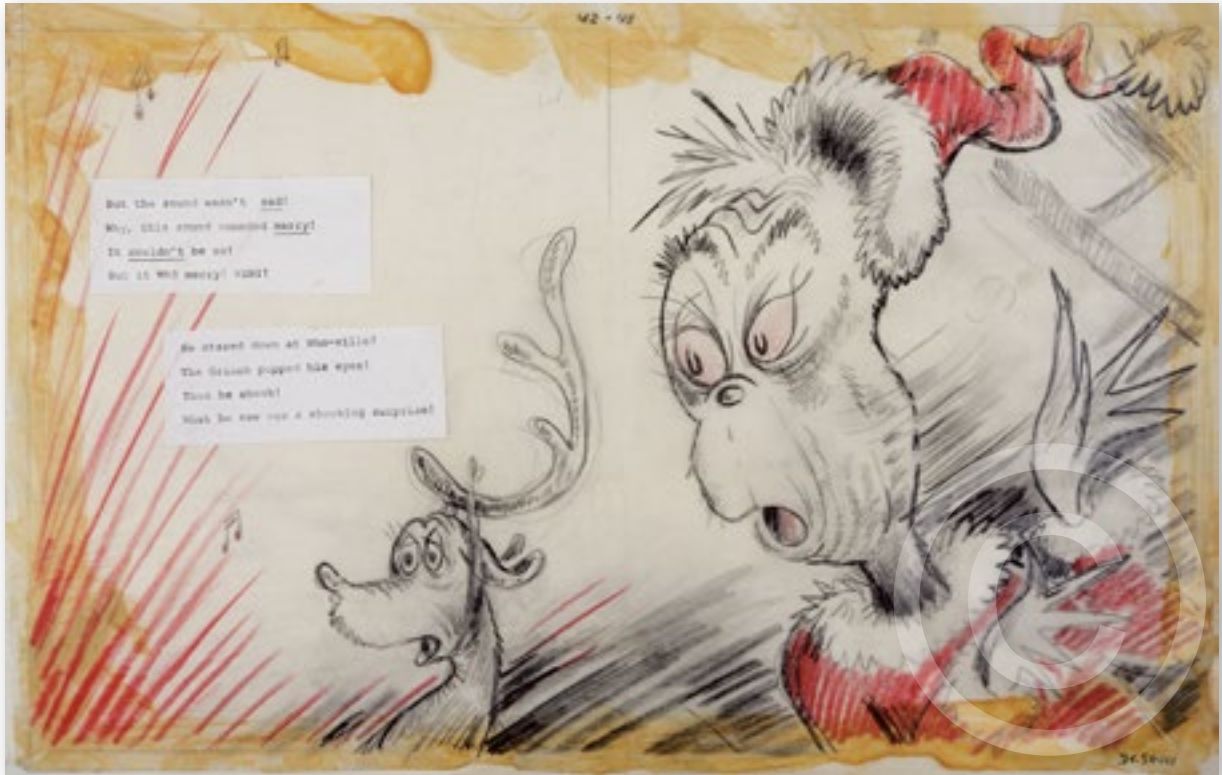
Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
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THE GRINCH 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Mixed-Media Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 29" x 26"

Limited Edition of 395 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce,
2 Printer's Proofs, and 60 Special Reserve Prints

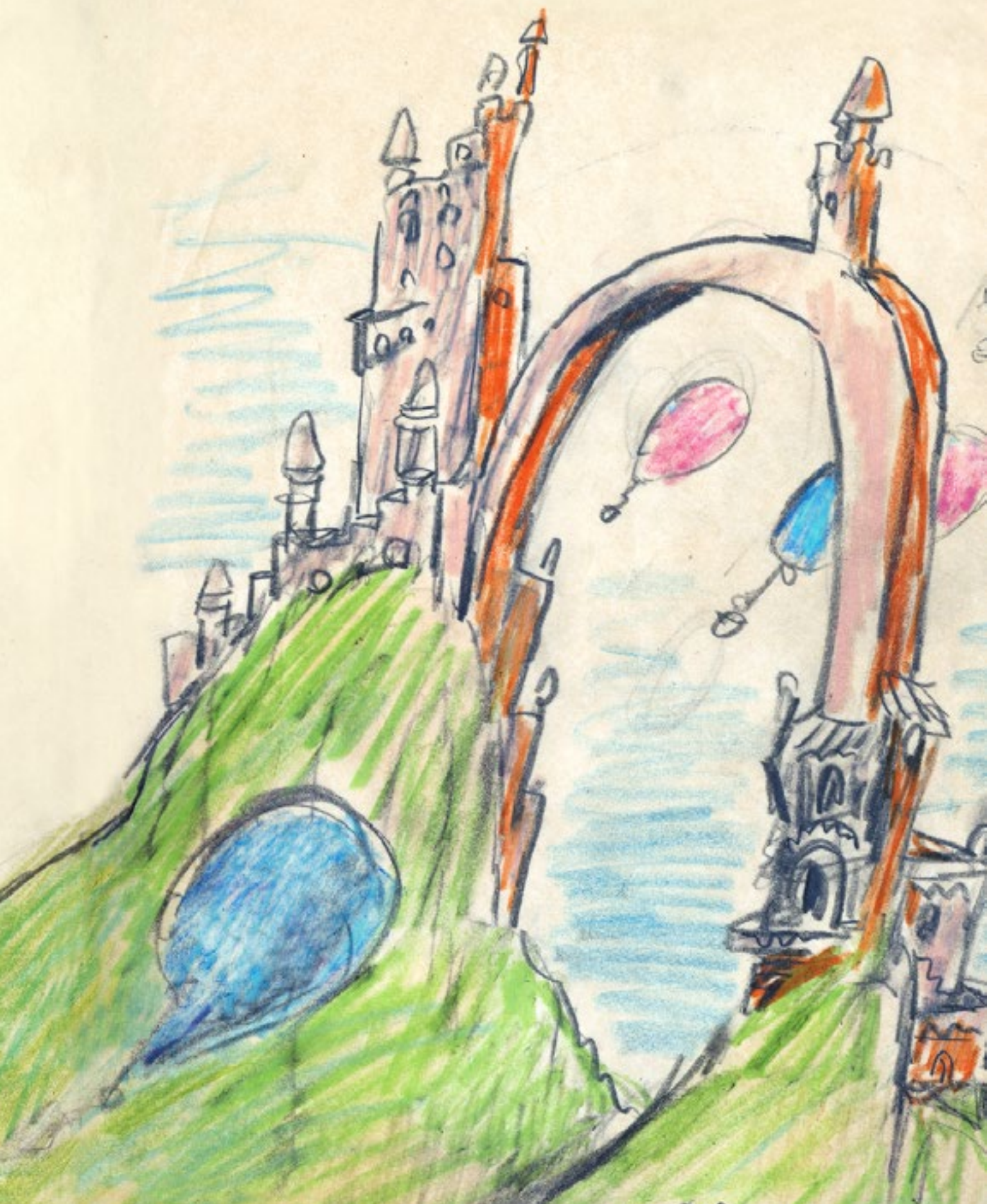


THIS SOUND SOUNDED MERRY!

Fine Art Pigment Print with Collage on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 14" x 22"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, and 5 Hors d'Commerce

Dr. Seuss's early pencil sketches capture the creative impulse of the artist just as his ideas are tumbling from his mind to the drawing page for the first time.





SOAR TO HIGH HEIGHTS

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 25.25" x 36"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs



KID, YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS!

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 25.25" x 36"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs



**OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!
25TH ANNIVERSARY PORTFOLIO**

Set of Nine

Fine Art Pigment Prints on Archival Paper

Image and Paper Size: 14" x 20"

Limited Edition of 295 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, and 5 Hors d'Commerce



THE SNEETCHES 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper

Image and Paper Size: 29" x 26"

Limited Edition of 395 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce,
2 Printer's Proofs, and 60 Special Reserve Prints



the pen & ink drawings

Color was a key ingredient in making Dr. Seuss's stories so engaging to children. Ted believed that the right color could catch a child's eye and move them through the story, even if they couldn't read. He had long since memorized the color charts and knew exactly which hues he wanted for each element of every page.

These pen and ink drawings marked the final stage in Ted's creative process and were the moment when color took center stage. Executed after the pencil sketches, these works contain his final color decisions and meticulously detailed notes written to his publisher.

Ted's explosive color played out across these images in bold, energetic strokes of oil pastel and crayon. His choices ignited these drawings, bringing to life the pen and ink lines and pushing them to their final stage of development.



Images from far left: A color chart with notes detailing several colors, which correspond to specific elements. *I Like Them Sam-I-am!* (detail) concept illustration for the 1960 book, *Green Eggs and Ham*. This details shows Dr. Seuss's note to his publisher regarding the center bone of the green ham.

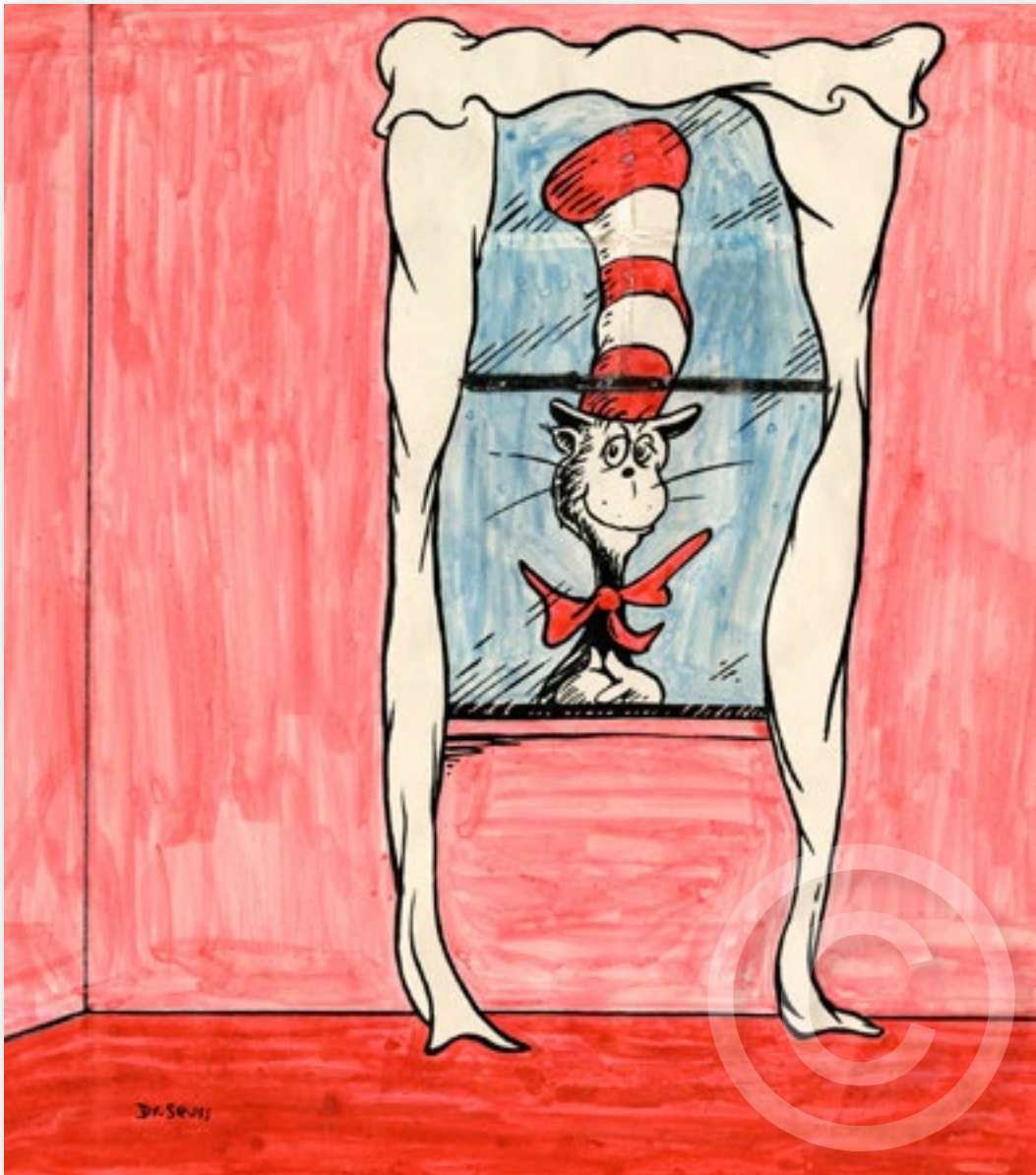
“Ted's explosive color played out across these images in bold, energetic strokes of oil pastel and crayon. His choices ignited these drawings, bringing to life the pen and ink lines and pushing them to their final stage of development.



AND THEN WHO SHOULD COME UP BUT THE CAT IN THE HAT!

Fine Art Pigment Print and Collage on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 13.75" x 20.5"

Limited Edition of 1500 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs



THE CAT 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Mixed-Media Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 29" x 25"

Limited Edition of 395 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce,
2 Printer's Proofs, and 60 Special Reserve Prints



THE CAT THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Mixed-Media Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Somerset Paper
Image and Paper Size: 39 5/8" x 28 7/8"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, and 5 Hors d'Commerce



THE CAT'S DEBUT - DIPTYCH

Serigraph on Coventry Rag Paper
Image and Paper Size: 25.75" x 35.5"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs



SINGING CATS

Serigraph on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 20" x 30"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
and 155 Collaborators' Proofs



Yawning Cat

Mixed-Media Pigment Print on Archival Somerset Paper
Image and Paper Size: 17" x 52.5"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs



GREEN EGGS AND HAM 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 29" x 28"

Limited Edition of 395 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce,
2 Printer's Proofs, and 60 Special Reserve Prints



I LIKE THEM, SAM-I-AM!

Serigraph on Archival Paper
Image and Paper Size: 28" x 38.75"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, and 5 Hors d'Commerce



white
bone

40

40

40



**GRINCH AT MOUNT CRUMPIT
(HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS 50TH ANNIVERSARY PRINT)**

Serigraph on Coventry Rag Paper
Image and Paper Size: 55" x 26"

Limited Edition of 295 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce,
and 50 Commemorative Proofs



ONE FISH TWO FISH RED FISH BLUE FISH 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper

Image and Paper Size: 29" x 23.125"

Limited Edition of 395 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce,
2 Printer's Proofs, and 60 Special Reserve Prints

These concept drawings transport us to the moment of creation and allow us to peer over Dr. Seuss's shoulder as they come to life.

the diptychs

These historic works highlight the nuanced changes that would occur throughout the development of a single page. They pair together some of Ted's earliest pencil sketches with his final pen and ink drawings of the same scene. The gap between these works could span as long as a year, whereby Ted would continue to refine and redraw the scene.



This analog editing process would unfold across the corkboard walls that surrounded his studio. As the sketches took shape, he would tack them onto the walls in an effort to fully immerse himself in the developing story. Ted could sense the pace of the narrative, the emotions of the characters, and adjust accordingly with new and more refined drawings that would slowly push the works to their final stage.

Image: Ted Geisel in his studio with concept drawings on the wall. Circa 1961.

If one looks closely, the subtle differences begin to reveal themselves: Sneetches shaking hands in pencil at the start of the drawing process are found holding hands in the final-line drawing, or A Thneed No One Needs is seen transforming from a garment one could actually wear to its final iteration as an item with no perceptible use.

These side-by-side artworks allow us to see the genius of Ted's artistic talent and showcase his tireless desire to improve the narrative throughout the development process.

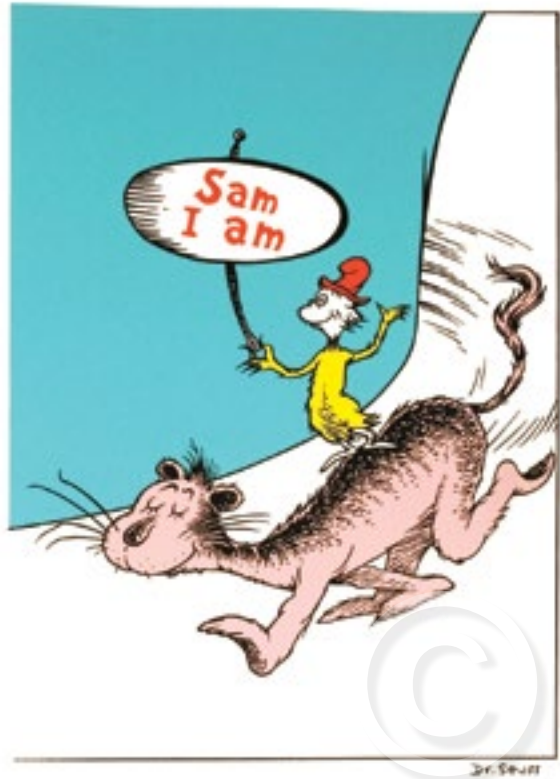
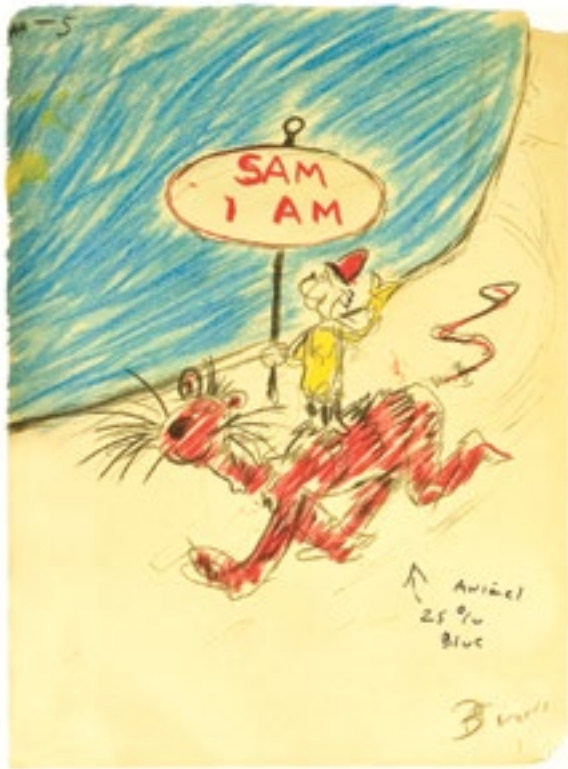
“ These side-by-side artworks allow us to see the genius of Ted's artistic talent and showcase his tireless desire to improve the narrative throughout the development process.



DO YOU LIKE GREEN EGGS AND HAM?

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image Size: 10.75" x 14" (each) Paper Size: 14.25" x 32.5"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs



SAM I AM

Serigraph on Coventry Rag Paper

Image Size: 11.75" x 8.5" (each) Paper Size: 14.75" x 20.5"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, and 5 Hors d'Commerce



KNOX IN BOX. FOCKS IN SOCKS.

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image Size: 14" x 11" (each) Paper Size: 17.5" x 26.5"

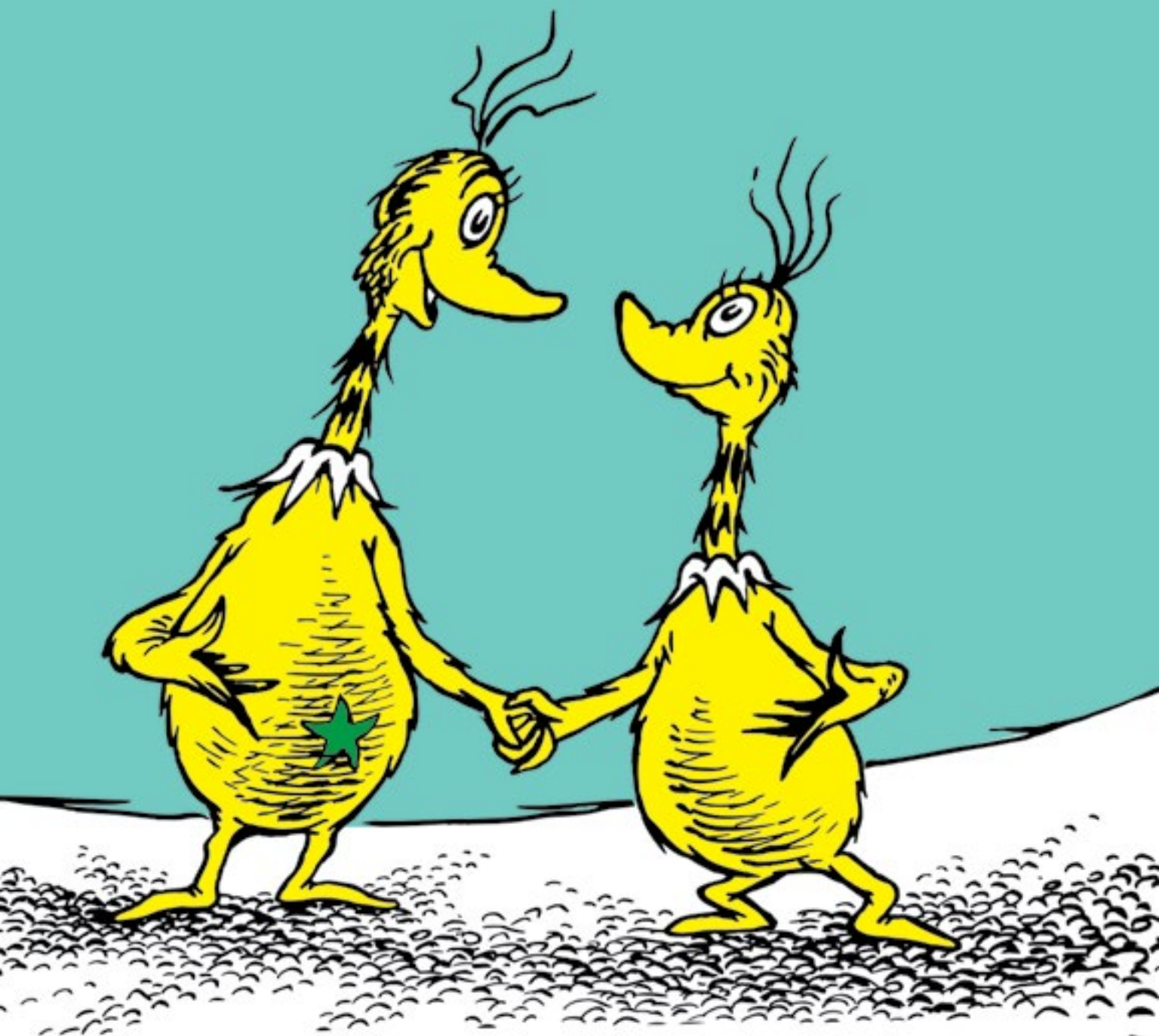
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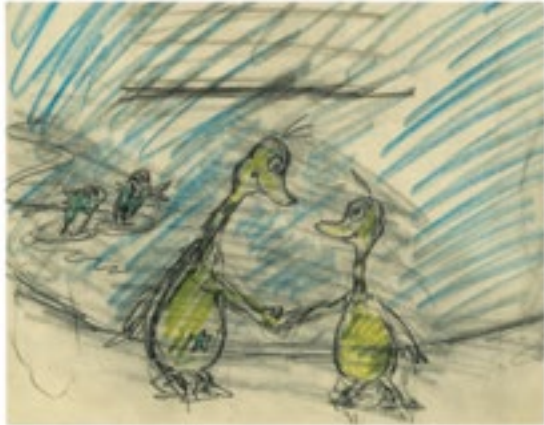


THE MORE YOU THAT YOU READ, THE MORE THINGS YOU WILL KNOW

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image Size: 9.5" x 14" (each) Paper Size: 13.5" x 32.5"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proofs





STARS UPON THARS

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image Size: 11" x 14" (each) Paper Size: 14.5" x 32.5"

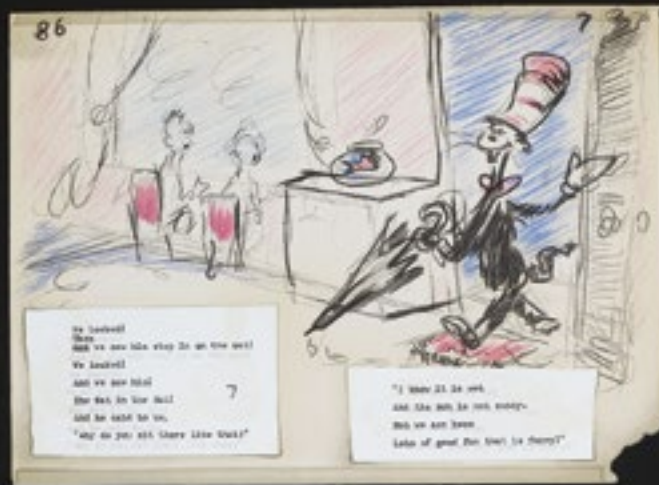
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THESE THINGS ARE GOOD THINGS

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image Size: 14" x 11" (each) Paper Size: 17.5" x 26.5"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, and 5 Hors d'Commerce



WE LOOKED! THEN WE SAW HIM

Serigraph on Black Stonehenge Paper
 Image Size: 17" x 11" (each) Paper Size: 21.5" x 15"

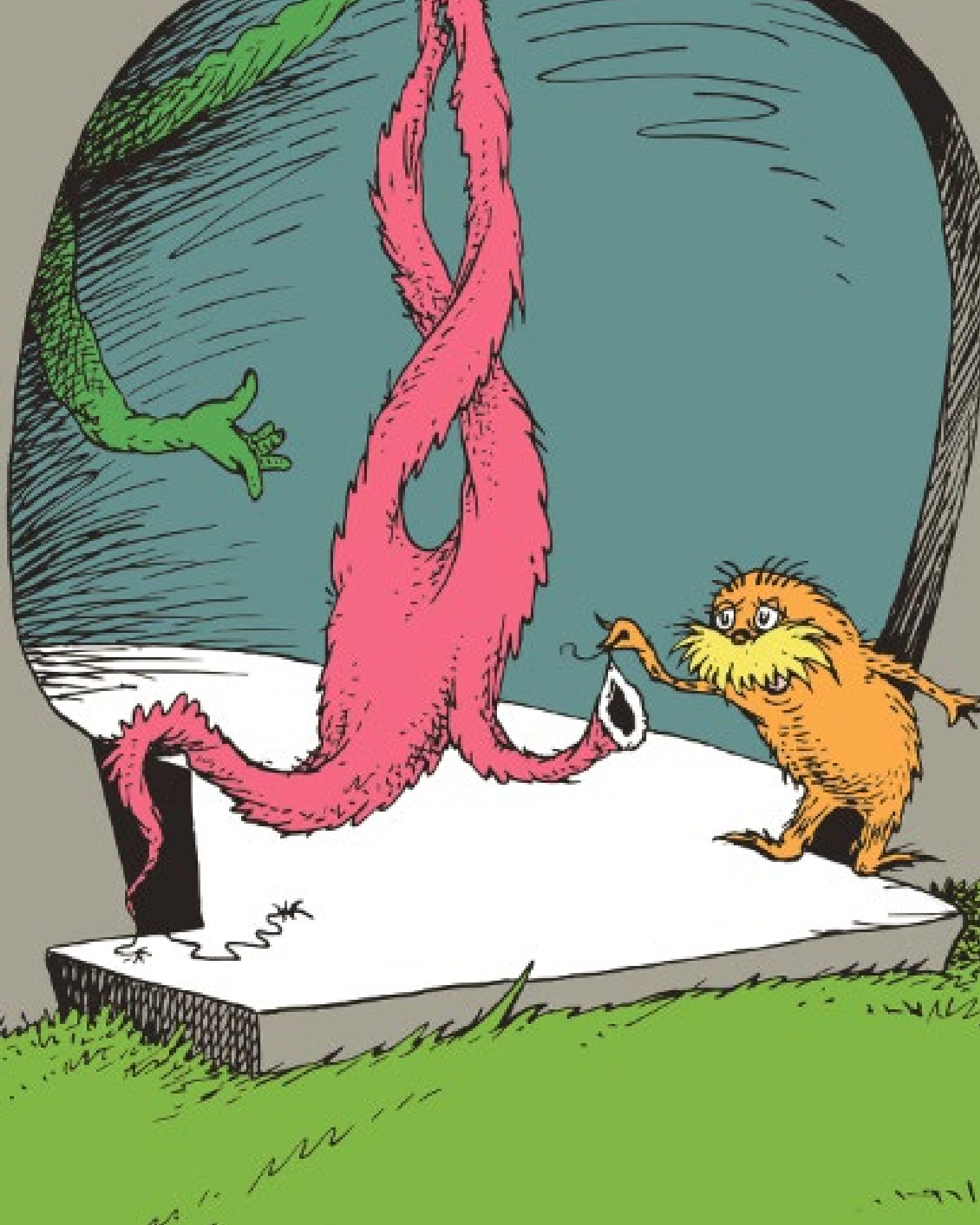
Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
 155 Collaborators' Proofs, and 5 Hors d'Commerce



A THNEED'S A FINE SOMETHING THAT ALL PEOPLE NEED!

Fine Art Pigment Print on Archival Paper
Image Size: 14" x 10" (each) Paper Size: 17.5" x 24.5"

Limited Edition of 850 Arabic Numbers, 99 Patrons' Collection,
155 Collaborators' Proofs, 5 Hors d'Commerce, and 2 Printer's Proof



about the art of dr. seuss collection



The Art of Dr. Seuss Collection, installation view, The San Diego History Center.

Theodor Seuss Geisel, a.k.a. Dr. Seuss, began his career as a little-known editorial cartoonist in the 1920s. His intriguing perspective and fresh concepts ignited his career; and his work evolved quickly to deft illustrations, modeled sculpture, and sophisticated oil paintings of elaborate imagination. His artistic vision emerged as the golden thread that linked every facet of his varied career; and his artwork became the platform from which he delivered numerous

children's books, hundreds of advertisements, and countless editorials filled with wonderfully inventive animals, characters, and humor:

Geisel single-handedly forged a new genre of art that falls somewhere between the surrealist movement of the early 20th century and the inspired nonsense of a child's classroom doodles. The Art of Dr. Seuss Collection project offers a rare glimpse into the artistic life of this celebrated American icon and chronicles almost seven decades of work that in every respect is uniquely, stylistically, and endearingly Seussian.

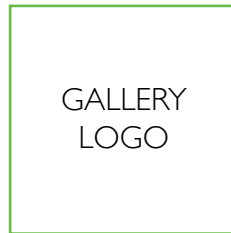
Many works included in this catalog are quite rare and only available for acquisition during the run of this exhibition. For priority access to acquire any works, please click below.

the spark of an icon:

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Dr. Seuss's Concept Drawings

Date XX – Date XX

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1234 N. Main Street
Anywhere, USA 12345
(123) 456-7890