

Tales of 'Rip Squeak'

Adventure-loving mouse and pals in Leonard and Susan Yost Filgate's children's books owe their swashbuckling style to Howard Pyle's pirates

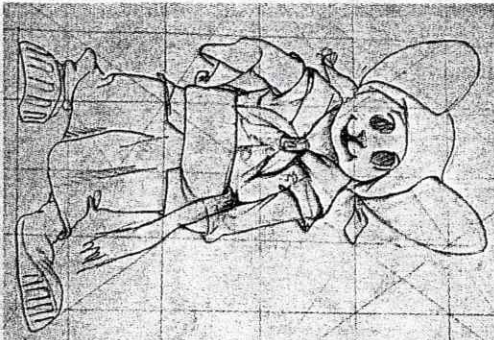
IF YOU GO

Rip Squeak Family Day - Saturday

- 10:30 a.m., noon, 1 and 2 p.m. - Tours of "Pirate Tales" exhibit.
- 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. - "Rip Squeak" story reading.
- Noon - 2 p.m. Artist Leonard Filgate and author Susan Yost-Filgate sign books.
- 12:30 p.m. - Blue Sky Puppet Theatre performs "Rufus."
- 1-4 p.m. - "Artful Afternoons," self-guided children's activities throughout the museum.

The exhibit runs Saturday-Jan. 29, Delaware Art Museum, 2301 Kentmere Parkway, Wilmington, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Regular museum admission for Family Day, but free to members. \$10; seniors \$8; college students \$5; youth \$3; 6 and younger free. 571-9590 or www.delart.org

A pencil sketch shows Rip coming into his own and bears a resemblance to the pirate in "Marooned." Delaware Art Museum



By KENT STEINRIEDE
The News Journal

Museums usually have policies against allowing mice, cats and frogs in the galleries. But the Delaware Art Museum is making an exception when the "Pirate Tales: The Adventures of Rip Squeak and Friends" exhibit opens on Saturday.

Rip Squeak is an adventure-loving mouse and the protagonist of three children's books created by painter and illustrator Leonard Filgate and his wife, Susan Yost-Filgate.

Museum curator Joyce Schiller has spent the last three years putting together the exhibit that highlights the ties that Rip Squeak and his creators have to the Brandywine Valley and one of its most famous artists, Howard Pyle. The Delaware Art Museum has a large collection of original works by Pyle and his students. Many of these illustrations were found in adventure books in the first half of the 20th century and fueled the imaginations of young boys for generations.

Schiller came across Rip Squeak in early 2002 while looking through an online gallery. Every Picture Tells a Story (www.everypicture.com),

devoted to illustrations of children's books. There she saw an image of a flamboyant frog in a swashbuckler get-up reading a pirate story to an enthralled pair of mice and a cat. Parts of the image - the lighting, the depth and the costume - reminded her of Pyle's work, albeit with a much more warm-fuzzy feeling.

A few moments later, she saw the image, "Rip the Pirate," and her interest was piqued. "Rip's costume recalled the outfit worn by the shipwrecked sailor in Howard Pyle's 'Marooned,'" wrote Schiller in the catalog for the exhibit, which runs through Jan. 29. Through a gallery, Schiller contacted the Filgates in California. Indeed, Leonard Filgate was inspired by Pyle and his adventure stories, as well as Maxfield Parrish, da Vinci and Gustav Klimt. He also draws direct inspiration from his serving five years in the Merchant Marine.

Soon after their first talk, Schiller visited the Filgates, and the three started working on putting together an exhibit of Leonard Filgate's original work at the museum.

Leonard Filgate's work - illustrations from the three books and other Rip Squeak-related images - has been exhibited in several art galleries around the country but

See PIRATES — E2

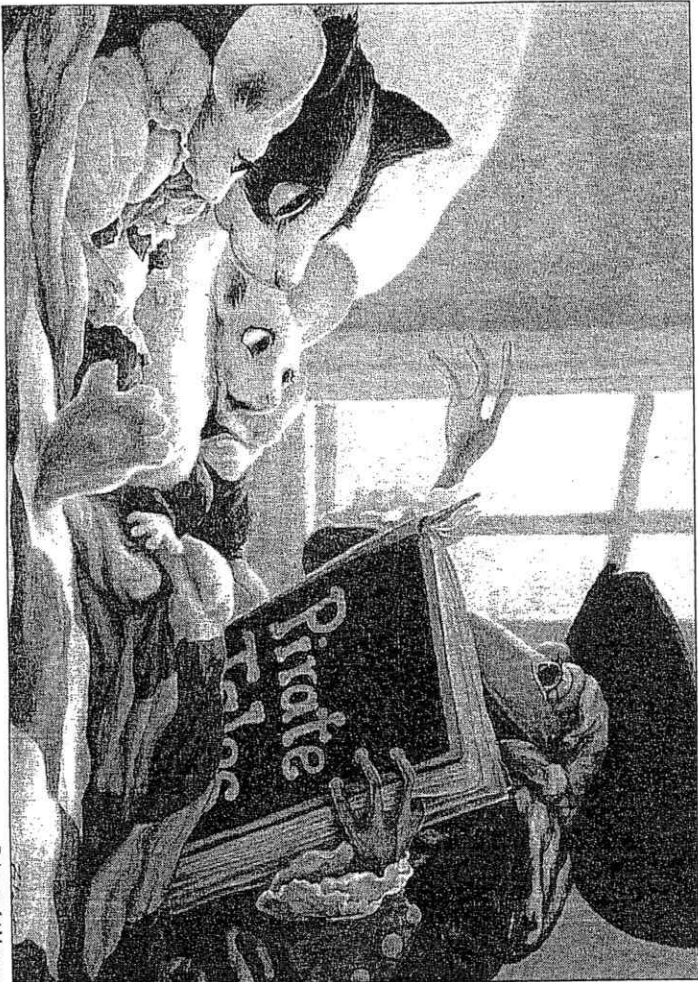


ABOVE: Rip clothing is similar to that of a pirate in this from Howard Pyle's "Marooned."

LEFT: A depiction of Rip Squeak could have another source of pirate inspiration.

Delaware Art Mu

Pirates: Fourth 'Rip Squeak' in the works



Leonard Filgate and his wife, Susan Yost-Filgate, created the pirate-inspired "Rip Squeak" characters.

Delaware Art Museum

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never on such a scale. Most of the drawings and original acrylic paintings are from private collections as well as the artist's own collection in Fresno, Calif., where the Filgates work in a home studio. Meeting Schiller has led to an exciting turn of events for the couple, said Susan Yost-Filgate. "What living artist wouldn't want to have their work in a museum?"
Rip Squeak was born in 1997 when the Filgates created characters for their first book "Rip Squeak and His Friends" (Rip Squeak Press, \$16.96). Susan wrote the story and Leonard created sketches of the scenes to accompany the text. Once the two decided on the images, Leonard created paintings with acrylic on canvas. Most of the paintings are about 24-by-24 inches, although some, such as "Wow!" with Rip, his sister Jesse, Eunripides the frog and Abbey the cat all dressed in pirate garb, is 48-by-80 inches. Leonard said he

needed a large canvas to convey the characters' astonishment during their adventure.

The Filgates are working on a fourth Rip Squeak book, to take place at Christmas time. Painting winter scenes, especially those at night, poses a challenge for Leonard, who has some research to do in the mountains in California. "I have to get the idea of moonlight on snow," he said. The Filgates will sign books at the museum on Saturday as part of its Family Day program.

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