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## **East Brown Cow welcomes Illustration Institute to Old Port**

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Portland, ME According to East Brown Cow, Illustration Institute, one of Maine's most pioneering arts organizations, will be utilizing a space at Three Canal Plaza in the city's Old Port. The space will be used to support and shine a light on the tremendous illustration talent that exists in Maine, both historically and in the present moment.

"Illustration is culturally significant and important to Maine," said Scott Nash, co-founder of Illustration Institute. "We have a legacy of attracting artists and illustrators to Maine. But what I've discovered over the past eight years is that we also have an abundance of illustrators here today that are some of the best in the world. It's getting to a point where I feel like we are in a golden age of illustration. There are incredible illustrators in Maine, and this is part and parcel of what we're partnering on with East Brown Cow, in order to showcase them."

Illustration Institute was co-founded in 2017 by Nash, a children's book author, illustrator and professor and his wife Nancy Gibson-Nash, a mixed-media collage artist and illustrator. Its mission is to raise appreciation and awareness of illustration in its many forms. "We do this through free programs that we provide at public venues across the city and state," said Nash.

"As well as a residency program, where we attract artists from around the world to Maine. We also create and install increasingly ambitious exhibitions with partnering institutions."

One of their most celebrated exhibitions was Robert McCloskey: The Art of Wonder which came to Brunswick's Curtis Memorial Library in 2023. The exhibition featured original drawings, studies and final art from five of McCloskey's most well-known children's books — and 80,000 visitors flocked to the library.

The new space at Three Canal Plaza will be used as an incubation hub for a new initiative that Illustration Institute is working on. They hope to build a future illustration archive in Portland — that will collect and exhibit archives of some of the world's most influential illustrators. "We're going to be using this space as a base for that initiative," said Nash. "The aim is to show the abundance of illustrators we have in Maine. It will be an area for us to display some of that artwork and talk to people about the initiative and we're grateful to East Brown Cow for the opportunity to use this space."

Their first project will be to collect archival works of Douglas Smith, an illustrator who illustrated the legendary 1995 novel, *Wicked*, among other works. Smith has been living on Peak's Island since

2004.

“We’re delighted to be partnering with Illustration Institute on this initiative,” said Tim Soley, president and CEO of East Brown Cow. “For years, we have been building an art collection of significant Maine artists which we display in spaces across our portfolio including our hospitality offering, The Docent’s Collection. But we are always on the lookout for innovative ways to further support Maine’s creative economy. We applaud Illustration Institute’s vision in building an archive, and know that having Scott, Nancy and their team meeting with their network of creative collaborators in the Old Port will contribute enormously to the area’s urban fabric.”

The Illustration Institute’s space will open in May 2025. It will be by invitation only.

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