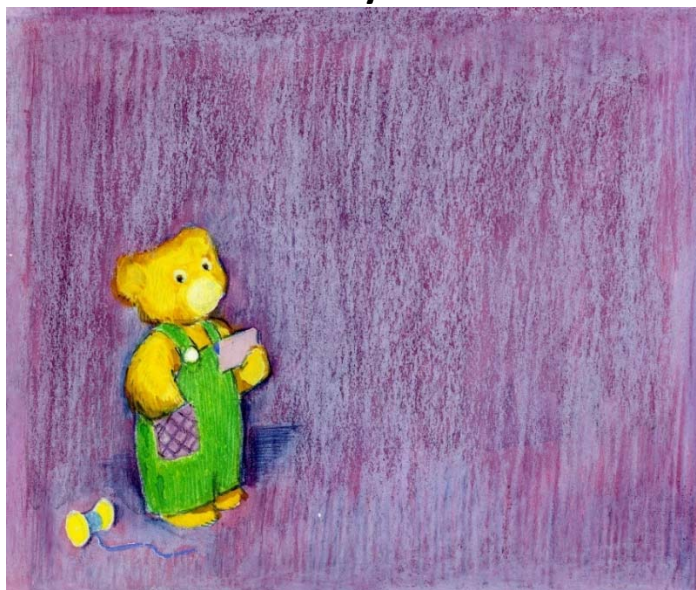




**For Immediate Release**

***A City for Corduroy: Don Freeman's New York*  
Opens at the Museum of the City of New York on November 21**



*A Pocket for Corduroy* cover art. Don Freeman papers, Kerlan Collection, Children's Literature Research Collection, University of Minnesota.

**First Major Exhibition Devoted to Celebrated Children's Book Author  
And His Depictions of New York**

"I wanted to be an artist . . . to see New York and find out how everybody lived and how they looked and acted." – Don Freeman

**(New York, NY, November 20, 2018)** [\*A City for Corduroy: Don Freeman's New York\*](#), on view at the Museum of the City of New York from November 21, 2018, through June 23, 2019, is the first major exhibition devoted to Freeman's work as a chronicler of New York City life. Freeman is best known as the author and illustrator of *Corduroy*, listed by the National Education Association as one of the top 100 children's books of all time. But before he ever illustrated a children's book, Freeman spent more than 20 years depicting New York City and its residents.

"Don Freeman was the quintessential New Yorker. After arriving in New York as a young man, he became enchanted with the city and captured the spirit and human drama of it in his illustrations, posters, and children's books," said Whitney W. Donhauser, Ronay Menschel Director and President of the Museum of the City of New York. "We are fortunate to have many of Freeman's works in our permanent collection and are delighted to present this exhibition on the 50th anniversary of the publication of his classic children's book *Corduroy*."

The exhibition will showcase Freeman’s use of different media and will feature approximately 50 works, including oil paintings, lithographs, drawings, watercolors, sketches, and issues of Freeman’s magazine *Newsstand*. The works on view will be primarily culled from the permanent collection of the Museum of the City of New York and will also include original drawings and watercolors featured in Freeman’s *Corduroy* books that will be on loan from the Kerlan Collection, Children’s Literature Research Collections at the University of Minnesota. Through three sections—“City Life,” “Stage Life,” and “Corduroy and Friends”—the exhibition will highlight Freeman’s charming works as they capture the full range of the city’s energy and chaos as well as its still, isolated moments.

Curator Morgen Stevens-Garmon: “Whether his subject was the stage hand at work, the ordinary New Yorker going home on the train, or the small, stuffed animal waiting patiently on the shelf, Don Freeman captured unseen moments and in them he found beauty and wonder.”



Don Freeman’s *Newsstand*, 1941.  
Museum of the City of New York.

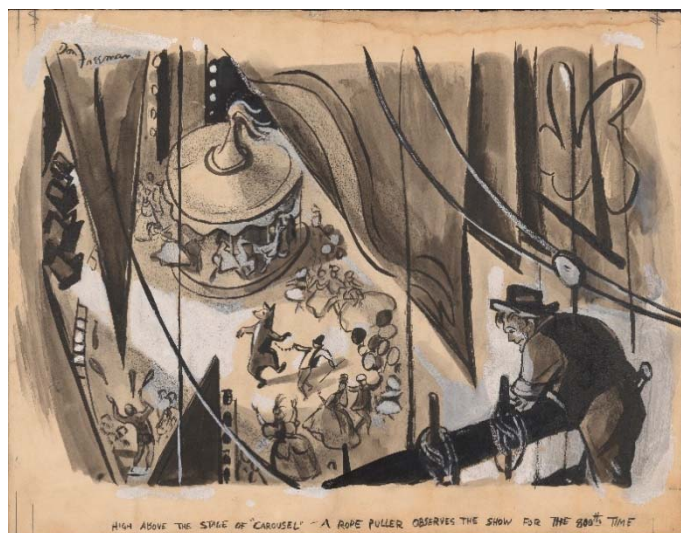
### City Life

Don Freeman (1908–1978) arrived in New York City from California in 1928, just shy of his 20th birthday. He immediately began to draw his impressions of the city on scraps of paper and in small notebooks. Freeman believed that “being part of this seething, turbulent, fabulous family [of New Yorkers] was a privilege that brought with it a living proof . . . that all people could live together if they but would.”

He eked out a living playing trumpet at night and took classes at the Art Students League during the day. Late one evening, engrossed in drawing a fellow subway passenger, Freeman absentmindedly left his trumpet behind on the train. This incident struck him as an omen that he should resolve to be an artist rather than a musician.

### Stage Life

Freeman came to New York to study art but he could not escape the thrall of another early love: the theater. Shortly after moving to New York, he sold his first drawing to the *New York Herald Tribune* for publication in the Sunday drama section. Freeman’s theatrical drawings were published in *The New York Times*, the *New York World*, and *Theatre Magazine*, among others. He also created illustrations for theatrical posters and programs, notably the poster and Playbill art for the original Broadway production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 1947.



High Above the Stage of Carousel . . . , ca. 1950.  
Museum of the City of New York.



Draft sketch from *Corduroy*. Don Freeman papers, Kerlan Collection, Children's Literature Research Collection, University of Minnesota.

### **Corduroy and Friends**

Today Don Freeman is best remembered as the author and illustrator of *Corduroy*, which was first published in 1968. The book featured an African-American girl at a time when few children's books acknowledged America's racial diversity. Freeman wrote or illustrated nearly 40 books over the next 30 years, sometimes collaborating with his wife Lydia. With "Corduroy and Friends," the exhibition takes a look at the early drafts and

working drawings that went into his city-centric books: *Corduroy* (1968), *Pet of the Met* (1953), *Norman the Doorman* (1959), *Hattie the Backstage Bat* (1970), and *A Pocket for Corduroy* (1978).

In 1976 New York Mayor Abraham D. Beame honored Freeman with a citation for his unreserved love of the city and its people as represented in his art.

### **Exhibition Support**

Supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Additional support provided by: The Angelo Family Charitable Foundation, Suellyn and Ted Scull, and Jill and John Chalsty, and YOTTOY Productions, Inc.

Made possible in part by The Friends of Corduroy, a collective of generous individuals celebrating Don Freeman's legacy.

Special thanks to Penguin Young Readers.

The exhibition is a co-presentation with the Children's Literature Research Collections, University of Minnesota.

Made possible in part by The New Network Fund, supported by  JL Greene

***A City for Corduroy: Don Freeman's New York*** is curated by Morgen Stevens-Garmon, associate curator at the Museum of the City of New York, with co-curator Bruce Weber and assistance from Sara K. Spink.

The exhibition is designed by Marissa Martonyi with assistance from Hanzel Li.

### **Audio Guide**

The exhibition will include an audio guide narrated by Tony- and Grammy-Award-winning actress Renée Elise Goldsberry, who created the role of Angelica Schuyler in *Hamilton: An American Musical*. The audio

guide will be accessible on the Urban Archive app and will offer context for the works, primarily drawing from Don Freeman's memoir *Come One, Come All!*, and to share more about Freeman's life in the city in the artist's own words.

The exhibition will also feature audio stations with commentary about specific objects to engage a younger audience.

### **Publication**

The Fall 2018 issue of *City Courant*, the annual journal of the Museum of the City of New York, will highlight the work of Don Freeman and will include essays by author and AI Hirschfeld expert David Leopold and children's book historian Leonard Marcus. Additionally, six creators of contemporary books for young readers share their art and reflections on the role of the city in their own work.

*City Courant* will be available for purchase in the Museum's shop for \$12.95.

### **Children's Programs**

On Sunday, January 6, Mallory Kasdan, author of the popular *Ella* children's book, will host an afternoon of children's activities, readings, and a book signing at the Museum.

On Saturday, January 19, Amanda Kingloff, author of *Project Kid* and *Project Kid: Crafts That Go!*, published by Artisan Books, will lead crafting activities with children.

An assortment of Corduroy Bear toys and books from YOTTOY ([www.yottoy.com](http://www.yottoy.com)), official U.S. home of Corduroy Bear toys are available in the Museum's shop. The toys, which look as if they have just stepped off the pages of Don Freeman's beloved Corduroy books, are a delight for adults and children alike.

Amy's Bread, located in Chalsty's Café on the second floor of the Museum of the City of New York, is creating custom cookies based on some of Freeman's beloved children's book characters.

### **About the Museum of the City of New York**

The Museum of the City of New York fosters understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world's most influential metropolis. It engages visitors by celebrating, documenting, and interpreting the city's past, present, and future. To connect with the Museum on social media, follow us on Instagram and Twitter at @MuseumofCityNY and visit our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY](https://www.facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY). For more information please visit [www.mcny.org](http://www.mcny.org).

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