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## **A Writer's Vision: Prints and Drawings by Günter Grass**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **A Writer's Vision**

#### **Prints and Drawings by Günter Grass**

From February 17 through April 15, 2001, the Elvehjem will present artworks by the 1999 Nobel Prize-winning German author Günter Grass in Mayer Gallery. As important as writing is to Grass, he has always needed other media to express himself. Grass, although known for his disturbing and evocative novels, created prints and sculpture throughout his career. This first U.S. tour of Günter Grass's works on paper features drawings, lithographs, etchings, and etching plates that Grass created between 1972 and 1997; they are drawn from two German collections: the Ludwig Forum in Aachen, and the Museum Wurth in Kunzelsau.

The work includes several cycles of prints related to Grass's books *The Tin Drum* (1959), *From the Diary of a Snail* (1972), *The Flounder* (1977), *The Rat* (1986), *The Call of the Toad* (1992), and *A Broad Field* (1995), among others. Regarding the relationship between forms of expression in his work, Grass has commented that on occasion the pictorial idea would come first, and that the writing process and the visual art process would fertilize one another.

Grass was born in 1927 in Danzig, Germany (now Gdansk, Poland), the setting for several novels. In the 1930s he joined the Hitler Youth, was drafted into the army at age sixteen, and wounded in battle in 1945, then imprisoned at Marienbad, Czechoslovakia. After he was freed, Grass worked on farms, in a potash mine, and as a stonemason's apprentice. In 1948, he enrolled as a student of painting and sculpture at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art and from 1953 to 1955 studied in West Berlin at the State Academy of Fine Arts. During the 1950s he traveled in Italy, France, and Spain.

His first novel, *The Tin Drum*, published in 1959, created a furor because of its depiction of the Nazis. It is the story of a child who refuses to grow in protest to the cruelties of German history and communicates only through his toy drum. He became the literary spokesman for the German generation that grew up

under the Nazis. He continued with this trilogy set in Danzig focusing on war crimes and the postwar acceptability of former Nazis and followed it with another trilogy set in Berlin. Grass then became active in politics, working as a speech writer for Social Democrat Willy Brandt. In the 1970s and 1980s Grass took on issues other than German history such as feminism and the art of cooking.

This exhibition was organized by the Robert Hull Fleming Museum of the University of Vermont, from the collection of the Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany. The exhibition was made possible by the Ludwig Foundation for Arts and International Understanding and the Goethe Institute, Boston.

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The Elvehjem Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9-5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11-5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located at 800 University Avenue on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the Murray Street (north) entrance. Parking is available at the city of Madison's Lake Street and Frances Street ramps, university lot 46 on Lake Street between Johnson and University Avenue, university lot 47 on Johnson Street between Park and Lake streets. Evening and weekend parking is also available under Grainger Hall with entrance on Brooks Street between University Avenue and Johnson streets. The Elvehjem Museum of Art will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, 608 263-4421 (voice).

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