

Illustrators light up the page, show many perspectives

"There is a distance in them (turtles), a coldness, their eyes filled with stars...it must be in such eyes that the universe first discovered a way to look back on itself." – David Carroll

If poets teach us to see, illustrators demonstrate different ways of seeing. Through minuscule details – a gesture, a shadow, stark lines, serpentine curves, a wild palette, hundreds of single strokes or the sweep of a brush – illustrators craft a moment that carries with it a thousand stories, often transcending the text it is illustrating.

"Beyond Words" at the Currier Gallery of Art in Manchester features the divergent work and disparate creative process of three of New Hampshire's award-winning illustra-



D. QUINCY WHITNEY

tors – Tomie dePaola, on New London; Beth Krommes, of Peterborough, and David Carroll, of Warner.

The word illustrate comes from a Latin word in the 1520s meaning to "light up, shed light on." The invention of the word was most likely inspired by medieval illuminated manuscripts – such as the Book of Kells – in which the image literally "lit up"

the page. These illuminations were of crucial importance, far more than embellishment, because they visually told the story to non-literate humanity since only the monks could speak and read Latin.

For thousands of years, humankind told stories. Stories memorized by bards came alive in the imagination of the listener – in a vivid way that helped bard and audience recall the story. Illuminated manuscripts served the same purpose, to make a story memorable.

Years ago, while participating in the a cultural arts exchange between the New Hampshire Department of Cultural Resources and the Irish Arts Council, I traveled to both Dublin and Belfast. I will never forget seeing the famous Book of Kells at Trinity College in Dublin, a manuscript on vellum

written circa 800 A.D. – its gilded illuminations are truly luminous.

Belfast boasted another kind of contemporary illuminated storytelling – the public art in the form

of murals that appear on walls all over the city painted by hundreds of Irish artists depicting "The Troubles."