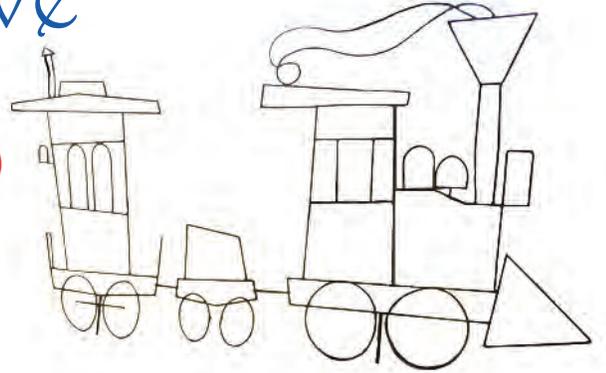


# Imagining Makebelieve

## An Exhibition Honoring

# Arto Monaco

July 22 – September 5, 2011  
Tahawus Lodge Center, Windows Gallery  
Au Sable Forks, New York



From 1954 to 1979, the magical *Land of Makebelieve* captivated visitors young and old. The delightful, child-sized park was created by Arto Monaco. Arto was born in Au Sable Forks in 1913, grew up in Upper Jay, and came home to the Adirondacks following distinguished service in World War II. He died in 2003 at the age of 90.

*Land of Makebelieve* was Monaco's masterpiece, a labor of love that he built and maintained by hand with help from dozens of local workers and craftspeople. Each year, they welcomed thousands of visitors from all over the world, as well as neighbors from the Adirondacks and the Au Sable Valley. Prior to developing his own park, Monaco had been commissioned to design nearby Santa's Workshop, which opened in 1949 as one of the nation's very first "theme parks." Through that experience, Arto realized he wanted a park of his own.

To create *Land of Makebelieve*, Monaco drew on his background as a toymaker, a Hollywood set designer and animator, and an ingenious developer of "training aids" for Army recruits. Everything in the park was sized for children—charming, touchable, and perfect. For kids, being there was like being inside a fairy tale or your own special movie.

The park included fanciful rides: a miniature train, tiny cars and pirate ships, a coronation coach near the castle and a stagecoach in Cactus Flats, the park's western town. There were picnic tables and benches for parents, incredible buildings for kids to explore, and winding paths where families could wander.

Millions of photographs were taken and countless precious memories were made at *Land of Makebelieve*. Today, Arto Monaco's legacy is kept alive through the ongoing work of the Arto Monaco Historical Society. We recently made major gifts of Monaco's work to the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake, NY, and the National Museum of Play in Rochester, NY. Our next challenge will be to create a park in Upper Jay as a permanent memorial to Arto. To learn more, please visit us at:

[www.artomonaco.org](http://www.artomonaco.org)

*Exhibition design by Karen Davidson and Anne Mackinnon. Special thanks to Peter Seward, Lynda Denton, Steven Engelhart, Derek Muirden, Maribeth Mackinnon, and Rebecca Kelly and Craig Brashear of the Tahawus Lodge Center.*

### In the exhibit:

**Wall-size reproduction from an original vintage postcard book** depicting the Land of Makebelieve castle, fairy tale houses, train, and grounds

**Arto, larger than life, with a wall drawing** by Peter Seward based on one of Arto's illustrations

**Steel sculpture** of the Land of Makebelieve train, made in the 1970s; originally an armature for red, green, and white lights during the Christmas season

**Collage of national magazine and newspaper stories** about the Land of Makebelieve, assembled by Arto in the 1960s

**Original signs** from the Land of Makebelieve

**Castle model by Arto**, made in the 1960s, on a pedestal from the original Land of Makebelieve castle

**Miniature pirate figure**, from the original Barbary pirates ride

