

Doris Kearns Goodwin introduction to reading, Monson, ME June 20, 2026

When Michael asked me to provide this short introduction, I could never have imagined the wave of emotions we would all feel this afternoon.

For here, at Monson Arts, for the very first time, this incomparable collection of world-class art, kept in this 200-year-old farmhouse on Tory Hill for more than 50 years, is finally open for the public to share. What a wonderful occasion.

It was just extraordinary to see everything so beautifully displayed. Usually, the work is in the barn, in different rooms, and it's never lit the same way. This is really incredible.

And here, also, in his newly released book, *Sculptures and Tales*, we have not only gorgeous photographs of his art, but several stories from two celebrated collections of his short fiction.

Over these five decades, as our family became part of the extended Rothschild family, we watched Michael's endless stream of sculptures, stories, drawings, prints, and etchings develop and grow. We reveled in the reviews of Michael's short stories, beginning with *Rhapsody of a Hermit* in 1973, followed by *Wondermonger* in 1990.

I still remember when the reviews of *Wondermonger* appeared in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. My late husband, Dick, was so happy and so proud. He read them aloud to everyone who came into our house.

"Listen," he would say. "You must listen. This is my best friend. There's no one like him. He's a brilliant writer. He is a sculptor. He is an apple grower. He is a farmer—the closest thing to Thomas Jefferson that I have ever met."

In fact Dick was so grounded in our founding fathers that he practically believed he had met Thomas Jefferson himself.

Then he would say, "Listen again, Here's *The New York Times Book Review*."

"*Wondermonger* is the work of a versatile, original, quirky (yes, we know him quirky), and deeply gifted writer who spins full*blown tales in a torrent of images and emotions guaranteed to lead us down paths the likes of which Faulkner and Gabriel Garcia Mârquez never walked"

Can you imagine receiving praise like that?

"And then, *The Washington Post*," Dick droned on as guests reached for couches and chairs "wrote that there are very few things worth waiting seventeen years for—true

love, perhaps, or one's dream house. "To this short list," the reviewer wrote, "we can now add Wondermonger."

Michael has been compared to writers such as Faulkner and Gabriel Garcia Márquez, yet he is entirely his own writer. His work is rooted in his native Maine. No other writer captures both the terror and grandeur of the North Woods—not the tropical neverland of Garcia Márquez, but a distinctly Yankee world of wonder.

Dick wanted Michael to go on a national book tour. But all Michael wanted was to stay here in his beloved Maine and continue creating, day after day.

The cider press was every bit as important as his giant printing press. He was making sculptures, printing, drawing, writing stories, grafting trees, planting new orchards, and caring for sheep, beef cattle, milk cows, chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys, together with large gardens—all tended by his ever-growing family, the most extraordinary and close-knit family I have ever known.

Maine was at the center of everything he created. The halibut was caught in Passamaquoddy Bay. The stone from which it was carved came from Monson. The Atlantic sturgeon came from Casco Bay, but once again, the stone from which it was carved came from Monson. The moose was a denizen of the woods surrounding the hill farm. The 45-pound turkey that served as the model for the sculpture was born and raised on the farm—and eaten by all of us at Thanksgiving.

All these years, working quietly on Tory Hill in Maine, Michael has created this spectacular body of work. A half-dozen sculptures and dozens of prints and drawings have entered private collections. His sculpture has even been featured in an art magazine in China. But until now, there has never been a public exhibition of his work in the United States.

That changes this summer.

Monson, Maine was chosen for a reason. Michael has long been drawn to its black slate, whose lustrous depth possesses what he describes as "a delicate strength." Nearly every stone engraved with his images was quarried right here in this village—as indeed was the stone used for my late husband Dick's and my gravestone in Concord, Massachusetts.

Michael worked on these stones for months, sometimes years, and now they have returned to their place of origin.

They have come home.

They are right here in Maine just as he wanted.

It is so thrilling to be here with all of you as we stand together, I believe, on the cusp of the first public recognition of a major talent whose unparalleled work has been hidden right here with all of us all along.