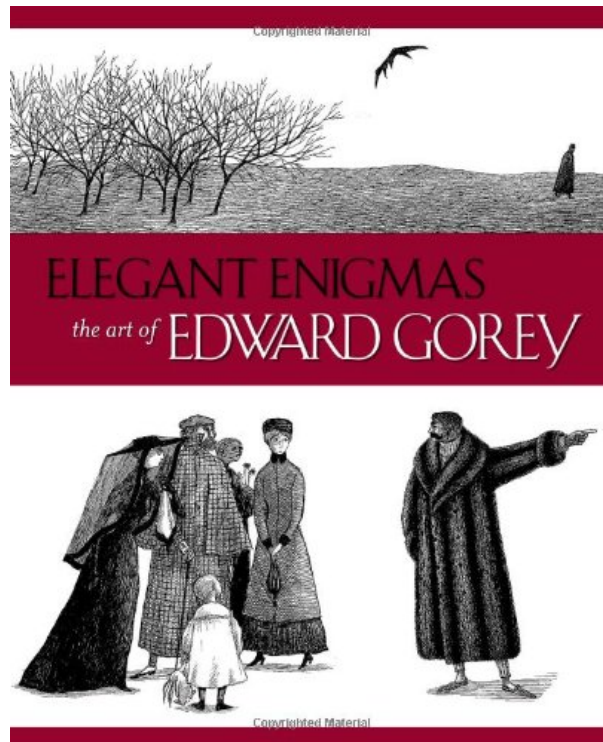


ELEGANT ENIGMAS: THE ART OF EDWARD GOREY BY KAREN WILKIN



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- *Learn how Edward Gorey was influenced by George Balanchine and Louis Feuillade.
- *See sketches for Gorey's costumes and backdrops for *The Mikado*.
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About the Author

Karen Wilkin, a curator and critic specializing in twentieth-century modernism, is the co-author of *The World of Edward Gorey* (Abrams, 1996) and the author of *Ascending Peculiarity: Edward Gorey on Edward Gorey* (Harcourt, 2001), as well as monographs on Anthony Caro, Stuart Davis, Hans Hofmann, Helen Frankenthaler, Giorgio Morandi, and David Smith. She is a regular contributor to *The New Criterion*, *Art in America*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, and a contributing editor for art for *The Hudson Review*.

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The delightful tales and theatrical drawings of Edward Gorey (American, 1925-2000) reflect a special kind of genius for what is left unwritten and unseen. In *Elegant Enigmas: The Art of Edward Gorey*, more than 175 reproductions include samples from Gorey's books, illustrations produced for other writers, theatrical sets and costume designs, and a wealth of individual pieces, many never before published. Sketches, typewritten manuscripts, doodles, and musings join the generous selection of finished works.

- Sales Rank: #453234 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Pomegranate
- Published on: 2009-03-01
- Original language: English
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- Binding: Hardcover
- 123 pages

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There's Art in Them Hills!!

By G.A. Emil

Karen Wilkin, the Brandywine River Museum and Pomegranate team up to bring us 'Elegant Enigmas: the Art of Edward Gorey'. It's a good-size hardcover book, doubling as catalog and checklist for the exhibition by the same name being held at the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania this year. The museum is famous for its art collection and association with several Wyeth families: notably N.C., Andrew, Jamie and Carolyn. With Andrew Wyeth's recent passing last January, there seems to be a stronger interest in

American art, and the Wyeth's work may be a good contrast to the draftsmanly pen & inks of Goreys. Like the book, this review precedes the exhibition, which runs from March 21 thru May 17 2009.

In 'Elegant Enigmas', Wilkin presents an essay in the beginning of the book entitled 'Mildly Unsettled' -- Gorey is quoted as using the term to describe his own persona and his work. 'Mildly Unsettled' has a some biographical information, but focuses largely on Gorey's output in relation to possible influences. Nearly everything is covered - art, literature, movies - silent and non-s, and cats. This essay isn't as in depth as Wilkin's previous work in *The World of Edward Gorey* (Abrams, 1996), but it does have a broader perspective. And maybe less implied cause and effect. It was good to go back and forth between the two books, as years and later works brought new subject matter to assimilate.

The collection of plates representing the artwork shown in the exhibit is very nicely done. Extra attention to the finest details in Gorey's artwork is evident; gradations are preserved, and not a line is lost. I'd seen a few of these original works in the 'From Prodigy to Polymath' exhibition in San Diego five years ago, and those reproduced here are indeed very close. The inclusion of concept sketches, character studies and pages of typed text finalized before illustration work was started provides a glimpse at the skillful side of Gorey's creative process. It endows each project with a sense of time and flow, and face it, the toil involved. Further along the pages, there's a neat little surprise that really brought a smile, as if a new discovery had been made. Of minor import at first glance, this artwork pulls a part of Gorey's life to the fore, showing how his developing talent also lived in a more private realm. This artwork also shows how joyful and fresh and spontaneous Gorey's work can be. I won't spoil it by just saying what it is, but it's nearly worth the price of the book alone. 'Wow!' was all I remember saying at the time.

-- GE

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Museum Quality Reproductions of Rare and Common Gorey

By Sid Wagner

"Elegant Enigmas" catalogs the contents of a traveling Gorey exhibit from a few years ago. The book is heavy on original art reproduction and slim on any new biographical content (slim, that is, if you have read "Ascending Peculiarity").

With the name Pomegranate affixed as publisher, you know you will be presented with high quality printing, and an overall well-made book. Image selections from Gorey's well-known works (such as *Doubtful Guest*, *Hapless Child*, *Willowdale Handcar*, *Gilded Bat*, *Deranged Cousins*, etc.) look BETTER in this book (with thick semi-gloss paper) than in the *Amphigorey* collections (standard thinner paper). There's also a number of color images, including rare designs for a 1983 Mikado production. Reproductions of envelopes Gorey sent to his mother, drawn while he was attending Harvard. And the most interesting inclusion of all: drafts for book ideas. Draft of a Blue Aspic image. Alternate covers for *Fatal Lozenge* and *Object-Lesson*.

Buy it for the art and the behind-the-scenes drafts.

If you are looking for a lot of biography material, you're probably better off with "Ascending Peculiarity". (NOTE: Pomegranate's "Floating Worlds: The Letters of Edward Gorey and Peter F. Neumeyer" is also an excellent, excellent work. If you read the Letters book, you'll feel like you had a chance to visit with the man himself.)

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

If you love Edward Gorey, you'll love this book

By Kathleen Sicard

I've been a Gorey fan since I first sat transfixed as a child by the opening credits of "Mystery" on PBS, and while I've poured over many of his little books, and his *Amphigoreys*, I've never had a good context in which to view his work. Karen Wilkin's insightful essay peels back the curtain and lets us see into Gorey's world. He was complex, and certainly did not want to be labeled or fit into any neat categorization people would like to put him, or his work, into. This book has really fleshed out my understanding of the man and his art. I never knew what a breadth of references he drew from, or how much I was missing. I love the background given to some of his more popular work, along with the chance to glimpse more private pieces that you normally would never get a chance to see. The hand-drawn envelopes he sent his mother when he was in school were simply marvelous. This book is terrific for anyone who wants to delve a little deeper into the mind of the man who has inspired so many. While I've been perfectly content to view his work at face value for all these years, I will certainly have a deeper appreciation for them now.

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