



Delicacies of the Macabre

a review of
"Edward Gorey: Works on Paper"
Art Institute of Boston

Edward Gorey ~ Many of us instantly conjure images of the intriguingly animated credits from the long running P.B.S. series "Mystery", or perhaps a beloved tale generally consisting of strange creatures, or the mishaps of unexpectant children and sinister adults. The hero usually dies, or perhaps everyone does, but always in jest and rhyme. Mr. Gorey has a gift of taking the macabre and making it humorous.

Being lucky enough to live in New England, we are somewhat more likely to witness an exhibit of this remarkable artist. Mr. Gorey was not in attendance for the exhibit's opening reception as he tends to sidestep these occasions which can be a bit much at times, sometimes meeting fans who are "slightly unhinged". However, his spirit was there along with his portrait accompanied by the stark, expressionistic watercolour paintings of his beloved cats and amorphic elephants.

This particular exhibit showcased novel first editions of "The Evil Garden", "The Mapless Child", "The Abandoned Sock", "The Chinese Obelisks", and "Les Passementeries Horribles", amongst countless others. Rare illustrated posters used as special event promotions for the New York City Ballet (of which Mr. Gorey had been a devout follower of, to say the least, for many years), "Dracula", the "Mystery" series, and many others themed around Gorey's frequent art exhibits, plays and puppet shows which occur in his home region of Cape Cod, Massachusetts were all to be seen lining the walls.

Alongside these were original sketches of some of his elaborate costume designs including "the Widow" ballet character (wearing a black outfit and hat so large it requires some imagination to envision her dancing about!), as well as the complete storyline of "The Doubtful Quest". The highly sought after "Dracula"



toy theatre patterned after his Tony award winning costume and set designs from the 1978 stage production, along with some of the actual silver tinted wallpaper featuring an art deco design of bats and soaring female vampires from the performance were especially eye catching. Wandering about, one could find "The Lost Shoelace", travel through "the Tunnel Calamity", and spot a "Mystery" coffin box graced by one of his darkly elegant heroines.

Such is this magical world of Gorey, a man to be recognized as a genuine artist, a true original of this century, and not merely an illustrator of wit. It was nice to see Mr. Gorey's work being appreciated and admired by such a wide variety of people as his audience spans across ages, races, and professions. All of those present at this especially well-attended event seemed to have such a great respect for this man who can change a page with just a pen and ink, and can change the world with just his view of it. Besides, he loves books, cats, and being left alone ~ thus earning our respect.



~ by the mysterious Madame K

A special thanks goes out to Gotham Book Mart of N.Y.C. (the best place to look for Gorey collectibles) for lending many of the drawings, prints, books, and ephemera for the exhibit; and especially for loving and believing in Mr. Gorey's work enough to publish his first book.

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