



Elegant Enigmas: The Art of Edward Gorey

Karen Wilkin

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The delightful tales and quick-witted drawings of Edward Gorey (American, 1925-2000) reflect a special kind of genius that resides in the effect of what is left unwritten and unseen. In Gorey's vaguely Victorian world of well-tended gardens and opulent estates, smoke-belching factories and fog-shrouded streets, nothing seems certain or quite as it should be. Chaos lurks just beneath life's tidy surface, occasionally erupting in surprising events with unexpected, often horrific consequences. But when tragedy befalls Gorey's quirky cast of characters--hapless waifs, dusty dowagers, scheming tycoons, and unhinged maidens--somehow we can't keep from laughing. Far from being morbid, Gorey reminds us to contemplate mortality with a smile.

In *Elegant Enigmas: The Art of Edward Gorey*, more than 175 reproductions offer a rich review of his work, including 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, which include his trademark finely detailed ink drawings and watercolors.

The text by Karen Wilkin, an expert on Gorey and a friend of the artist, offers an intimate review of his career, with insights that provide a fresh understanding of Gorey's life and work.

Published on the occasion of the first major traveling exhibition of Edward Gorey's work, organized by the Brandywine River Museum, *Elegant Enigmas* is a long-overdue tribute to a master artist and writer, who with sharp intellect and devastatingly wry humor created a body of work singular in its brilliance and charm.

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