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*Intriguing*  
**PAST & PRESENT**  
CAPE COD AND THE ISLANDS

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**EDWARD GOREY**

1925-2000

Called an “American gothic” who lived in a “macabre yet merry world,” Gorey was one of America’s “most eclectic—and eccentric—creative artists.”

“Edward Gorey is an artist whose volumes of drawings amuse, delight and provoke a small coterie of collectors,” Thomas McDade wrote of the late Yarmouthport artist and writer years ago in *American Book Collector*. “His distinctive and characteristic style of drawing is joined with a mordant wit and a taste for the outré. There is also enough mystery or obscurity in his stories to challenge the reader-viewer to answer the question: ‘What does he mean?’ As is true of most artists, his work is not all of a piece and his style of drawing may vary from book to book, and his writing may move from the relative explicit to the obscure.”



There is nothing obscure about Gorey’s talent. He published more than 70 books of drawings, starting in the 1950s. “His illustrated versions of other people’s work, including T.S. Eliot’s *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*, are perennial bestsellers,” PBS wrote in a review of his art. “Gorey’s work seems to invite psychoanalysis for

some. Critics have searched for deep meaning in his often obsessive crosshatching in the backgrounds of his drawings, in his subject matter, which often seems firmly preoccupied with death, or his uneasy relationship with his dotting mother as keys to understanding his art. Gorey neither helped nor hindered such inquiries; he mainly seemed bemused by them. His unusual lifestyle only fueled the concoction of more psychological theories.”

Gorey lived the last 14 years of his life with several cats in a 200-year-old stone house just off Route 6A in Yarmouthport. He first visited the Cape in the 1940s and spent many summers with relatives in Barnstable Village before taking up residence here. His home, now open to the public, was cluttered with items from yard sales and 45,000 books—fuel for the pondering imagination that stirred his great gifts.