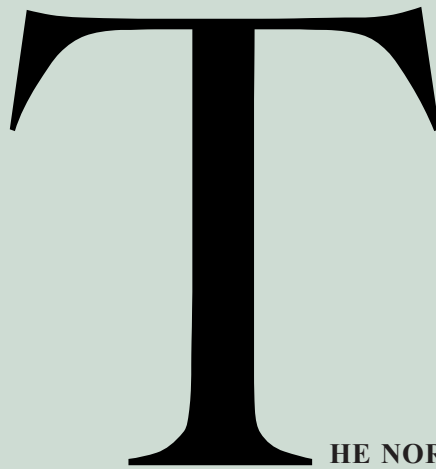


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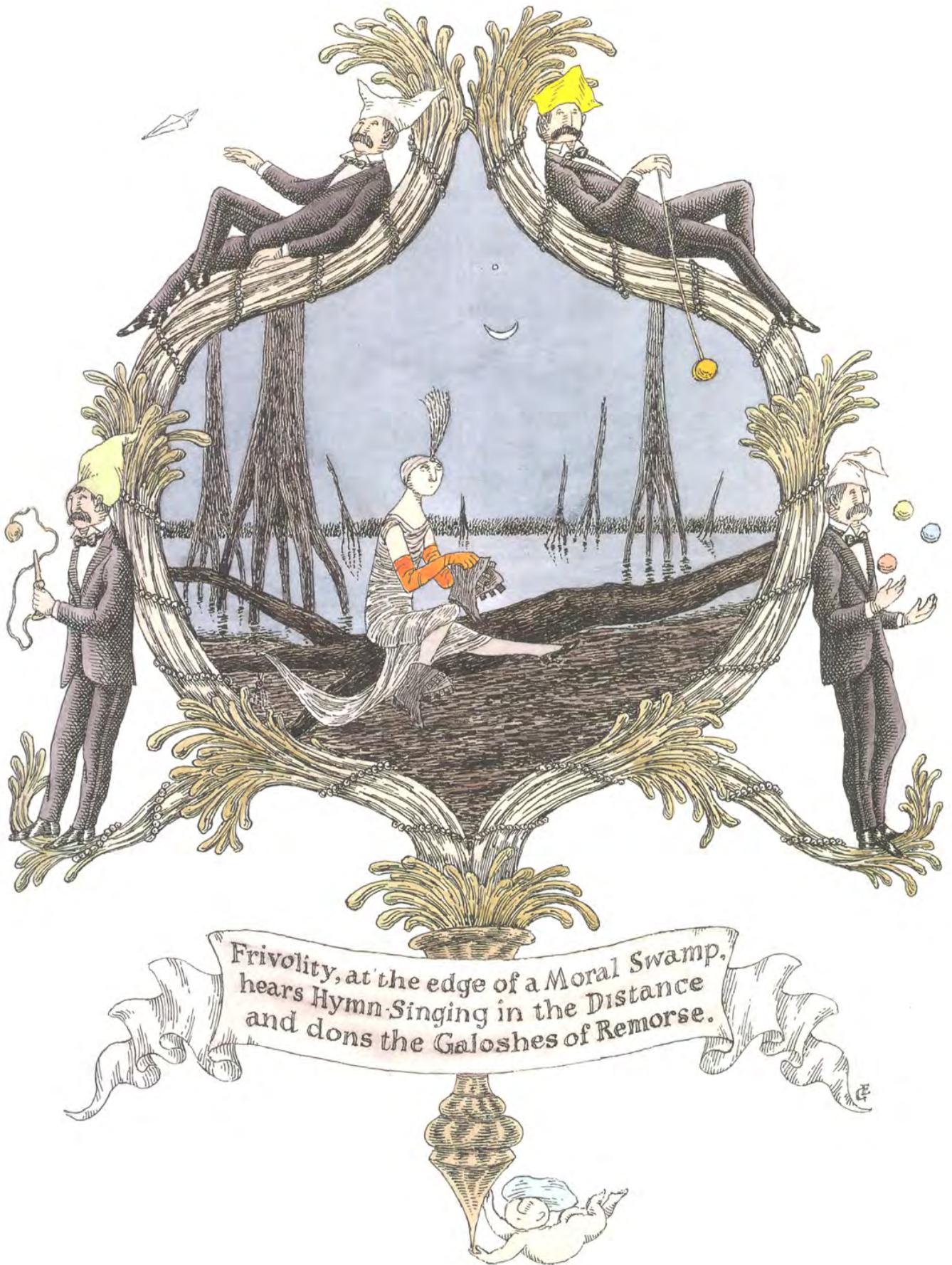
Elegant Enigmas: The Art of Edward Gorey

*On view 06.07–09.02.12 at the NORTON MUSEUM of ART,
West Palm Beach*



THE NORTON MUSEUM OF ART opens its summer exhibition schedule with *Elegant Enigmas: The Art of Edward Gorey*. Gorey (1925-2000) is among the rare breed of artists whose work is as much beloved by children as it is by adults. Included in this delightfully enigmatic display are more than 150 drawings the artist created for many of his books, including *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*, *The Unstrung Harp* and *The Gilded Bat*, among others. An illuminating array of sketchbooks, illustrated envelopes, book cover ideas and theatrical costume designs are also presented in the exhibition, which was organized by the Edward Gorey Charitable Trust and Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, PA.

At the mere mention of the late artist's name, adjectives such as ghoulish, gothic



Galoshes of Remorse, n.d., frontispiece for *Amphigorey Again*, 2006, pen, ink, and watercolor, 9.75 x 7.25", The Edward Gorey Charitable Trust, ©2010 The Edward Gorey Charitable Trust

Gorey himself described his work as “whimsically macabre.”

and, well...gory, often come to mind. But that’s not even half the story, according to art historian, curator and author, Karen Wilkin, who was also a good friend of the artist. She has worked diligently to set the Gorey story straight and has authored, or co-authored, three books about the artist, including *Elegant Enigmas: The Art of Edward Gorey* (2009), which also serves as the catalog for the exhibition. Wilkin is scheduled to present an exhibition lecture at 6:30 pm on June 7th, during the Museum’s popular weekly Art After Dark series. On June 14th at Art After Dark, exhibition-related activities include a Gorey illustration workshop; Gorey storytelling; a Gorey Curator’s Conversation, led by Tim B. Wride, the Norton’s William and Sarah Ross Sorter Curator of Photography—and in the realm of the eerie, a demonstration by mentalist/mind-reader, Brent Gregory.

One thing Wilkin hopes the exhibition accomplishes is to “lay to rest how people talk about [Gorey] as being macabre and eerie.” She attributes the enduring popularity of books such as *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*, published in 1963, which features the alphabetical, diverse, and sometimes diabolical demise of children, as one of the reasons Gorey is mischaracterized, misunderstood and pigeonholed as ghoulish. A book illustrating such misfortune as, “E is for Ernest who choked on a peach. F is for Fanny sucked dry by a leech,” could do that to a reputation.

Books, films (of the silent sort), TV shows, art and artists, were major influences for Gorey’s work, including the absurdist theatrical works of Ionesco and the comedy of Buster Keaton. While Wilkin doesn’t dispute the macabre aspect to Gorey’s oeuvre—Gorey himself described his work as “whimsically macabre”—

Mr. C(lavius) F(rederick) Earbrass is, of course, the well-known novelist. Of his books, *A Moral Dustbin*, *More Chains than Clank*, *Was It Likely?*, and the *Hipdeep Trilogy* are, perhaps, most admired. Mr. Earbrass is seen on the croquet lawn of his home, Hobbies Odd, near Collapsed Pudding in Mortshire. He is studying a game left unfinished at the end of summer. From *The Unstrung Harp; or, Mr. Earbrass Writes a Novel*, 1953, pen and ink, 4.5 x 3.5”, The Edward Gorey Charitable Trust, ©2010 The Edward Gorey Charitable Trust



Elegant Enigmas: The Art of Edward Gorey**B is for BASIL assaulted by bears**

it's only part of the equation. A close look at the exhibition also reveals the witty, slapstick sensibility of much of his work as well as the mind of a Renaissance man.

Aside from illustrating books—his own and those by others—Gorey's medium was also the Broadway stage, TV, and through his influence, film and literature, too. His was nominated for a pair of Tony Awards for Best Set Design and Best Costume Design (winning the latter) for the 1977 Broadway production of *Dracula*, which spread his reputation well beyond the world of books. His popularity expanded further in 1980, when the hit series PBS *Mystery!*, later renamed *Masterpiece Mystery*,

B is for Basil assaulted by Bears. From The Gashlycrumb Tinies; or, After the Outing, 1963, pen and ink, 2-7/8 x 4", The Edward Gorey Charitable Trust, ©2010 The Edward Gorey Charitable Trust

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used his work for its opening theme. The films of Tim Burton—*Beetlejuice* and *Edward Scissorhands*, for example—and the tales of Lemony Snickett (*A Series of Unfortunate Events*) owe more than a little “macabre whimsy” to Gorey’s work.

So, even if you’ve never heard of Edward Gorey, you’ve probably stumbled upon his work at one time or another. And younger generations continue to discover and embrace the artist’s work. Take for example, Siobhan Magnus, the 2010 American Idol contestant who was not shy about revealing the tattoo on her right shoulder, portraying a scene from—what else?—*The Gashlycrumb Tinies!* **ON VIEW**

After it had passed, Lord Wherewithal was found crushed beneath a statue blown down from the parapet.

From *The Secrets: Volume One, The Other Statue*, 1968, pen and ink,

4.5 x 5.5”, The Edward Gorey Charitable Trust, ©2010 The Edward Gorey Charitable Trust