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**Edward Gorey's Illustrations and Art Collection Unite in  
Unprecedented Exhibition at Wadsworth Atheneum**

Hartford, Conn. (Dec. 15, 2017) – The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art will present “Gorey’s Worlds,” the first museum exhibition to contextualize the work of celebrated American author and illustrator Edward Gorey (1925–2000) by uniting artworks from his personal collection and art of his own creation. Gorey bequeathed 73 objects he accumulated to the Wadsworth Atheneum—the only public institution to receive such a gift from him—in 2001. Ranging from 19<sup>th</sup>-century European prints and modernist American drawings to contemporary art from the 1970s and 1980s, these works offer an in-depth look into Gorey’s artistic inspiration. Defining works from this gift—by Édouard Manet, Charles Meryon, Eugène Atget and Albert York—are integrated with 50 of the artist’s own illustrations and key personalia. In total, more than 130 objects combine to encourage a holistic view of Edward Gorey, the art he lived with and the art he produced. The exhibition is on view from Feb. 10–May 6, 2018.

“There is a surprising feeling of intimacy viewing the art Gorey collected with his own work,” says Robert H. Schutz, Jr., Associate Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture Erin Monroe, who organized the exhibition. “Getting closer to Gorey’s work—which is frequently associated with the creepy or macabre—by engaging with the art he collected and understanding what sparked his creativity reveals that Gorey’s material is clever and playful.”

Gorey’s prolific career spanned more than 50 years; he is best known for his pen and ink illustrations of tales of hapless children, kohl-eyed swooning maidens and whimsical creatures, depicted with little or no text in a distinctly Gothic style. His repertoire of illustrations, book cover designs and prints is vast, and forays into popular work include the opening sequence to PBS’s “Mystery!” and set design for the Tony-Award winning Broadway revival of “Dracula” (1977). While Gorey’s own work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions, “Gorey’s Worlds” is the first to bring together his work with the contents of his art collection. A catalogue published by the museum and Princeton University Press accompanies the exhibition.

While Edward Gorey’s bequest is the latest major artist bequest to the Atheneum, the gift was unexplained and unexpected at the time of its arrival. Gorey was a regular patron of the Wadsworth Atheneum, visiting the museum while traveling between New York and his house on Cape Cod. But perhaps it was his enthusiasm for the New York City Ballet and its famed artistic director George Balanchine that drew him to the Atheneum; Balanchine was invited in 1933 by the Wadsworth’s then-director A. Everett “Chick” Austin Jr. and his Harvard University classmate Lincoln Kirstein to establish a school for ballet in Hartford. When Gorey moved to New York to launch his career two decades later he became a devotee of the NYCB, attending nearly every performance during Balanchine’s tenure (1953-83).

Gorey’s collection is predominated by works on paper by artists including Eugène Atget, Pierre Bonnard, Eugène Delacroix, Édouard Manet, and others, as well as American folk art. The exhibition is organized thematically. Groupings explore the creative and aesthetic worlds Gorey admired; shared subjects include the ballet, animals and creatures, Gothic scenery and empty landscapes, Surrealist art and literary nonsense. “Gorey’s Worlds” aims to elucidate connections between the art he consumed and collected, and the art he produced. Some similarities are readily apparent—Charles Burchfield’s “Study of Bats in Flight” (c. 1954-63) bears comparison with Gorey’s bat-embellished set designs for the Broadway production of “Dracula” (1977); the depiction of figures in a cave, seen from behind, from the American folk art sandpaper drawing “The Magic Lake” (c. 1850) strongly resembles a scene from Gorey’s wordless tale “The Prune People” (1983); Gorey’s own book “The Lavender Leotard” (1973) is (ostensibly autobiographically) subtitled “Going a Lot to the New York City Ballet.” Others are subtler—many of Gorey’s settings resonate with the artwork he collected such as the eerily vacant land and streetscape photographs of Eugène Atget.

### **Public Program Highlights**

Tours of “Gorey’s Worlds” are offered Saturdays and Sundays at 2:30 p.m. from Feb. 17–May 6. Free lectures include “Edward Gorey: Theater & Dance Enthusiast,” a conversation between curator Erin Monroe, Tony Award-winning Hartford Stage artistic director Darko Tresnjak and dance critic Robert Greskovic, Feb. 21 at 6 p.m. and “An Evening with James Prosek,” a conversation with the artist, naturalist and writer, Feb. 28 at 6 p.m. Former New York City Ballet principal Emily Coates and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer present an exclusive dance performance, “Incarnations,” March 17 at 2 p.m.; tickets \$10–15. “Sunday Serenades: Shostakovich & Gorey”

on March 4 at 2 p.m. explores whimsicality with a program also including Mozart, Shnittke and Britten; tickets \$25–30. Visit [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org) for a full schedule of programs and events.

### **Exhibition Support**

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### **About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continuously operating public art museum in the United States. The museum's nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Wednesday–Friday: 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Admission: \$5–15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free “happy hour” admission 4–5 p.m. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org).

**Note to editors:** High-resolution image files to accompany publicity of this exhibition will be available for download at <http://press.thewadsworth.org>. Please email [taryn.bunger@wadsworthatheneum.org](mailto:taryn.bunger@wadsworthatheneum.org) for availability and login credentials.

**Top image:** Charles Ephraim Burchfield, "Study of Bats in Flight," c. 1954-63. Conté crayon on wove paper mounted on cardboard. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Bequest of Edward Gorey, 2001.13.34.

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