

## Exquisite Corpse

*Edward Gorey's Moveable Books*

April 4 - December 29

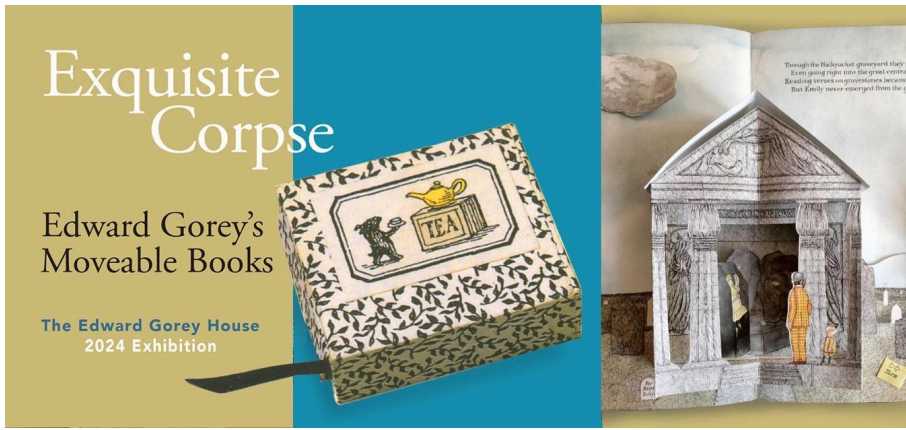
**“The older I’ve gotten, the more I’ve tended to like things you can fiddle around with.”**

— *Edward Gorey, interview with Simon Henwood, 1995.*

Sometimes a book doesn’t *behave* like a book but defies interpretation—which is explicitly at odds with what a book is *supposed* to do. Edward Gorey’s authorship has never shied away from allowing a book to pose more questions than answers. Among his many other accolades – author, illustrator, set designer, costume designer, print-maker, playwright and puppeteer – Edward Gorey is, at his core, a Book Artist. The House’s 2024 Exhibit *Exquisite Corpse* presents Gorey immersed in, and gleefully subverting, the physical realm of The Book with the first ever assembly of all his Moveable Books. Incorporating all his usual inscrutability and ambiguity, Gorey additionally manipulates folds, pagination, and expectation to allow for endless visual and narrative possibilities to – quite literally – unfold.

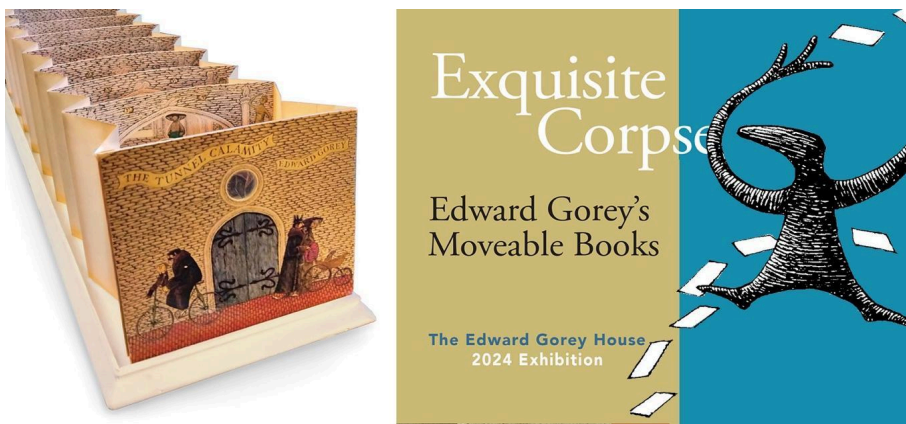
A Moveable Book (Movable Book is acceptable spelling as well) means just that—a book expressing its story in a physically interactive and unconventional way—not just books whose pages you move forward, but multiple-fold books, pop-up books, flipbooks, accordions, and dissolving image books.

Edward explored many of these forms as well as cut-outs, fans, tarot decks, books containing two stories moving in different directions, and even miniature books that don’t really open at all. While many of the books in this exhibit like *The Dwindling Party* and *The Tunnel Calamity* were produced by large publishing houses and involved relatively large (for Edward) commercial print runs, most of these books were very small press operations and frequently limited to hundreds of copies—which puts them into the category of Artists’ Books. They are nonetheless all Moveables in body or spirit. Nearly every one of these books are also quite rare.



The title **Exquisite Corpse** derives from an early 20th Century Dadaist/Surrealist game of creating a drawing from separately drawn parts—usually by different artists. Likewise, the game can be played with snippets of text, or just the random pairing of individual words—which is likely how the game’s title came about. Obviously, the name stuck as it perfectly represents the jarring beauty that sometimes arrives with casual juxtaposition.

As the first public assembly of all of Edward’s moveable books, **Exquisite Corpse** showcases the delight that Edward took in blurring the boundaries between book and game, story and prompt, and fate and chance. Most of the works displayed were created in the 1980s and coincided with Gorey’s permanent move from New York City to his renovated Yarmouth Port sea captain’s home. It was during this time that he was also collecting a library of moveable and miniature books and several of these, on loan from the Edward Gorey Charitable Trust and San Diego State University Library, are incorporated into the exhibit.



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March 25, 2024