



Floating Worlds: The Letters of Edward Gorey and Peter F. Neumeyer

Peter F. Neumeyer

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Edward Gorey and Peter Neumeyer met in the summer of 1968. Gorey had been contracted by Addison-Wesley to illustrate *Donald and the . . .*, a children's story written by Neumeyer. On their first encounter, Neumeyer managed to dislocate Gorey's shoulder when he grabbed his arm to keep him from falling into the ocean. In a hospital waiting room, they pored over Gorey's drawings for the first time together, and Gorey infused the situation with much hilarity. This was the beginning of an invigorating friendship, fueled by a wealth of letters and postcards that sped between the two men through the fall of 1969.

Those letters, published here for the first time, are remarkable for their quantity and their content. While the creative collaborations of Gorey and Neumeyer centered on children's books, they held wide-ranging interests; both were erudite, voracious readers, and they sent each other many volumes. Through their discussions of these books, one marvels at the beauty of thoughtful (and merry) discourse driven by intellectual curiosity.

The letters also paint an intimate portrait of Edward Gorey, a man often mischaracterized as macabre or even ghoulish. His gentleness, humility, and brilliance—interwoven with his distinctive humor—shine in each letter; his deft artistic hand is evident on the decorated envelopes addressed to Neumeyer, thirty-eight of which are reproduced here.

During the time of their correspondence, Peter Neumeyer was an assistant professor at Harvard University and then a professor at Stony Brook University in New York. His acumen and compassion, expressed in his discerning, often provocative missives, reveal him to be an ideal creative and intellectual ally for Gorey.

More than anything else, *Floating Worlds* is the moving memoir of an extraordinary friendship. Gorey wrote that he felt that they were “part of the same family, and I don't mean just metaphorically. I guess that even more than I think of you as a friend, I think of you as my brother.” Neumeyer stated, “Your letters . . . your existence has made something of this world that [it] hadn't the possibility of before.”

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