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Awaking Beauty: The Art Of Eyvind Earle



Synopsis

Graphic but mystical, vibrant yet enigmatic, the work of American artist Eyvind Earle is a treasure trove of subtle and shimmering contradictions. From fanciful backgrounds for Disney classics such as *Sleeping Beauty* to bold experiments in multimedia art, from ambitious commercial animations to lush and otherworldly oil landscapes, Earle's oeuvre never fails to please the eye and engage the imagination. And here, collected in *Awaking Beauty* – the official catalog for the 2017 Walt Disney Family Museum exhibition of the same name – is a definitive exploration of his life's full work. Born in New York City in 1916, Earle showed early talent, hosting his first solo exhibition at the age of fourteen. After traveling in Mexico and Europe as a teenager, he bicycled across the United States, painting watercolors to pay his way. In the late 1930s, he began designing Christmas cards – which have sold more than 300 million copies over the years – while continuing to exhibit his fine art. Earle's transformative moment, however, came in 1951, when he was hired at The Walt Disney Studios as a background painter. Again, he proved a quick study, lending his talents to the Academy Award-winning short *Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom*, a beloved full-length feature *Sleeping Beauty*, and many other time-honored Disney animated films. After his tenure at Disney ended in 1958, Earle turned his attention to commercial animation and advertising, then returned to fine art full-time in 1966. Here, in the last three decades of his life, Earle created an immense and impressively varied body of work. He became an expert at the silkscreen-printing process known as serigraphy, a painstaking art form that could require up to 200 individual screens. He also created dozens of graphic and arresting scratchboards – engravings carved into boards primed with white clay and black ink – for his autobiography, *Horizon Bound on a Bicycle*. In addition to his multimedia experiments, Earle painted dazzling oil works of the natural world, capturing the rolling hills, lacy and voluminous trees, and crashing blue waves of California in a nearly transcendental light. A moving and lyrical writer, he often accompanied his mesmerizing landscapes with equally meditative and intriguing poems. After a long and esteemed career, Earle passed away in 2000 in Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, leaving behind a formidable legacy in animation and fine art. Today, his work is in the permanent collections of several prominent museums (including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York), while his memory continues to inspire new generations of aspiring creatives around the globe.

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Customer Reviews

The Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco, California, presents the fascinating story and achievements of Walt Disney, the man who raised animation to an art, transformed the film industry, tirelessly pursued innovation, and created a global and distinctively American legacy. Located in the scenic Presidio of San Francisco, the museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded by Walt's daughter Diane Disney Miller. The cutting-edge facility opened in October 2009 and features contemporary, interactive galleries with state-of-the-art exhibits narrated in Walt's own voice alongside early drawings, cartoons, films, music, a spectacular model of Disneyland, and more. *Awakening Beauty: The Art of Eyvind Earle* is the eighteenth original special exhibition created by The Walt Disney Family Museum.

I'm conflicted about this book. On the one hand, I welcome any attempts to bring attention to Eyvind Earle's life and works. On the other hand, I think *Awakening Beauty* could have been a lot better. The nice things about it is that they pulled out all the stops on these reproductions. They are beautiful and often appropriately sized, while still giving them space to breath on the page. There are quite a few works in here, especially those pertaining to Earle's early life and studies, that are impossible to track down in print or online. Finally, we can see some of the brilliant watercolor landscapes that Earle goes on and on about during his roadtrip journal in *Horizon Bound*! And the Easter special! (I wish they could have tracked down some of the navy portraits though.) Moving on to the bad: Upon seeing the title and description for this book, and knowing that it was made to commemorate a show at the Disney Family Museum, I knew this book would show some of Earle's

non-Disney work but have a distinct focus on the art he created for the numerous productions he was attached to throughout his years at Disney. The Disney section is wonderful, but it's too short. At about 60 pages, it covers only a third of the book. I was so looking forward to wonderful reproductions of some of the concept works I've seen in online auction catalogs and others that find their way to the internet here and there. But very little of it makes it into the book. It's still quite a lot by comparison, but you could fill a whole book with just the Sleeping Beauty stuff I've seen out there alone. I could be mistaken, but I don't think anything made it from his foray into the Little Golden Book collection either. Most of the textual information found in this book is rehashed or directly quoted from Earle's autobiography, *Horizon Bound on a Bicycle*. The quotes are completely unattributed in the main part of the book, which is a little jarring, but the source is made clear in a small paragraph on the copyright page at the end. The book seems to rely a lot on this reprinted material to carry it; seeing Earle's own words beside his artwork is great, but it takes up a disproportionate amount of the text (I'm not counting poetry here.) I would have liked a more cohesive narrative or supporting details that add something to what's already available. But even in areas where the writers summarize events in their own words, much of the nuance of Earle's life is lost as well and you end up with a frustratingly vague picture of who he was and where he came from. He led a very interesting life and it's a shame to water it down to such an extent. Lastly, not only does the book lift a lot of its text from *Horizon Bound*, but they devoted over 10 pages to reprinting 26 of the 70 chapterhead illustrations found in it. I can understand reprinting a few to show Earle's scratch board works, but many of these are repetitive and some are quite simple works hardly worthy of their own page. I don't mean to insult the sentimental value when I say that, but for such a prolific artist who has so few publications dedicated to his work, these pages just start to feel like they exist simply to pad it out. Not only that, but if you want to see them all, why not just buy the book they were made for? Though I've only got a chance to look through Earle's other book, *The Complete Works of Eyvind Earle*, only once, I heavily suspect the same could be said for many of the works that comprise the last 30 or so pages of *Awakening Beauty* as well. And a note on the physical book: The dust jacket is very fragile and the book itself wasn't shrinkwrapped. As a result, though I preordered, my book still arrived with a torn and beat up dust jacket. This was a long review. I understand that this book was a labor of love for those involved and I don't mean to disparage their effort, and it's entirely possible that the production of this book suffered limitations beyond its creators' control, but so much of this book seems to me a lost opportunity. There is so much out there by Eyvind Earle that's already had its chance to shine and I would have liked to see this book focus more on things that haven't found their way to print. I will still display it proudly on

my shelf, as I'm excited to see any of Earle's Disney work collected. Here's to hoping that some day we will get to see more of Earle's stunning concept work on our shelves.

Being a creative writing student, I was pleased to hear that Disney artist Eyvind Earle was the nephew of world renown poet William Carlos Williams. When I visited the Awakening Beauty exhibit at the Walt Disney Family Museum a month ago, I was blown away by the poetry that complimented the artwork! Very breathtaking! In fact, the museum had a pamphlet of the poetry to read so that you could follow along while viewing the artwork. When I got to the gift shop, I knew I had to get the catalog book. Not only does the book layout include the art from the exhibit, but the poetry is in there as well. If you enjoy art and literature, you must buy this book!

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