



The Parrots, Die Papageien - Les Perroquets: The Complete Plates, Samtliche Tafeln Toutes les planches

Francesco Solinas, Rainer Willmann, Solphia Willmann

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Brilliant Plumage, Exquisite Technique: An unsurpassed monument in the history of scientific illustration

Edward Lear may be best known for his nonsense verse, but in his early years he excelled as an illustrator of birds and reptiles. This set of 42 hand-colored lithographs, originally entitled *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots*, was **the finest achievement of his relatively brief career as a natural history draftsman**, before failing eyesight led him to concentrate on his writing.

During Lear's time, live parrots were rare and much sought-after, bought and sold for large sums by wealthy amateurs of natural history, and prized by 19th century European aristocracy for their astonishing plumage and mimicry of the human voice. Naturally, fine drawings of them were also highly prized. One of the first collections entirely dedicated to the species, *Parrots* includes African, Australian, and American parrots bred by eminent ornithologists such as Sir William Jardine and Prideaux John Selby, who sponsored Lear, inspiring and directing his work. Unlike other avian illustrators who often worked with stuffed birds, the young and prodigiously talented Lear (1812–1888) made his drawings from live parrots, **capturing their expressions and movements in remarkably lifelike illustrations**. The new medium of hand-colored lithography facilitated the vivid elegance of Lear's work.

This exquisite collection was **originally reproduced in only 175 precious sets and sold by subscription to Britain's most eminent scholars and wealthy collectors** of living parrots. The *Psittacidae* established Lear as a celebrated illustrator, and professor of drawing to the young Queen Victoria. With a brief zoological introduction and written descriptions of each bird, **TASCHEN's perfect reprint brings Lear's parrots back to life for all to admire**.

Text in English, French, and German

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