



## Edouard Vuillard

*By Guy Cogeval*

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The illustrious career of Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940) spanned the fin de siècle and the first four decades of the 20th century. During that time, the French painter, printmaker and photographer created a large number of extraordinary works. This study of Vuillard's art presents some 100 works that should reveal the full range of his renowned artistic abilities. In a series of illustrated essays, the authors explore Vuillard's complex and diverse career, which began with his academic training in Paris in the late 1880s. By the early 1890s, Vuillard was painting the innovative and sensual Nabi paintings for which he is best known, characterised by complex patterns and vibrant colours. Vuillard was also beginning to paint provocative interiors and works associated with the avant-garde theatre. The volume concludes with an examination of Vuillard's sumptuous large-scale decorations, luminous landscapes and elegant portraits from the last decades of his career as well as a substantial selection of his pastels and prints, in addition to his photographs.

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

A quiet man who lived with his beloved mother, the painter Édouard Vuillard applied his inventive talents to re-imagining bourgeois interiors as shifting planes of color and pattern. Admirers of his sensuous interior world will be bowled over by this sumptuous volume with its vivid narrative and 463 exquisite color reproductions. In *Édouard Vuillard*, Guy Cogeval discusses the artist's life and work with a passionate involvement that is rare in contemporary art writing. He describes how Vuillard's early work as a set designer apparently led him to stage manage family members, placing them in tense or confrontational tableaux that he memorialized in paint. Vuillard was an enthusiastic amateur photographer who favored the new handheld Kodak camera. An entire chapter is dedicated to the artist's charmingly artless snapshots of family and friends. In his later years, Vuillard utilized a more down-to-earth painting style in portraits of the rich and famous. While these paintings are often dismissed as conservative, Cogeval points out Vuillard's use of subtle details to comment on some of his sitters. Four other essayists treat themes ranging from "Vuillard and Ambiguity" to the effect of his annual summer vacations on his treatment of landscape, light and composition. This exceptional book accompanies an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C., from Jan. 19 to April 20, 2004, which travels to Montreal, Paris, and London. --Cathy Curtis

### From Publishers Weekly

The traveling exhibition on which this catalogue is based (it's now in Washington, D.C.) has been described as overstuffed in more than one review. But since one is not jostling for space or walking miles of galleries when perusing this volume, its bulk works in its favor, revealing in 463 color (and 95 b&w) reproductions the breadth of Vuillard's achievement, as well as its limits. The 334 works from the show begin in 1889, with Vuillard and Waroquy, a portrait of the artist and his friend ("of whom we know almost nothing") and plunge into the astonishing works of the 1890s, where Vuillard (along with Bonnard) took Impressionism in new directions. Cogeval, director of Montreal's Museum of Fine Arts, rightly devotes a good portion of the book to this period, providing ample sketches and studies to buttress the case for Vuillard's accomplishment, along with photos of the figures one often finds in the work (also part of the exhibit). After some uncertain mid-period works, the book presents a series of portraits from the 1930s that reveal Vuillard (1868-1940) to have been a "discreet observer of a certain modernity." That discretion, for some, may signal a dead end, but long enough looks at some of these late works reveal that "certain modernity" to have a lot in common with the denatured reality of lifestyle journalism. But whatever one's final opinion of the work, the book (which also includes four scholarly essays and a detailed chronology) allows a contemplation of it that was previously impossible.

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### From [Booklist](#)

Vuillard's lavish painterly paintings have long been prized for their surprising colors, forceful textures, mysterious atmosphere, and molecular animation in which the air itself has texture and hue, but even Vuillard's most avid fans will be amazed at the size of this handsome volume and the diversity of work contained within. The exhibition documented so thoroughly and cogently here is only the second Vuillard retrospective ever mounted; the first was organized in 1938, two years before the artist's death, and Vuillard's profoundly human oeuvre, including his intimate photographs and lush decorative works, has rarely been considered with such breadth and depth. Cogeval, director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, and his international cast of contributors, strike just the right balance between aesthetics, art history, and biography as they analyze the tremendous influence women had on his work, and discuss the felicitous evolution from

Vuillard's symbolist explorations to his involvement with avant-garde theater to his participation in the Nabi group and beyond. Simultaneously reserved and sensual, Vuillard progressed from thrillingly moody, strongly patterned, alternately oppressive and tender domestic interiors to works radiant with sunshine and infused with a grateful serenity, exquisite testimony to art's redemptive powers. *Donna Seaman*  
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