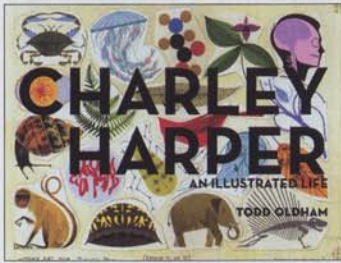


# books

edited by Stanley Abercrombie



**Charley Harper:  
An Illustrated Life**

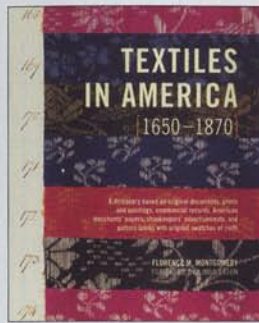
by Todd Oldham  
Los Angeles: AMMO Books, \$200  
420 pages, 400 color illustrations

It could easily be said that Todd Oldham's designs epitomize the whimsical. From hotels in Miami Beach to furniture and textiles

for La-Z-Boy, Oldham has honed his penchant for quirkiness bordering on kitsch, and his flea-market foraging is well documented. On one thrift-store tour in 2001, he unearthed his aesthetic soul mate amid a pile of dusty old magazines. What resulted is this extensive monograph on Charley Harper, a Cincinnati artist and draftsman who worked from the late '40's until his death earlier this year. Although the illustrations might at first seem simplistic, they blossom into highly sophisticated compositions under the reader's gaze.

Oldham's decision to print the book at mammoth scale (12 by 17 inches) allows every swath of color and flourish of Harper's pen to be studiously scrutinized and sweetly savored. In addition to a straightforward Q&A between artist and author, nearly all of Harper's oeuvre appears here, from his 25-year tenure at *The Ford Times*, a lifestyle magazine published by the Ford Motor Company, to his own *Birds and Words* of 1974. It's an encyclopedic overview rarely afforded to graphic artists.

Fittingly, Oldham's interest has inspired two hometown exhibitions. "Graphic Content" runs at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center through February, and "Minimal Realism: Charley and Edie Harper," which also includes Harper's wife, opens in August at the Cincinnati Art Museum. For those unable to see the work in person, Oldham's book performs beautifully as a traveling show. —Deborah Wilk



**Textiles in America 1650-1870**

by Florence M. Montgomery  
New York: W.W. Norton, \$50  
496 pages, 372 illustrations (117 color)

First published almost a quarter century ago, this definitive study showcases the textiles that played such an important role in the daily life of early America—some made by the colonists, some traded with Native Americans, and others imported from Europe, India, and China. The book's

first half is devoted to subjects such as furnishing practices in England and America, bed hangings, window curtains, and upholstery; the second half is a dictionary of over 1,000 textile terms, many of them illustrated. There is also an extensive bibliography, not updated.

As Linda Eaton, textiles curator at the Winterthur Museum & Country Estate in Delaware, writes in her introduction to the new edition, the

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