



Erik Blegvad, illustrator, March 3, 1923 to January 14, 2014

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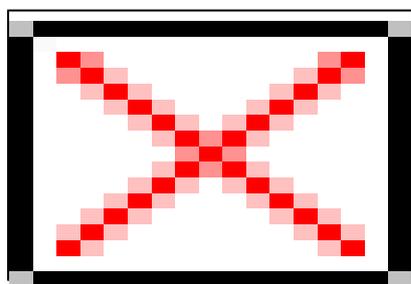
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Nicholas Tucker remembers the illustrator Eric Begvad.



Erik Blegvad, who has died aged 90, illustrated over a hundred children's books. Born in Copenhagen in 1923, he spent time as a child with his grandfather, who told him the folk and fairy tales which formed the basis of his visual imagination for the rest of his life. In 1941, tall, red-headed and soon to sport his distinctive handlebar moustache, he enrolled at Copenhagen's School of Applied Arts where he met his life-long friend Niels Mogens Bodecker, later a celebrated illustrator and poet. Moving to America in 1952, he started illustrating children's books, drawing on meticulous draughtsmanship informed by an impish sense of humour. Still mostly working in pen and ink sometimes washed over with water colours, he illustrated the American publication in 1957 of Mary Norton's classic story **Bedknobs and Broomsticks**. Next year he translated and illustrated Hans Andersen's story **The Swineherd** and did the same with Andersen's **Twelve Tales** in 1993, writing in his introduction that 'if the English in these translations sounds old-fashioned, well, so does the original Danish.' In 1961 he illustrated Marjorie Winslow's **Mud Pies and Other Recipes**, reprinted in 2010 by the New York Review of Books in their Children's Classics series. There was also work on children's books written by his American wife Lenore Hochman. One of these, **This Little Pig-a-Wig and other Rhymes about Pigs** (1978) was chosen by the New York Times as one of the best illustrated books of the year.

In 1966 he and his family of two sons moved to London. Many more illustrations followed. It was only much later, when his type of exquisitely detailed art-work began to go out of fashion, that commissions began to dry up. In his charming illustrated autobiography **Self-Portrait** (1979) he describes how 'when my lucky side is working I find myself concentrated at the tip of my pen, which to my delight proceeds to create people, objects and worlds I never knew existed.' Readers looking back will remember how well he used to spread this sense of delight to them too.

Erik Blegvad, illustrator, was born on March 3, 1923. He died on January 14, 2014.

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