

The Museum of Modern Art

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THREE YOUNG RATS AND OTHER RHYMES: Drawings by Alexander Calder; edited with an introduction by James Johnson Sweeney. Reprint edition in near-facsimile size. 160 pages, 85 illustrations. Hardbound, \$6.95, distributed by Doubleday and Company, Inc.; paperbound, \$4.95.

THREE YOUNG RATS AND OTHER RHYMES, a sophisticated and delightful compendium of verses illustrated for adult readers by the sculptor Alexander Calder, has just been reprinted by The Museum of Modern Art.

The tradition of nursery rhymes and tales is an ancient one, as James Johnson Sweeney points out in the introduction to the collection. Far from being ephemeral, nursery rhymes have a universal relevance and direct appeal that cuts across centuries in time and all cultures, both civilized and primitive. Mr. Sweeney traces the origin, significance and themes of the nursery rhyme tradition in the light of our knowledge of folk psychology. This tradition continues to be a vital source of inspiration for modern poets, such as T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden.

Mr. Sweeney observes that the child is the primitive man later concealed by the thin veneer of industrial civilization. "In making a drawing the child goes straight to those features it considers most interesting.... And because the child's inhibitions are limited, it observes few reticences. Its interests are the larger realities of life and death.... It thinks by image. And it takes mischievous pleasure in contriving out of these images incongruous associations that often have the quality of fresh and startling metaphors."

By means of his witty line drawings, Alexander Calder achieves this childlike directness and charm, which, however, does not conceal the harsher realities of life. Although Calder is best known for his abstract mobiles and stabiles, throughout his career he has turned his attention to illustration and humor. In the 20's, Calder created his famous "circus," and the illustrations for THREE YOUNG RATS reflect this part of his oeuvre.

James Johnson Sweeney, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts of Houston, Texas, is the author of a monograph on Alexander Calder published by The Museum of

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Modern Art in 1943 (revised, 1951), now out-of-print.

THREE YOUNG RATS AND OTHER RHYMES was originally published in a limited edition by the well-known dealer Curt Valentin in 1944, and two years later the Museum published a larger edition. Both were printed by S.A. Jacobs of the Golden Eagle Press, New York. This beautiful typography is retained in the present reprint edition in near-facsimile size.

THREE YOUNG RATS is available in two editions: hardbound, \$6.95, distributed to the trade by Doubleday and Company, Inc.; and paperbound, \$4.95. Both editions are available by mail from the Museum or at the Museum Bookstore.

Review copies and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Patricia B. Kaplan, Assistant, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. Circle 5-8900.