

## 1830s art printed anew

**The Parrots** by Edward Lear, Taschen, 2009, 32-page booklet and 42 fine-art prints (12.9x19.3" each), \$100, boxed.

You might know Edward Lear as a 19th-century poet, famous for his nonsense verse and limericks. Before devoting most of his life to literature, however, Lear excelled at illustrating birds and reptiles. In the early 1830s, his *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots* was published to high acclaim in England. But only 175 sets of the 42 hand-colored lithographs were printed, and most went to scholars and wealthy collectors of living parrots.

Now art-book publisher Taschen has reprinted Lear's paintings and is selling them as a boxed set, along with a 32-page booklet. It includes essays, printed in English, German, and French, about the artist and about the diversity and behavior of parrots.

Eleven pages are devoted to descriptions of the bird species that Lear painted. They include the modern names of the birds and the names used in Lear's time, and they describe the birds' behaviors, ranges, habitats, and sizes. Kudos to the publishers for getting the details right.

Simply put, the plates are stunning. Lear captured his subjects' expressions and postures so masterfully that the birds appear ready to leap off the page and fly away.

