



The Christmas Book

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The Christmas Book captures the nostalgia and iconography of Christmas in full-color pictorial splendor.

With examples spanning from the tenth through twenty-first centuries, the book focuses most on the United States and Europe. After three brief introductory essays that cover the birth of Jesus and Christmas traditions, food at Christmastime, and the evolution of Santa Claus, the book's primary concern is cataloging the imagery of Christmas with short text synopses. And it casts a wide net: J. R. R. Tolkien's handmade Father Christmas letters appear alongside cult classics like Mariah Carey's Christmas album. Patterns for 1940s Christmas sweaters feature equally with modern art staples, like the upside-down Christmas tree that Iranian artist Shirazeh Houshiary suspended from the ceiling of London's Tate Britain. Raymond Brigg's colored pencil picture book *The Snowman* keeps company with Everhard Rensig and Gerhard Remisch's fourteenth-century stained glass piece *The Nativity*.

With inclusions running the gamut from church art to pop art, music to movies, commercial objects to found folk art, *The Christmas Book* understands that, for much of Western culture, it's elaborate visual and sensory displays that make the holiday a touchstone cultural creation.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (November / December 2023)

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