

IRISH ENCOUNTERS



JIM COLLINS

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A TOURING EXHIBITION
2010 – 2011



June and July 2010
THE BLACKBIRD GALLERY
18 William Street--KILKENNY
Phone 056 7762050



November 2010
THE BASEMENT GALLERY
DUNDALK



January 14th until February 11th 201
DOORADOYLE LIBRARY, CO.
LIMERICK

Peter Baldaia*: During your long career, you've become best known for public art sculpture. But I think the works you create from vintage materials – your more personal sculptures and your box collages – are your finest. The collages are very sophisticated in their fusion of materials to suggest compelling narratives. You often create unusual visual effects in your works through weaving materials like cigar bands, food labels, sheet music, and currency into repetitive patterns. You've got to have a huge supply of these items in order to make your work. I'm wondering if you seek your materials with a particular application in mind, or do you find things that strike you and later determine how you'll use them?

Jim Collins: It works both ways. In either case, the material has to have some quality to draw my attention. Primarily it's color or design if it's something like a stack of labels.



THE MURDERER 2002

PB: When did you start making collages?

JC: Around 1983, after I resigned from teaching at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. My wife Debbe and I had the romantic notion of making a living as artists. We left Chattanooga, bought and renovated a bank building built in 1860 overlooking the Ohio River in Ripley, Ohio. This became our home and studio until we returned to Chattanooga in 1987. The early collages started out small, but got bigger and more complex over time. I approach the large works theatrically. I feel like I'm setting up stages with my works, and it's up to the viewer to tell the story. Actually, they are somewhat challenging in that the art is not finalized until the viewer completes it. Works like *The Murderer* and *The Gambler* represent aspects of the human condition, and in these works I'm writing the play. But it is still open to individual interpretation.

*Peter J. Baldaia is the Director of Curatorial Affairs of the Huntsville Museum of Art located in Huntsville, Alabama.



MY IMAGINARY BROTHERS' PUB 2005

JC: Here is a favorite, because of the strong horizontal composition which I use from time to time. However, most importantly it reminds me of the Irish Pub. You can see that canned pumpkin occurring again, as in *Waiting for Arthur*. I fabricated the frame using a 1940's sign that came from a restaurant near the Chattanooga Choo Choo in downtown Chattanooga and the metal elements, including the stars, which are a reoccurring motif in my work. There are parts of a Japanese kimono and the money is Chinese. The two lads there were originally together in an old tin-type photograph that I bought, but I separated them.

PB: Old photographs are always so compelling. They represent real people with real lives, important to their families and loved ones. When they end up in a flea market somewhere, they've become nobodies, falling into a strange realm of anonymity. But, here you've reinvented these two boys, and now they're the main characters in...

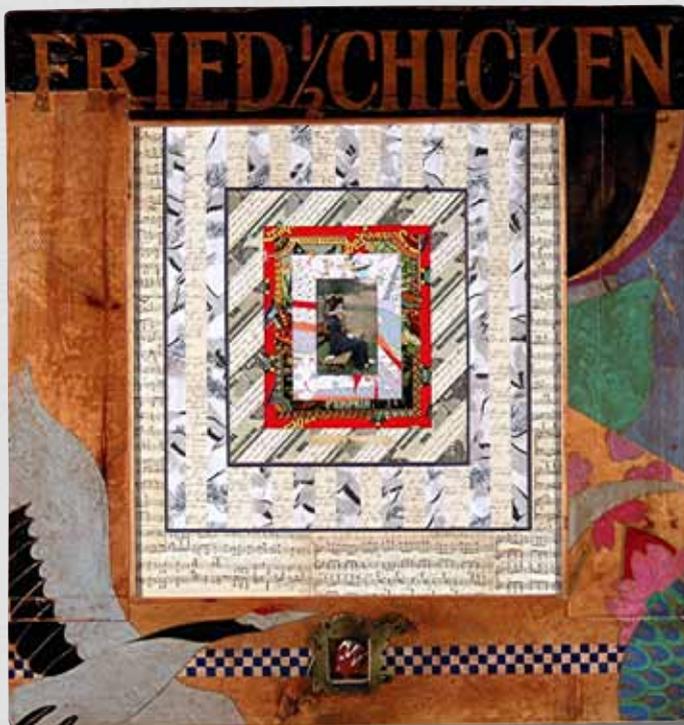
JC: ...in my play!

PB: I'm struck by this piece in which you've integrated an old fried chicken sign with a number of Oriental elements.

JC: Arthur Golden wrote *Memoirs of a Geisha*, and one of the characters was Pumpkin. Arthur's last name is Golden, hence the "Golden Pumpkin" food labels surrounding the geisha. His mother, Ruth Holmberg, is a good friend of mine and I told her, "I know you think I contrived all of this, but I swear I didn't! The only thing missing here is Arthur. So you know what I titled this one?"

PB: Arthur?

JC: Close---*Waiting for Arthur*. Because for me that's what the geisha is doing.



WAITING FOR ARTHUR 2006

PB: I'm intrigued by this series you've created using animals as the central motif.

JC: There are a total of sixteen pieces in the series, which I created in 2002 and titled Animalloys. They were inspired by a collection of English cigarette premiums from the 1930's that I purchased on eBay, where I find a lot of my material. Three premium cards make up a complete animal. I started playing with them and instead of putting three together to make an alligator, for instance, I began to shuffle them up to make unusual animals. Then I read on the back of the cards, "By mixing the sections you can produce a large number of strange creatures with amusing names." How clever!



JAKE'S DOG SCRAPPY 2007

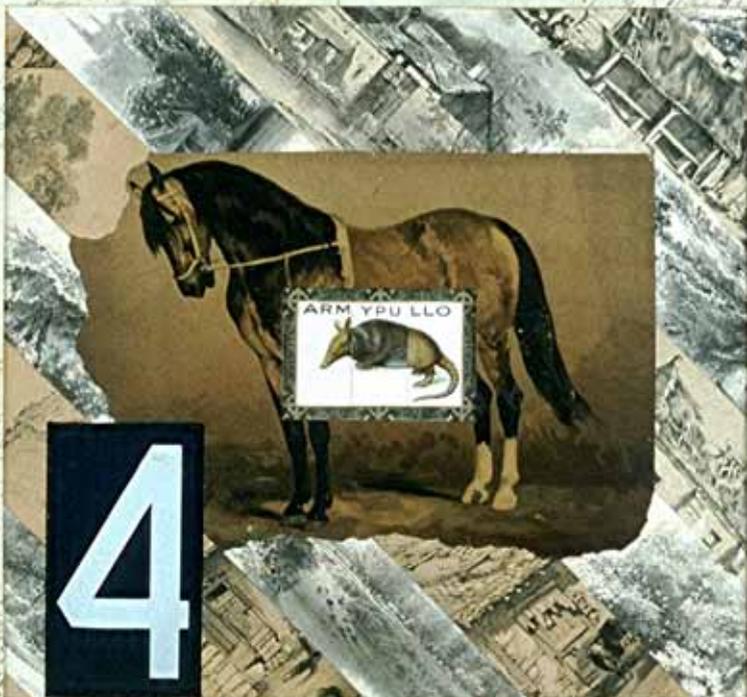
PB: This one with the horse and the number four immediately draws attention.

JC: It's called ARMYPULLO, I framed the central inset of the premium cards with a liner that I created out of money fragments. It is surrounded in turn by a nineteenth century color print of a horse, and diagonal bands of early prints in various states of discoloration. The prints originally belonged to the granddaughter of the artist Charles Wilson Peale. Surrounding them is a band of ledger pages showing elegant penmanship from an earlier century. I selected these pages for their design qualities and not for what is written on the page although I think that is interesting too.

PB: There's such attention to detail in this work, with the metal corner elements and painting on the frame. That's a nice touch.

JC: Thanks. The frame is rough-sawn wood salvaged from European shipping crates that I obtained from Clement's Antiques here in Chattanooga. I distressed the surface to give it the look of age that's critical in my mixed media collage work. Then I segmented the frame, painting the upper section with diagonal stripes that oppose the composition within.

ARMYPULLO (Number 4) 2002



JC: Okay, here's one. It's called TEXAS HOLD'EM, inspired by the poker game of that name.

PB: What are these currency bills that you've used lavishly in the background?

JC: They're 50 mark bills from hyperinflation Germany, circa 1920. I had a bunch of them but began to run out. I located a man in Brooklyn who had a hundred, so I bought them to replenish my stock. Every element in this piece that surrounds the old photo of the guys playing cards is money, from different times and countries.

PB: I'm surprised that you're able to buy so many unusual materials in quantity, and in such good condition. Are they always original, or are they sometimes reproductions?

JC: As far I'm aware they are always vintage materials. I am not interested in using reproduction materials—I try to stick with the authentic stuff.

PB: So the fur here is real too?

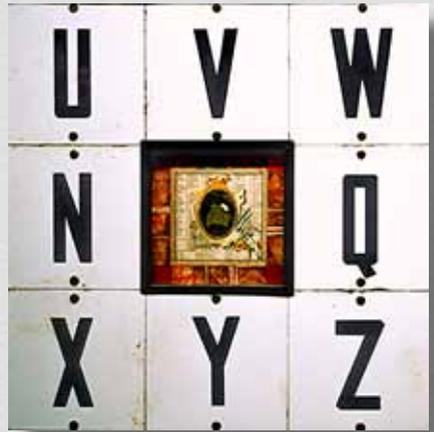
JC: Oh yes, it's cowhide. My wife bought a bunch of them to use as rugs throughout the house. When I saw this one I said, "I want that!" I think it is quite beautiful as the framing element.



TEXAS HOLD'EM 2006



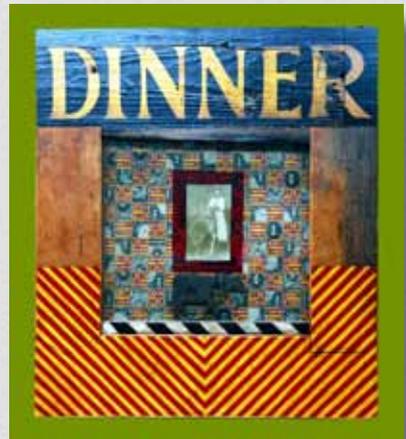
PLAGUE OF THE FROGS 1990



PELOPS 1996



KAVANAGH HIMSELF 2007

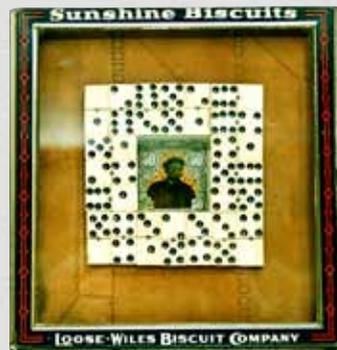


BIG BEE RANCH 2006

Education: Marshall University, West Virginia, BA
University of Michigan, M.P.H.
Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, M.F.A.

1966-1983: Professor of Art
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Reference: *Dictionary of American Sculptors*
Who's Who in American Art
Art of Tennessee Frist Center for the Visual Arts
Jim Collins Art: 1963-2003, a survey published by
Two Hands Art Publishing



THE GAMBLER 1995

SELECTED PUBLIC ART COMMISSIONS:

An individual sculpture each for the three villages of: Carlingford, Collon, and Heynestown
in County Louth Ireland 2009

Major Public Sculpture Commission - Number1 Fire Station, Plano, Texas 2008

MILE MARKERS, Nine powder-coated stainless steel sculptures on the Tennessee
Riverwalk Chattanooga, TN 2007

Major Commission: *LIMERICK HERD*, 32 silhouettes of life-sized animals,
powder-coated aluminum, four sites along dual carriageways in
County Limerick, Ireland 2004

BLACK AND AMBER WATCHER, Langton's, Kilkenny Ireland 2004

Commission: *FOOTBALL WATCHER*, stainless steel and powder-coat,
Mattoon High School, Mattoon, IL 2003

Commission, *THE COMMUNITY*, stainless steel and brass relief,
Sheriff's Building, Rockland County, NY 2002

VOLUMES, stainless steel fountain, 22' X 12' X 10'

The Bicentennial Library, Chattanooga, TN 2001

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

01. **GARCIA BROTHERS** 1988
13 X 11 X 2 inches
02. **PLAGUE OF THE FROGS** 1990
27.5 X 27.5 X 3 inches
03. **THE MULLION LEAGUE** 1993
16.5 X 16.5 X 2 inches
04. **CINCINNATI KID** 1993
15 X 15 X 4.5 inches
05. **THE GAMBLER** 1995
10.5 X 10.5 X 1.75 inches
06. **THE PERUVIAN STOREKEEPER** 1995
16 X 15 X 3.75 inches
07. **PELOPS** 1996
24.5 X 24.5 X 1 inches
08. **PORTRAIT OF JANUS** 1997
12 X 12 X 1 inches
09. **NUMBER 13** 2002
40 X 40 X 2 inches
10. **ARMYPULLO (Number 4)** 2002
30.5 X 33 X 2 inches
11. **MURDERER** 2002
39 X 35 X 6.5 inches
12. **MY IMAGINARY BROTHERS' PUB** 2005
21 X 48 X 2.5 inches
13. **FOUR FROGS AT CHRISTMAS** 2005
27 X 19.5 X 1.5 inches
14. **UNCLE SAM** 2005
21.5 X 17.5 X 2 inches
15. **TEXAS HOLD'EM** 2006
32 X 30 X 3 inches
16. **WAITING FOR ARTHUR** 2006
38.5 X 37 X 3 inches
17. **BIG BEE RANCH** 2006
23.5 X 21 X 2.5 inches
18. **SIX GEISHA ON THE GOLDEN ROAD** 2006
35 X 37 X 2 inches
19. **JAKE'S DOG SCRAPPY** 2007
31 X 30 X 3.5 inches
20. **KAVANAGH HIMSELF** 2007
30 X 29.5 X 3.5 inches



NUMBER 13 2002



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