



Jess: O! Tricky Cad and Other Jessoterica

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The San Francisco artist Jess (1923–2004) has for decades been known to cognoscenti as an inventive and sophisticated master of the collage aesthetic. Recently however, his works are receiving fresh attention from a younger generation attuned to Jess' interests in myth, narrative and appropriation. Jess used images taken from sources ranging from *Dick Tracy* to Dürer, from a Beatles bubblegum card to medical textbook drawings, from 1887 *Scientific American* line engravings to frames from George Herriman's *Krazy Kat*. In reexamining myth through a synthesis of art and literature, Jess' work remains a crucial assemblage of the meanings of our time. This volume brings to light collages, collage books, word poems and altered comics that have been largely inaccessible or unavailable since their making. Originally published in small editions and hard-to-find journals, or made as one-off artist's books, these works demonstrate the full range of Jess's extraordinary verbal and visual play. Several of Jess's surreal comic-strip manipulations, *Tricky Cad* (1954–1959), are reproduced for the first time in their entirety, as are others such as *Ben Big Bolt* and *Nance* that have never before been published. The book also includes a group of complex wraparound book covers, several unpublished collage poems, and two artist's books never before reproduced in full: *From Force of Habit*, a "fantastic tale" which plays with the pages of a Swedish cult sci-fi novel, and *When a Young Lad Dreams of Manhood*, a homoerotic paeon (and naughty parody) of the priapic urge. A facsimile reproduction of the 20-page collage masterpiece *O!* is included as a separate booklet, and the book sports a dustjacket that folds out into a poster-size collage.

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