

# GRAND STREET



"Hurry and get dressed," said Sharon. "I'm going to make French toast."

"Goody," said Sharon and started out of bed. Instead of leaping, she was very surprised to find herself rising like a queen, slowly and regally. Her body felt very heavy but smooth and sort of floaty. It was pleasant.

Sharon's usual custom in the morning was to jerk out bureau drawers so hard, they almost always came all the way out and dumped everything on the floor. This time she went over to her bureau to get some clean clothes. She reached for the drawer handles and was surprised to find that she was pulling them out slowly and carefully. Her fingers grasped them. She tried to jerk the drawers out but her arms moved back. The drawers pulled out gently and just far enough for her to be able to reach her socks without any effort. When she had finished she tried to give the drawer handle a hard pull but it wouldn't come away. It pushed the drawer back in, carefully, and she was down in her drawers.

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**SECRETS**  
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*Peter Brook*  
*Joseph Cornell*  
*António Lobo Antunes*  
*Susan Meiselas*  
*Ingmar Bergman*

From the European cubists and surrealists of the early twentieth century, to the work of the British-based Independent Group in the 1950s, to American pop art in the seventies, artists have incorporated popular print material such as advertising imagery in collage to critique and celebrate the dominant culture. More recently, practitioners seem to have approached the potential of collage for dismembering and reassembling by way of an interest in the grotesque or carnival figure—one who, in Bakhtin's theory, has been turned "inside out" and displays its openings on the surface. This "body collage" has taken many forms, most famously, perhaps, in Cindy Sherman's photographs of pieced-together body parts, or in the sensationalist installations of Jake and Dinos Chapman, whose disfigured, child mannequins have been endowed with surplus or enlarged orifices. In such artworks—antiportraits—the boundary points of the body, normally guarded by taboo, become confused. The sense of an individual person or self evaporates.

Arturo Herrera's collages join these three elements of collage—the critical, the celebratory, and the grotesque—and add to this gene pool strains from the already bizarre world of fairy tales and folklore, where ideas of innocence and deviance are first introduced to the child's imagination.

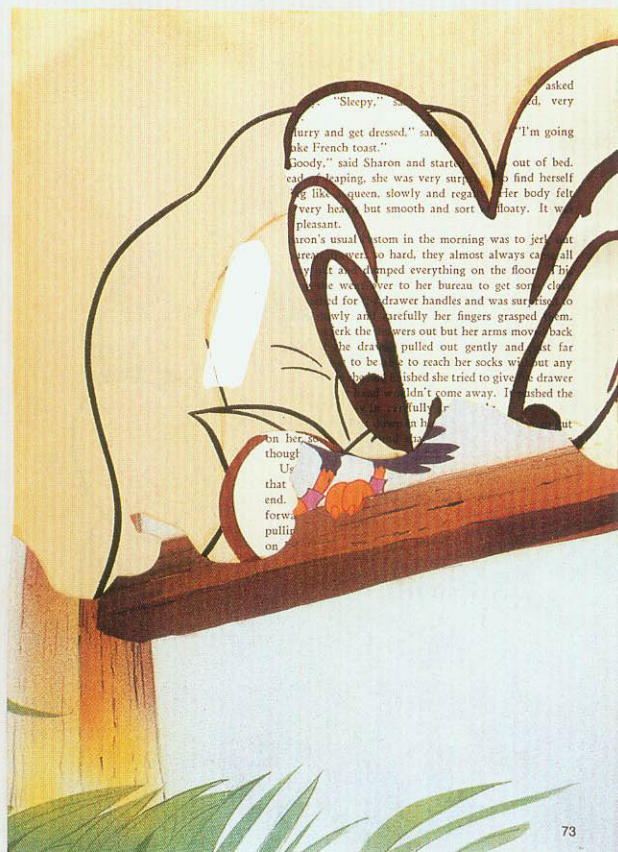
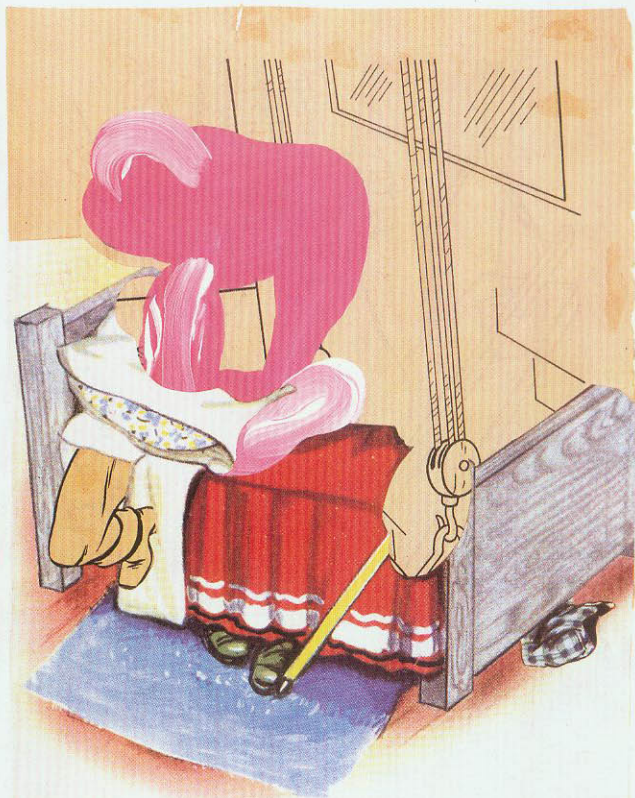
Herrera's mix of cut, pasted and painted fairy-tale figures, coloring book images, advertisements, and abstract, painterly marks creates a region of *collision*, a liminal zone in a state of constant penetration and transformation. Here, no single image is allowed autonomy. Each element in a single work is occluded, violated, played with. In one example a shiny, chocolate-covered Häagen-Dazs ice cream bar from a magazine ad protrudes, not so innocently, from the

striding legs and torso of Donald Duck. This duck-cum-ice-cream has been isolated in the rounded frame that typically comes at the end of a television cartoon—the type that gradually closes around the image, like an iris in a lens. In the mostly obscured background of this bubble, which is surrounded by an expanse of monotone beige, pictures from a coloring book have been partially filled in, or their boundaries exceeded, with an innocent sense of disregard for the prescribed dictum to stay within the lines. In another collage, Herrera has scribbled furiously in pink crayon over cartoon figures and furniture, causing Tweety Bird to dissolve into the support on which he stands. Tweety looks over—bewildered—at the scene beside him, in which a teddy bear has been flattened by the combined pressure of a Wonder bread wrapper and a phallus-shaped cutout. A brownish abstract wash seeps out from underneath the bear. Here and elsewhere, the complex layering precludes logical visual decoding—which scene came first, what figure went under where, and whether, in the end, abstraction or figuration wins out.

In his collages, Herrera creates a childlike site of "imagination" with a sophisticated sense of the interpretive implications—psychological and cultural—of his archives. The resulting images toy with our desire to recognize forms or characters in much the same way that we try to decipher the abstract and read meaning into gesture and color. Herrera's collages thwart our attempts to identify a cohesive tale, but in searching for a plot we become happily lost in leapfrogging, associative, and impulsive reading of his hybrid maps.

Jessica Morgan





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 hurry and get dressed," said Sharon. "I'm going  
 to make French toast."  
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 Early in the morning, she was very surprised to find herself  
 feeling like a queen, slowly and regally. Her body felt  
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