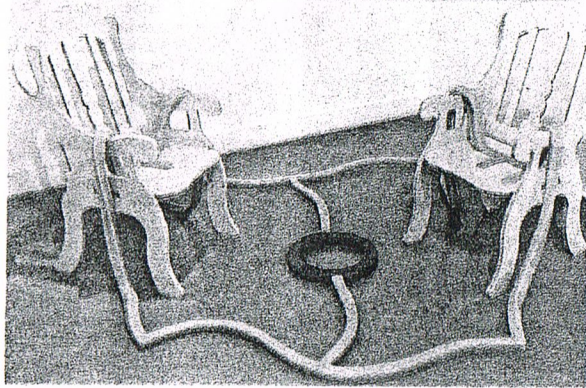


ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ART REVIEWS/HELEN A. HARRISON

A Master
Of Parody
In His Realm**'Red Grooms: Ruckus in Roslyn'**

Nassau County Museum of Art, One Museum Drive, Roslyn Harbor, (516) 484-9337. Through Feb. 5.

The flame-colored hair that earned Charles Grooms the nickname Red has faded to a cool silver, but his art has lost none of its volcanic energy. More than 45 years after staging his madcap happening, "The Burning Building," in a downtown Manhattan loft, Mr. Grooms's art still blazes with satiric inventiveness and formal exuberance.

This survey of Mr. Grooms's career spans those years, from 1959 through 2005. Unfortunately, though, nothing is included from the 1960's, when he made innovative films and created his first major installation, "The City of Chicago," which defined his artistic direction.

Still, the show hits many highlights and is all the more revealing for being organized thematically rather than chronologically. By mixing work from various periods in categories like food, other artists and urban life, it illustrates a basic consistency of vision apparent even in his earliest work.

Watercolors and drawings from Mr. Grooms's teenage years disclose a fascination with the circus that underlies every aspect of his subsequent work, from its chromatic excesses and spatial distortions to its captivating caricatures and frank desire to entertain.

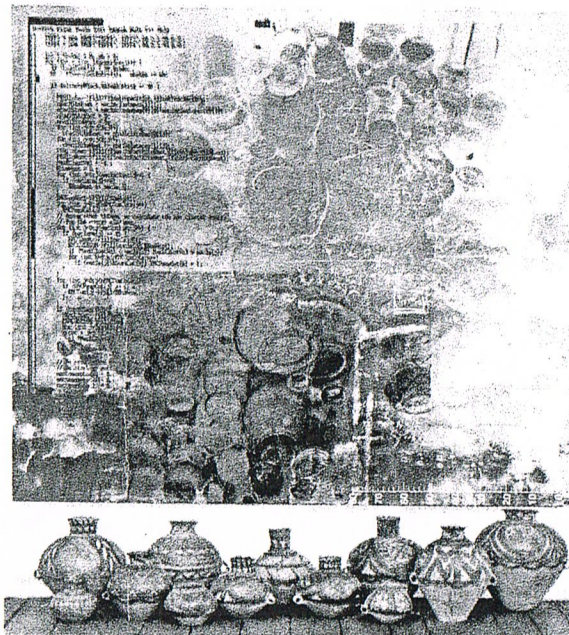
The catalog's efforts to pigeonhole Mr. Grooms as a latter-day Ashcan School realist, a closet Abstract Expressionist and a proto-Pop artist founder in complexity. Actually, he is none of the above; he is in a class by himself, at least as far as the orthodox art world is concerned. His closest parallels are found in the realms of set design, puppet theater, even window displays.

If anyone doubts his conventional art skills, recent watercolors show him to be a competent still-life and genre painter, though by no means a notable one. His claim to fame is his wickedly incisive but good-natured parody of the world around him, using all the tricks of a master showman.

'Sports Illustrated'

Islip Art Museum, 50 Irish Lane, East Islip, (631) 224-5402. To Jan. 29.

Athletic competition has long been a favorite subject for artists, but most of the 10 included in this group show approach the theme from unusual perspectives. Only three appear interested in aspects of the game itself: Benny Andrews, with his studies of football coaches and players; Lance Richbourg, whose paintings stop the action on the baseball field; and João Penalva, who uses video close-ups of a gymnast to emphasize the physical



Gary Mamay

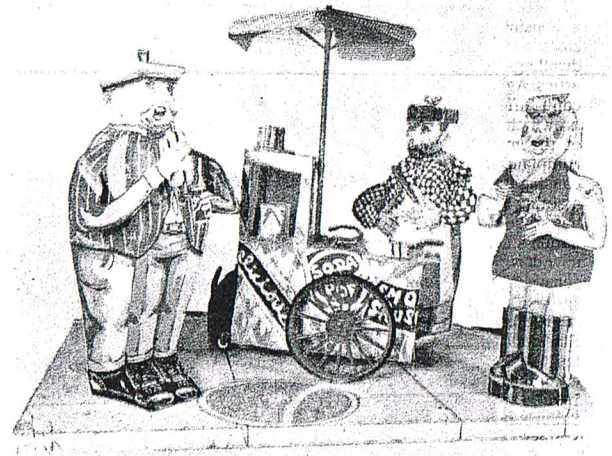
and psychological rigors of a highly formalized test of athletic skill.

The others look at the subject more obliquely. In Doug Wada's "Shine Like It," the locker room, with rows of identical, handleless metal lockers, symbolizes the hermetic character of team sports.

Tory Fair imagines the boundaries and markings of the playing field as a metaphor for the everyday interaction of people vying for position and dominance. For Ann Craven, the deserted soccer field becomes a haunting landscape that gives structure to her abstract paintings. Sach Hoyt uses the boxer Jack Johnson to symbolize defiance of social and racial conventions.

In "Ball Park XXXII," Russell Maltz deconstructs the framework of a stadium and compresses it into a minimal sculpture that resembles a treasured relic. Similarly, Phil Frost's "Trust," an assemblage of discarded baseball bats and timbers covered with decorative motifs, suggests a totemic display by some exotic cult.

Caitlin Parker's video, "I Wish I Was Roy Jones Jr.," combines docu-



Far left, Tory Fair's "The Competitive Mundane" at the Islip Art Museum. At the Parrish Art Museum, left, "Maximum Clusters" by Steve Miller. "Hot Dog Vendor" is part of an exhibition of works by Red Grooms at the Nassau County Museum of Art.

mentary and staged footage to cast the artist in the fantasy role of a boxing champion. At once ridiculous and poignant, the pastiche nicely encapsulates the athletic achievement that many sports fans experience only vicariously.

'Finders Keepers'

Parrish Art Museum, 25 Job's Lane, Southampton, (631) 283-2118. Through Dec. 31.

The purpose of museums is to collect and display objects, and there are museums devoted to just about everything you can think of, from Botticellis to beer cans. This museum's founder, Samuel Longstreth Parrish, collected (among other things) Renaissance panel paintings; the stewards of his legacy have added canvases by William Merritt Chase, Fairfield Porter and other 19th- and 20th-century American artists, as well as significant collections of Japanese and American prints.

But these treasures hardly ever grace the Parrish's walls, and the current exhibition, which includes a handful of pieces from the museum's holdings, inevitably raises the question why they are not seen more often.

The show's main focus is on selections from various private collections — not of art, but of interesting collectible objects like walking sticks, picture postcards and costume jewelry. The only unifying factor is said to be the collector's obsession; in the case of Stuart White, whose enthusiasm for all sorts of canes appears boundless, obsession is perhaps not too strong a term.

Eric Woodward, on the other hand, is better described as devoted. His collection of vintage postcard views of local landmarks often includes multiple views of the same scene or building, including the museum itself.

Marjorie Chester's remarkable collection of cast iron seats from old mowers, threshers, plows and tractors seems less obsessive than sophisticated and discerning. Steve Miller, whose collection of ancient Chinese ceramics is a component of his art, must relinquish part of his holdings whenever a mixed-media work is sold.

An odd inclusion is Adam Bartos's color photographs of yard sales, which document the need for periodic housecleaning. His subtle close-ups of mundane things that people want to get rid of represent the antithesis of passionate collecting.