



Jess
Xrysxrossanthemums, 1978
 Collage, 15 3/4 x 19 1/2 in.

Jess: Secret Compartments

March 14 - April 20, 2019

Reception: March 16, 2019 3:30 PM - 6:00 PM

Anglim Gilbert Gallery
 1275 Minnesota Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
 tel: 415.433.2710

Gallery Hours: Tues-Sat 11:00-6:00pm
 gallery@anglimgilbertgallery.com
 www.anglimgilbertgallery.com

Anglim Gilbert Gallery is pleased to present *Jess: Secret Compartments*, an exhibition of paintings, drawings, and collaborative works by **Jess Collins** dating from the early 1950s to the early 1990s. Collins (August 6, 1923 - January 2, 2004), now known simply as **Jess**, left his scientific career for the arts after his involvement in the development of the Manhattan Project and the Hanford Atomic Energy Project. Subsumed by the threat of destruction posed by nuclear weapons, Jess enrolled at the San Francisco Art Institute (then called the California School of the Arts). An openly gay man, he was the longtime partner of poet Robert Duncan. Jess and Duncan founded King Ubu Gallery with painter Harry Jacobus in 1952, which has since become a historical touchstone for the San Francisco beat era. The exhibition indexes Jess' most important series — including his *Romantic* and *Erotic* works, as well as his *Translations*, *Salvages*, and *Paste-Ups*. This marks the first time this traveling exhibition, organized by the **Jess Collins Trust** and **Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York**, will be shown in San Francisco.

Jess' first major body of work, known as his *Romantic* series, dates from the early to mid-1950s. Created shortly after leaving art school in San Francisco, and influenced by teachers Clyfford Still and Edward Corbett, these works are colorful, impressionistically painted landscapes, featuring figures or moody abstractions. Here, Jess expertly melds his lifelong fascination with fantasy, legend, and storytelling. These interests, along with literary, scientific, historical, and mythical source materials, encapsulate the “constellation” of Jess' personal archive and artistic concerns.

The *Paste-Ups*, Jess' most iconic series of works, originated out of his discovery of Max Ernst's collages and the writing of James Joyce. Jess' collages, which he dubbed *Paste-Ups*, in reference to their scrapbook nature, were drawn from his vast collection of ephemera from San Francisco bookshops and junk stores. The *Paste-Up* method allowed Jess to integrate his wide range of interests, working and re-working found images until they were woven into a tapestry. Even a small *Paste-Up* could be made up of over 100 separate images, each sliced and manipulated with a special X-acto knife on a pivoting table. According to Jess scholar and curator, Michael Auping, Jess said of his *Paste-Ups*, “Our [he and Robert Duncan] lives are essentially a grand collage of fantastical images in books, paintings and puzzles from inside the house and my imagination of the world outside the house (where Jess seldom ventured).”

Explicit homoeroticism and the use of Greek and Roman mythological tropes link Jess' series of *Erotic* paintings and graphite studies for *Narkissos* — Jess' monumental pencil on paper *Paste-Up*, now in the permanent collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. His *Erotic* works are a precursor to the final *Narkissos*, which was conceived in 1959 and completed in 1991. Jess described the piece as, “... grand obsession, and obsessions don't always have a logical or perfect conclusion. When I made that first little drawing (1959), I saw immediately that it was a vision capable of expanding into great complexity. In the second drawing (1964), I elaborated the field of possibilities and then the *Paste-Up* took me years and lured me into what still seems to me to be an endless magical realm.”