

**Excerpt taken from *ART FROM CAPE COD*
The Cape Cod Museum of Art's Permanent Collections Book
Co-authored by Deborah Forman and Edith Tonelli**

**Red Grooms
(Born 1937)**

Charles Rogers Grooms, a twenty-year-old native of Tennessee, arrived in Provincetown in 1957 to study with Hans Hofmann. He wasn't "Red" Grooms then. But Provincetown changed that. Grooms found Hofmann's classes weren't for him. He was washing dishes at the Moors restaurant when he met Dominic Falcone, who was running the Sun Gallery in town. And it was Falcone who dubbed him "Red" because of the color of his hair. And it stuck. It's how Grooms has signed his work ever since.

Provincetown's Sun Gallery was opened in 1955 by poet Falcone and artist Yvonne Andersen. A group of artists leaning toward figurative art—Grooms, Claes Oldenburg, Alex Katz, Jan Müller, Bob Thompson, Lester Johnson, Tony Vevers and Alan Kaprow—came together to make this an exciting scene, a frothy mix of creativity and playfulness.

After Grooms's first summer in Provincetown, he returned to New York and lived in a loft with Andersen and Falcone. The next summer he was back in Provincetown washing dishes again and had his first solo exhibition at the Sun.

In 1958, Grooms created an installation piece *The City*, which was a medley of painting, sculpture, drawing, photography and poetry. A viewer could walk into and around the exhibit and become immersed in an environment.

By the summer of 1959 in Provincetown, Grooms had already found his place in art with collage and sculptural pieces. His pictures, assemblages or walk-through environments—"sculpto-pictoramas," he called them—are raucous, rowdy, robust, and effervescing. These densely packed artworks are a great escape into a rollicking world. Fun is exactly what Grooms seems to be having with his art.

Some may find that Grooms's work goes beyond simple fun into satire with his depiction of modern life and especially urban living. Consider his mixed-media assemblages of Manhattan. They are complex and crowded, bursting with a saucy style and frantic energy. He creates endless stories. He uses a variety of materials: plywood, two-by-fours, pine planks, fabric, Fiberglas, resins, Styrofoam, and insulation foam.

His large works resemble stage sets, for which he even supplies the actors. Like the scenic designer, Grooms worked with a team. One of his assistants was his wife, artist Mimi Gross, daughter of sculptor Chaim Gross. They worked together on many of his large pieces until they separated in the mid-seventies and later divorced. Although he has lived in New York since he was twenty, Grooms presents a tourist's view. It's like he's still fresh from the Nashville suburbs, where he grew up, and can't get enough of the topsy-turvy world of New York.

As part of his artist series, *To the Lighthouse*, in the collection of the Cape Cod Museum of Art, lightheartedly portrays Grooms admiring Edward Hopper painting a Cape Cod lighthouse. The aquatint amusingly inserts humor into the picture of the serious Hopper being observed by Grooms, who has so much fun with his art.

Grooms's works are included in numerous museum collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C.; Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden; and the Nagoya City Museum, in Nagoya, Japan.