FORWARD THINKERS

PAPER with purpose



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PAPER PEOPLE

JERRY JEANMARD

Jerry Jeanmard finds things then puts them away. He collects dry-cleaning tags, used tickets, envelopes, maps, wallpaper scraps, discarded scribblings, Victorian-era papers, and chromolithographs. The scraps of paper that he carefully catalogs in his Houston studio inhabit his imagination until he takes them out and begins arranging them. Eventually, they morph into what he calls his "Paper People," (also the name of his book) collage-like assemblages that illustrate his whimsical wit and intellect. "The papers don't intersect in random ways," he explains. "They are compositions as well as figures."

With his punning titles (Ampersand Man, St. Carrottop) and modern sense of color and composition, Jeanmard displays his canny humor, which he says has created a strong bond between him and his clients. Jeanmard, who is chief executive officer of Wells Design/Jerry Jeanmard, Inc., a successful interior design firm in Houston, says he began making his collages, which typically measure twenty-two inches by fifteen inches, about eight years ago in his office. He would bring the collages home and put them under the guest-room bed for safekeeping. "It's a pleasure to go to the studio and not know what I'm going to make," he says.

As he explains it, his collages represent a kind of intellectual pursuit of freedom. Just as a jazz musician steps on stage and lets his ideas flow, so, too, does Jeanmard disappear into his studio with his papers and glue to improvise at will. He moves the cut, folded, and torn shapes around until his eye is satisfied. He then glues the scraps onto white paper, sometimes leaving the edges unglued for added texture.

Jeanmard's paper people have many followers and collectors, some of whom buy groups of his collages. His work has been exhibited at Houston's Moody Gallery, the Red & White Gallery in Fayetteville, Texas, and Kinnaman & Ramaekers in Bridgehampton, New York. "Spontaneity is the key," he emphasizes. "My collages make me happy, and people seem to respond to them."

For his artwork, Houston-based Jerry Jeanmard (far left) particularly likes the feel of discarded paper that has been written on or folded. "With my 'Paper People,' I don't always know how they should look but eventually I wind up there," he says. Clockwise from top left: Cleaning Lady, Global Figure, Jeanmard's book.

PORTRAIT BY MEGAN THOMPSON LOVOI WRITTEN BY CHERYL WHITEHEAD