



## Mischievous Art of Jim Flora

*Jim Flora, Irwin Chusid (ed)*

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**The first retrospective of one of the defining visual stylists of the 1950s.**

Vintage music buffs have long been bedazzled by bizarre, cartoonish album covers tagged with the signature "Flora." In the 1940s and '50s, James (Jim) Flora designed dozens of diabolic cover illustrations, many for Columbia and RCA Victor jazz artists. His designs pulsed with angular hepcats bearing funnel-tapered noses and shark-fin chins, who fingered cockeyed pianos and honked lollipop-hued horns. In the background, geometric doo-dads floated willy-nilly like a kindergarten toy room gone anti-gravitational. He wreaked havoc with the laws of physics, conjuring up flying musicians, levitating instruments, and wobbly dimensional perspectives. Yet Flora's wondrous, childlike exuberance was subverted by a sinister tinge of the grotesque. As Flora confessed in a 1998 interview, "I got away with murder, didn't I?"

This is the first collection of the marvelous, mischievous album art of Jim Flora (1914-1998). The book contains most of Flora's known covers (around 50), which command high prices on eBay. The gallery includes rarely seen illustrations and covers from Columbia's new release monthly, "Coda" (1943-1953), and some of Flora's post-WWII commercial magazine work. *The Mischievous Art of Jim Flora* also presents the first reprinting of Flora's fabled Little Man Press work (1939-1942). LMP was a small publishing imprint started by literary nutjob Robert Lowry, who recruited Flora as his graphic co-conspirator. Their LMP editions were printed at home in small runs of 125 to 400 copies. These books served as artistic rites of exorcism for Flora, as the budding illustrator's images veered from childish whimsy to disturbing freakishness. The book encapsulates Flora's life with a biographical profile, interviews, photos, autobiographical reminiscences, and tributes from Alex Steinweiss, Gene Deitch, Shag, R.O. Blechman, Tim Biskup, and others who knew Jim and/or were influenced by him. Full-color and black-and-white illustrations throughout

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