

GREGORY GILLESPIE



“In all of my shows, there are paintings which seem to differ stylistically from each other in their approach. Some are instantly recognizable as representing the so-called real world, and others are seen to represent a world of fantasy where the rules of logic, perspective and proportion do not apply, or, at any rate, are played with in a much freer way.

I enjoy both approaches and I enjoy mixing them up so that the “realist” paintings have elements of the bizarre, the fantastic, and (I hope) an almost hallucinatory iconographic quality about them; and I work on the more imaginary pieces for months to make them as specific and tangible as I can. In fact, there has been no fixed line between what is real and what is imagined in my paintings. I’ve always felt that the important thing is allowing the deeper, more intuitive, subconscious voices to get through, and so I like the freedom to explore combinations of techniques and approaches in order to express the full range of my emotional responses to the world.”

_GREGORY GILLESPIE

“We can conceive of Gillespie’s paintings as private interior landscapes into which we are transported by the power of the artist’s imagination and the cunning of his hand. We become travelers in a strange and fascinating region where we may experience the metamorphosis of places, objects, and people, and where the simplest things, painted with painstaking clarity, become bewitched and transformed. Gillespie has the power to excite in us sensations which are rare in contemporary figurative art, by reaching through the veil of the subject to its essential nature and force. He is a romantic with gothic affinities, a realist who is also a Surrealist, a visionary and a moralist in whose art the sentiment and unease of our time are merged.”

_ABRAM LERNER, first Director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,

Catalogue essay written on the occasion of *Gregory Gillespie*, a retrospective exhibition presented by Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; traveled to Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA, 1977.

“Who Isn’t A Realist, Surrealist, Magic Realist, or Miniaturist? Give Up? Gregory Gillespie is a rare painter...who cannot be grouped within a past school or a current vogue. Although his detail in the representation of commonplace things is minutely realistic, he cannot be called a realist. Although he invests his genre scenes with a disturbing irreality, he cannot quite be called a magic realist and cannot at all be called a surrealist. Although some of his paintings are as small as six inches square, he cannot be called a miniaturist. His forms are too solid and, in effect, too big.”

_JOHN CANADAY, *The New York Times*, February 26, 1966

“There are several varieties of realism to be seen in Gregory Gillespie’s paintings. In the self-portraits, there is a realism of psychological intensity, in the still lifes, a realism of detached observations. In the huge *Studio Wall*, measuring 8 feet by 10 feet, which is the tour de force of this show, yet another mode of realism is broached – a pictorial game of appearance-and-reality as objects, paintings, photographs, sketches and the other materials of the artist’s studio are examined, depicted and made to seem more ‘real’ than the space they occupy.”

_HILTON KRAMER, *The New York Times*, November 26, 1976

“Technically, Mr. Gillespie is one of the most accomplished painters around. An obsessive draftman, he gets down visual facts—the freckle spatter on a torso, the separate hairs of a day-old beard—with enormous precision. His rendering and his surfaces—built up with glazes to a hard, shiny finish—are painstakingly modeled on the great old-master techniques.”

_GRACE GLUECK, *The New York Times*, March 9, 1984

“Mr. Gillespie’s art exhibits an emotional response to physical things that recalls the impulse behind the reliquary and the votive offering. For him, art’s transformations are sacred stuff...Rather than eliminating troubling elements, Mr. Gillespie holds them front and center, the better to tame them. His is an art of precarious balances; between chaos and order, carnality and transcendent spirituality, the quotidian and the bizarre.”

_MILES UNGER, *The New York Times*, October 31, 1999