

WILLIAM BECKMAN | GREGORY GILLESPIE



“William Beckman and Gregory Gillespie are two of our finest realist painters, their works as compelling as any produced in our time. The artists have been close friends for more than a decade, regularly visiting one another’s studios to share impressions of recent pictures, bound further by a common interest in the Old Masters who embody the Northern tradition – the Dutch, the Flemish, the Germans, and, in Gillespie’s case, the North Italians as well, particularly Mantegna and Crivelli. Their paintings are characteristically worked in a close and meticulous detail; they include large as well as small formats; and their subjects range from landscape to the human figure. Each is nonetheless his own painter in possession of his own vision, Beckman’s inclining toward order and discipline, Gillespie’s toward rupture and spontaneity, though each has a measure of the other in him. They may on one level be the Apollo and Dionysus among our realists, but thought and feeling are not finally isolated in their respective achievements.”

—CARL BELZ, Director Emeritus, Rose Art Museum, 1984

Catalogue essay written on the occasion of *The Art of William Beckman and Gregory Gillespie*, a two-person exhibition organized by the Rose Art Museum, traveled to La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, CA, 1984.

“Gillespie and Beckman have involved themselves in self-portraiture to a greater extent than almost any other contemporary realists. Gillespie has even said that he has considered painting the self-portrait exclusively. For both, the expediency of using oneself was the initial cause for such a commitment, and it is still convenient, primarily because of the exceedingly slow pace at which both Gillespie and Beckman work...However, both artists have used self-portraits for ends other than pure autobiography.

William Beckman and Gregory Gillespie...paint what they can see more than what they know about the body. Both maintain that figure painting does not require a strong commitment to anatomy. In their search for realist form, Beckman and Gillespie are interested in creating volumetric forms on a flat surface with flat strokes of pigment, forms that occupy space and also read as surface.”

—FRANK H. GOODYEAR, JR.

Excerpt from *Contemporary American Realism since 1960*, the book published on the occasion of the exhibition curated by Frank H. Goodyear, Jr., presented at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; The Oakland Museum, CA; Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, Portugal; Kunsthalle, Nuremberg, Germany, 1981.

“(Gregory Gillespie) is one of the few painters who ultimately ended up as an artist, in the true sense of an artist as a creator of concepts and an originator of thought.”

—WILLIAM BECKMAN

“(William Beckman) could paint the blond hair on his head or beard, and he could paint a whole room or a landscape reflected in the eyes. His focus and concentration are incredible. So you push your own limits, and you feel content with what you’re doing; and then somebody else pushes it even further.”

—GREGORY GILLESPIE