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Robert Fishko, *Director*

GREGORY GILLESPIE
(1936-2000)

Studio: Still Life, 1978

oil, graphite, charcoal, alkyd and paper collage
on board

73 1/2 x 59 1/2 inches

Provenance

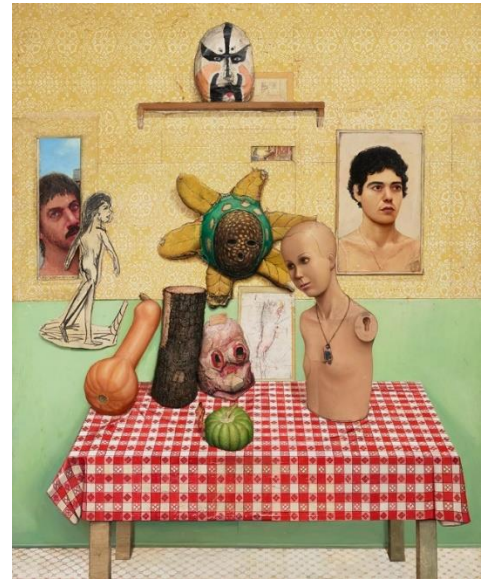
The Artist

Forum Gallery, New York, NY

Private Collection, New York and North Carolina

[acquired from the above, May 1979]

Forum Gallery, New York, NY



Exhibited

Gregory Gillespie: Recent Paintings, Forum Gallery, New York, NY,
November 13 – December 4, 1979

A Unique American Vision: Paintings by Gregory Gillespie, curated by Donald D. Keyes,
Traveling exhibition:

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, Athens, GA

April 10 – May 30, 1999

Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, La Jolla, CA

June 12 – September 12, 1999

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA

October 8 – December 19, 1999

Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH

January 9 – March 5, 2000

Life as Art: Paintings of Gregory Gillespie and Frances Cohen Gillespie,
Harvard University Art Museum, Cambridge, MA, December 6, 2003 – March 28, 2004

The Voyage of Life: Art, Allegory, and Community Response,
Reynolda House, Winston Salem, NC, July - December 2021

Literature

Essays by Carr, Rani M., Keys, Donald D. and Belz, Carl. *A Unique American Vision: Paintings by Gregory Gillespie*, 1999: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, cat. no. 20, p. 60, Illustrated, and p. 68, Listed.

Stebbins, Theodore E. and Susan Ricci Stebbins with an essay by Fred Licht. *Life as Art, Paintings of Gregory Gillespie and Frances Cohen Gillespie*, Harvard University Art Museum, Cambridge, MA, 2003, cat. no. 6, pg. 36, Illustrated and p. 57, Listed.

Note

Gregory Gillespie's **Studio: Still Life**, 1978, is an ambitious painting in oil, graphite, charcoal, alkyd and paper collage on board. Wholly autobiographical, the composition of this work depicts an arrangement of objects kept by the Artist in his Massachusetts studio. However, in Gillespie's hands, each object is transformed into an icon, a symbol of life and relationships carrying an uncommon gravitas for Gillespie whose existential questioning was a lifelong obsession. The painting simultaneously reveals themes from Gillespie's formative years spent in Rome from 1962 to 1970, to which Gillespie returned throughout his life. The manikin, gourds, starfish, and Japanese Noh masks, arranged around a red checkered tablecloth is familiar iconography in Gillespie's paintings as are the Artist's arresting *trompe l'oeil* depictions of his own earlier paintings of his first wife, the artist Francis Cohen (1939-1998), and his self-portrait, both set against patterned yellow wallpaper. The careful arrangement of these elements recalls Gillespie's shrine paintings and interiors of Italian kitchens and trattorias of the 1960s, which carry the emotional weight of religious or sacred spaces.

Studio: Still Life relates closely to Gillespie's massive *Studio Wall*, 1976, a 10-foot-wide painting on four wooden panels and the largest work he ever created. As relevant to *Studio: Still Life* as it is about Gillespie's 1976 monumental work, Abram Lerner, First Director of the Hirshhorn Museum, wrote about *Studio Wall* for the monograph published by the museum on the occasion of the retrospective it gave Gillespie when he was just forty years old:

"...Gillespie mingles fragments of his art and life. Objects related only by their association with his work and family – masks, paintings, plants, vegetables, toys – all dominated by a studio manikin – are rearranged against a wall. Some of the objects are rendered in *trompe l'oeil* fashion, others are painted in a straightforward, nonillusionistic style. This mixture of conventional realism and outright illusion keeps the viewer's perceptions in a state of imbalance; the viewer's eye, deliberately stopped by jeweled areas of precise notation, leaps forward in sudden discovery of what appears to be a collage object, only to discover the error and return to painted areas whose figurations never penetrate the surface skin of the work. There is no straining for dazzling perspective or for the polished finish of a Harnett, yet the individual forms are convincingly defined and occupy their own space without destroying the flatness of the picture plane...the arrangement of shapes and patterns of color has been carefully planned without making the abstract nature of these decisions too obvious. Illusion, the depth or tactility of objects, is handled with a sparseness which has the virtue of creating a continuum of spatial perception."

Abram Lerner, *Gregory Gillespie*, retrospective exhibition presented by Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; traveled to Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA, 1977; catalogue essay.



Studio Wall (Still Life with Self-Portrait), 1976, oil, printed paper collage, pencil and Magna on wood, in four parts, 96 x 124 inches