FORUM GALLERY

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Robert Fishko, *Director*

GREGORY GILLESPIE
(1936-2000)



Lady with Jewels, 1969
(also known as *Woman with Beads*)
mixed media on board
6 x 4 inches
18 3/8 x 14 1/4 (with artist's frame)

Provenance

The Artist
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Murray Handwerker,
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida (and thence by descent)
Forum Gallery, New York
Private Collection

Exhibited

Gregory Gillespie
Traveling exhibition:
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC
December 22, 1977 – February 12, 1978
Georgia Museum of Art, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA,
April 23 – May 14, 1978

Looking Back, Forum Gallery, New York, July 24 – August 30, 2013

Gregory Gillespie: Supernatural Observation, Forum Gallery, February 6 – March 15, 2014

Wives, Daughters and Lovers, Forum Gallery, Summer 2014

Literature

Gregory Gillespie: Paintings (Italy 1962-1970), Forum Gallery, New York, NY, 1970, p. 6, Illustrated and p. 58, Listed.

Lerner, Abram. *Gregory Gillespie*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution: Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 1977, no. 23, p. 54, Illustrated.

ADAA member

Note

"In turning away from the popular aesthetic of the sixties, Gillespie reduced the physical scale of his paintings, in sharp contrast to the enormous canvases then being produced. The small format may have resulted from his working method, that is, the use of photographs and magazine clippings, but their effect is intense, demanding close and careful scrutiny, promising some rare insight or secret to the sensitive observer…Beginning in 1967 with such paintings as…*Three Sisters,* 1969, strong currents of sexual references, explicit or insinuated, dominate Gillespie's paintings. The most innocent objects become endowed with phallic or visceral properties, even still lifes and interiors. In the complexities of a wall recess, the details of a plant form or the contours of a squash, a special or erotic element is either specifically noted or illusionistically implied. On occasion, these references are carried to extremes in morbid sexual fantasies where brutality, amputation, and seduction are components in sad and mortifying rituals. Unhappiness and pity permeate some of the more specific paintings in which people are depicted as brutalized, injured, or debased….There is certainly no sense of pleasure or rapture suggested in any of these paintings and one may conjecture that they are reflections of a particular crisis in the artist's life."

_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.



Gregory Gillespie, *Three Sisters,* 1969,
oil and magazine photographs on wood, 10 ¾ x 9 ¼ inches

The recipient of a Fulbright Grant and three Chester Dale Fellowships, Gregory Gillespie spent the 1960s studying in Italy. In Rome, he lived in the American Academy, a few steps away from St. Peter's, the ultimate symbol of his Catholic upbringing, rejected by Gillespie as a young man. Some of his paintings created whilst in Rome featured pornographic subjects that Gillespie talked about with Abram Lerner and Howard Fox in an interview conducted on the occasion of his retrospective exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum in 1977:

Q: *Why do you call them pornographic?*
A: It's just a label. They're really not pornographic. They're antipornographic. They may be pornographic if you drew up a technical definition – probably having to do with genitalia. But it comes out motivated more by a kind of horror of sex rather than a sensual approach to it. Now, as I look back, I see that kind of painting as a kind of social act. Working at the Academy was a kind of catalyst for a lot of repressed anger which sooner or later I guess I had to try to work through.

Q: *Are your paintings religious?*
A: Yes, the paintings are religious – like the erotic paintings are religious. Definitely. Because they come of repression. They come out of a dramatic reaction to repression. They come out of the impulse to do sacrilege, which is a religious impulse.

About *Lady with Jewels,* 1969:

"I think this was one of the paintings where I would just paste an image down, and then I'd paint off the clothes – denude the figure, and then add things. When you paint, your motivations are not all that clear.

This is not sensual. Her body is explicit, but everything is stiff. The clothing represses her…Her smile looks good because it's also like a snarl. It was a complexity I liked."