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Robert Fishko, *Director*

GREGORY GILLESPIE
(1936-2000)

Standing Couple, 1967

oil, tempera and collage on wood

10 ¾ x 8 ½ inches (includes artist's frame)

Provenance

The Artist

Collection of Joseph Feury and Lee Grant, New York

Forum Gallery, New York

Private Collection



Exhibited

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

Note

During his eight years in Italy living in Florence and then at the American Academy in Rome, **Gregory Gillespie** studied Northern Italian Renaissance painting, especially the work of Masaccio and Crivelli, as well as the German and Flemish masters to whose romantic sensibilities he was naturally drawn. In Gillespie's paintings of the 1960s, these influences combined with his living experience of the contemporary Italian scene. The trattorias and Italian interiors became a stage for Gillespie's paintings, imbued with the often tragic articulation of contemporary Italian life as seen in the films of the contemporaneous cinematic masters, De Sica and Fellini. Gillespie began painting miniature-sized works, exquisite in detail, often revealing what was for the Artist a painful process of psychological reflection.

For the catalogue published in conjunction with the retrospective exhibition given to Gillespie in 1977 by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, first Director of the museum, Abram Lerner, discussed Gillespie's intimately scaled Italian works, such as *Standing Couple*, 1967:

“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...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.