

## Reviews: New York

### Gregory Gillespie

#### Forum

Comprising 33 thoughtfully chosen paintings, this museum-quality mini-retrospective surveyed the career of Gregory Gillespie, who died in 2000 at the age of 63.

Each work was a testament to the visionary painter's technical virtuosity. In a series of paintings of timeworn tiled rooms, not one square inch could have been more beautifully rendered. His pictures of people appear startlingly alive: the symbol-laden *Self-Portrait with Bread and Chakras* (1987–88) captured the look of blood pulsing beneath flesh. Watch the smiling face that emerges from the shadows in the small *Portrait of a Man* (1962–63), and the childlike grin slowly turns sinister.

Obsessed with details, Gillespie created worlds within worlds. Complicated trompe l'oeil pictures like *Still Life with Grasshopper* (1971) are made up of passages of paint that is alternately smooth and marbled, palette-knifed and glazed. *Burial Place* (1985) depicts a crawl space teeming with life amid the rot. Like a dream, the image is simultaneously vivid and open to many possible interpretations: biological truth or a metaphor for the unconscious, the entrance to Hades or proof that beauty exists in the oddest places.

The artist once proclaimed that he

sought a “balance between will and playfulness,” and his search united a diverse oeuvre. Gillespie's works resist stylistic classification, but they linger in the mind's eye, and his singular sensibility is instantly recognizable.

—Gerard Haggerty



Gregory Gillespie, *My Aunt*, 1988, mixed media, 19¾" x 18½".

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