

## Art in Rome

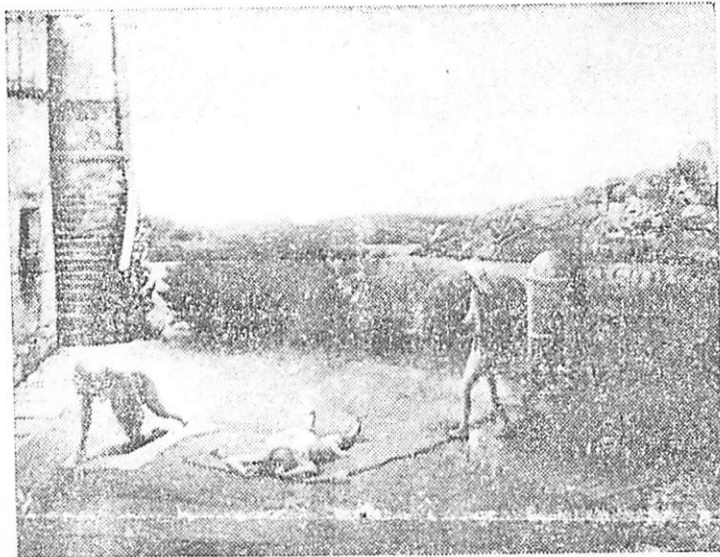
## An American Painter's Intense Reality

By Edith Schloss

ROME, Dec. 19.—Gregory Gillespie, a young American whose paintings are on view at the American Academy in Rome, has a particular approach to reality. In his clear, uncompromising paintings, none of the conventions of placid seeing are taken for granted: surfaces are looked at close, lifted up, probed under. Each painting is a setting furnished with objects and happenings never experienced in ordinary life (or, rather, that we prefer never to let ourselves experience). Obscure drives under known desires are pulled out and made visual.

Gillespie is not afraid to wonder, he opens wounds, picks at peeling wallpaper, finds naked people in unlikely corners; humdrum used things from forgotten corners as holy or unholy as reliquaries — dreary rooming-house walls, dirty trattoria tables, toilet tiles—all are equal, nothing is too humble.

The paradox is that the repugnant and the distasteful, along with the accepted, are all transfigured in the terrible beauty of the paintings. Utterly unrelated elements furnish a scene as saints do in an allegory: Jesus, rolls, a Victorian vase, a pink rug, an oven become a kitchen interior of the hallucinatory clarity of a Bellini.



Detail from a landscape by Gregory Gillespie.

Bellini and Antoniello da Messina are influences, and the gaudy trimmings of popular Italian Catholicism permeate Gillespie's work.

It is difficult to talk of him without resorting to easy labels—but he is neither realistic nor is he surrealist. His reality is so intense it is better or worse than our own. There is nothing pleasing about his forthright pictures with their unlovely

subject matter. But when you stop blinking you are faced with a moment or an eternity which is intangibly beautiful.

Gregory Gillespie, American Academy, Via Masina 5, Rome, to Jan. 1970.

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Other exhibitions to see this month in Rome include:

Giorgio De Chirico, Galleria La Medusa, Via del Babuino 124, Rome, through December.

Looking at a mature artist's work, one suddenly understands his early paintings which had seemed uninteresting years before. With De Chirico it is almost the other way around: the memory of the marvelous dream vistas of the twenties suffers under the effect of his recent work. Here the graphics and drawings of the last two years exploit the old "metaphysical" themes again and again, dummies accoutred with triangles

embracing men in business suits, bathers rising from a lake of bricks, baroque horses prancing beside classic statues; all have the touch of the old modern master but none of his bite. Only some landscapes with several suns and a self-portrait are more incisive.

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Hans Hartung, Il Collezionista, Via Gregoriana 36, Rome, through December.

In his first show in Rome at a new gallery this Paris-oriented German painter shows elegant abstractions from 1962 to 1967. His vigorous raking of surfaces, the fast flourishes, are close to the later and more visceral action painting but cannot be confused with it. Furry swirls flow over even grounds, calligraphic strokes flash by like lightning, there are all over fireworks flares. Over the years Hartung's hand has become very sure. But it is hard to say if all his technical brilliance hides or denies a romantic vision.