

Gregory Gillespie (Forum Gallery, 1018 Madison Avenue, at 79th Street): Celebrating a 20-year association with the Forum Gallery, the painter Gregory Gillespie includes in his present show a rather uncharacteristic construction, "Studio Corner," which faithfully reproduces the messy, seedy, anxious circumstances in which a good deal of art is produced. The pinned-up sketches, the running wall diary, the paint-splattered radio, the remnants of food and more nameless substances scattered around might also be an allegory of the artist's mind. For the rest of the show, Mr. Gillespie stays with the two-dimensional, varying the tightly rendered realist canvases for which he's known with Picassoesque drawings and fantastical smaller collage-paintings that play with incongruities.

Technically, Mr. Gillespie is one of the most accomplished painters around. An obsessive draftsman, he gets down visual facts — the freckle spatter on a torso, the separate hairs of a day-old beard — with enormous precision. His rendering and his surfaces — built up with glazes to a hard, shiny finish — are painstakingly mod-

eled on the great old-master techniques. In "Peggy Seated (Imaginary Pregnancy)," for instance, a brilliantly realized portrait of a nude, very pregnant woman startles with its soft, incredibly lifelike skin tones against the harsh, shiny texture of a beat-up brown wall. Yet he's also quite at home with contemporary usage, sneaking collage and photographic elements into his imagery, then working them over to create ambiguities. (The murky landscapes here in which he has fused photography are not, however, by any means Mr. Gillespie's best work.) In a different psychic realm are his fantasy

drawings, one of which, "My Crazy Mother," is a close-to-home rendition that sets up poignant relationships between a psychotic-looking woman and some subordinate male figures.

The show certainly confirms once again Mr. Gillespie's considerable talents as a painter. But, while individual canvases stand out, the exhibition is too varied, in approach and quality, for us to get the sense of a solid, overall body of work. He rides off in all directions. (Through March 29.)

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