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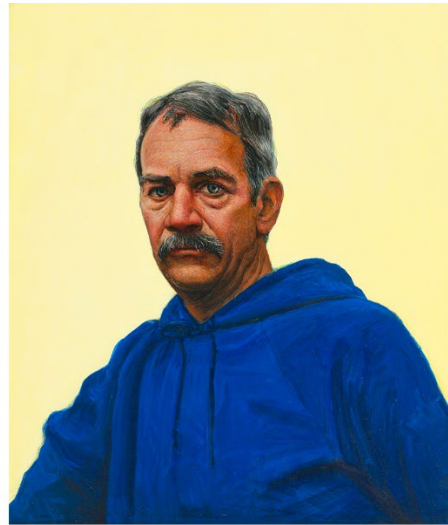
Robert Fishko, *Director*

For Immediate Release

WILLIAM BECKMAN
GREGORY GILLESPIE
November 16, 2023 – January 6, 2024



William Beckman, *S.P. w/ I-P*, 2019
oil on panel, 23 3/4 x 19 1/2 inches



Gregory Gillespie, *Self Portrait in Blue Hooded Sweatshirt*, 1993, oil and alkyd on board
26 x 22 1/2 inches

New York, NY – Forum Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of twenty-one paintings and drawings by **William Beckman (b. 1942)** and **Gregory Gillespie (1936-2000)**, recognized as two of America’s most exceptional figurative painters of modern times. William Beckman and Gregory Gillespie shared the power to illuminate life through revelatory focus on its organized detail above and beneath the surface of the individual subject. Opening on Thursday, November 16, 2023, and continuing through Saturday, January 6, 2024, the exhibition celebrates their friendship and art with landmark works spanning seven decades.

The two artists met in 1969 as panelists at a meeting of the nascent Alliance of Figurative Artists, an artist-run discussion group that throughout the 1970s attracted the majority of the figurative and realist artists in New York City. Within the spirited, contentious exchanges of ideas, Beckman and Gillespie discovered they “agreed on pretty much everything,” Beckman recalls, and their friendship was cemented in that instant.

The earliest work in the exhibition is *Roman Interior Kitchen (Still Life with Milk Carton)*, 1967-69 (63” x 45 1/2”), a beguiling masterpiece created by Gregory Gillespie while living in Rome where he painted and studied at the American Academy as the recipient of the Chester Dale Fellowship and a Fullbright grant.

By 1970, Beckman and Gillespie were visiting each other’s studio regularly to see and critique new work. In 1976, William Beckman put the finishing touches on *Diana III* (74” x 51”), a powerful and defiant portrait of his then-wife, Diana Moore, while Gregory Gillespie completed the monumental *Studio Wall (Still Life with Self-Portrait)* (96” x 124”). In the same important Washington DC collection for four decades, our exhibition

presents the two virtuosic expressions together publicly for the first time, offering revelations into the artists' mutual admiration and fierce competition in art.

Beckman's "double portraits" examine domestic relationships and are psychologically charged depictions of two fiercely independent individuals. *Man and Woman*, 1987 (79" x 79"), Beckman's stunning, larger-than-life oil of the Artist and Diana is exhibited alongside three charcoal drawings: *Study for Diana and Deidra*, 1979 (61" x 49"), *Overcoats II*, 1998 (90" x 80"), and *W.D.D.T.*, 2022 (96" x 72").

For Gillespie, human psychological and subconscious experience underscored what he called a "reality beyond our sense," illustrated in *Dog and Doll in Room*, 1981 (25" x 31"), and *Bird, Man, Japanese Figure and Mad Dog* (24" x 33 ½"), where commonsense is replaced by playful, Bruegel-like fantasy.

For both Beckman and Gillespie, self-portraiture has been a constant subject. Their scrutiny of Dutch, Flemish and Northern Italian Renaissance portraiture to unique and entirely modern ends gives us the magnetic self-portraits in this exhibition, including Beckman's *S.P. w/ I-P*, (23 ¾" x 19 ½"), a 2019 reflection on the culture of "selfies," and Gillespie's vibrant *Self-Portrait in Blue Hooded Sweatshirt*, 1993 (26" x 22 ½").

Landscape features prominently in the work of both Beckman and Gillespie. Raised on his family's working farm in Maynard, Minnesota, the worked land is Beckman's inspiration, while for Gregory Gillespie, who settled in Belchertown, Massachusetts at the end of the 1960s, the local sweeping vistas and the minutia of nature outside his backdoor, offered endless starting points for imaginative, sometimes haunting landscape paintings. Three intimately scaled landscape paintings by each artist are included alongside *Bales #3*, 2019 (24" x 39") by William Beckman, an expansive vista of wheat fields, farm buildings, and the big sky of America's heartland.

William Beckman and Gregory Gillespie were first shown together in 1981 in the landmark exhibition, *Contemporary American Realism since 1960*, curated by Frank H. Goodyear, Jr., presented by Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Oakland Museum, Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, Portugal, and Kunsthalle Nuremberg, Germany. A two-person exhibition, *The Art of William Beckman and Gregory Gillespie*, curated by Carl Belz, soon followed at the Rose Art Museum, Waltham, MA; and the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA in 1984.

In 2002, the Frye Art Museum in Seattle, WA, organized a retrospective of paintings and drawings by William Beckman; his portraits were the subject of a solo exhibition in 2006 at the opening of the newly-situated National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.; and his masterful charcoal drawings were honored in a retrospective in 2014 organized by the Columbus Museum in Georgia (traveled to the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts in Little Rock).

Gregory Gillespie first exhibited at Forum Gallery in 1966 and in 1977, at the age of 40, Gillespie was honored by Joseph H. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC with a retrospective exhibition. A second retrospective followed in 1999, the year before his death, presented by the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens (traveled to the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, the List Visual Art Center in Cambridge, MA, and the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, OH).

William Beckman lives and works in Dutchess County, New York. Sadly, Gregory Gillespie died by suicide in 2000.

You are invited to explore our Online Viewing Room for **William Beckman | Gregory Gillespie** here: <https://viewingroom.forumgallery.com/viewing-room/william-beckman-gregory-gillespie>

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Forum Gallery is located at 475 Park Avenue at 57th Street, New York, NY 10022. Please visit <https://viewingroom.forumgallery.com/viewing-room/william-beckman-gregory-gillespie> to view the entire exhibition online. The gallery is open to the public Monday through Saturday, 10am to 5:30pm. The gallery is closed Sundays and holidays.

For press inquiries, please contact 212-355-4545; asja@forumgallery.com.

For sales inquiries, please contact **Nicola Lorenz**, Executive Director or **Marjorie Van Cura**, Associate Director, 212-355-4545; gallery@forumgallery.com.



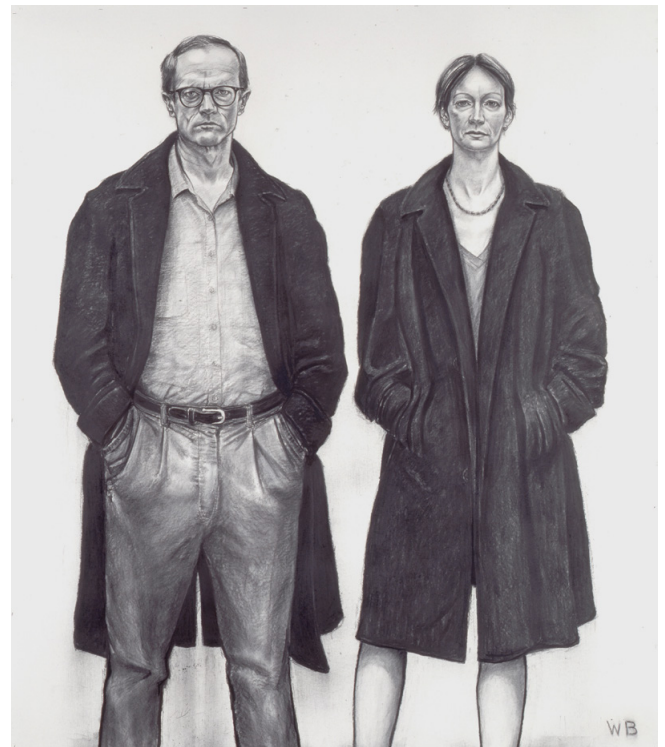
Gregory Gillespie, *Lani's Game*, 1999, oil on wood, 10 1/2 x 28 1/4 inches



William Beckman, *Bel Air Farm Summer*, 2020, oil on panel, 9 3/4 x 23 3/4 inches



Gregory Gillespie, *Dog and Doll in Room*, 1981, mixed media, 25 x 31 inches



William Beckman, *Overcoats II*, 1998, charcoal on paper, 90 x 80 inches