

Alfred Leslie
Paintings, Drawings, and Collages 1960–1980
November 7–December 20

Press Release

George Adams Gallery is pleased to present a survey of paintings, drawings, and collages by Alfred Leslie (1927–2023). This exhibition features ten works from three decades of Leslie's career, offering a focused view of his evolution from the abstraction of the 1950s to the disciplined realism that defined his mature style over the decades that followed. Included are abstract collages from the early 1960s and a selection of figurative paintings and drawings from The 1970s and 1980s reveal the depth of Leslie's engagement with both form and narrative.

By the end of the 1950s, Leslie was recognized as one of the foremost second-generation Abstract Expressionists, whose canvases and collages were notable for their physicality and intensity. Yet in the early 1960s, at a moment when abstraction dominated the art world, Leslie made a controversial shift to figuration. This break from convention placed him among a group of painters—including Jack Beal, Alex Katz, and Philip Pearlstein—who came to be associated with New Realism. Their commitment to representation was both a challenge to and a continuation of the expressive concerns that defined postwar painting.

Leslie's earliest figurative works were life-size oils incorporating a grisaille format suggestive of Polaroid snapshots. By the late 1960s, however, Leslie's palette began to warm, and his compositions grew more complex under the noticeable influence of art-historical masters such as Jacques-Louis David, Georges de La Tour, and Caravaggio. By the end of the decade, these sepia interiors had evolved to include natural light and specific settings, even landscapes, that grounded his subjects in the textures and rhythms of lived experience.

The current exhibition includes a group of small collages from 1960, studies for paintings from the 1970s and 1980s, as well as three large canvases, *In the Studio of Gretchen McLaine* (1979), *Self-portrait with 'Hoboken Oval'* (1983), and *Bread and Coffee* (1983). Together, these works chart Leslie's ongoing exploration of realism as both a technical discipline and a philosophical inquiry—one rooted in observation but charged with imagination and empathy.

Born in the Bronx in 1927, Alfred Leslie was a painter, filmmaker, and playwright whose career spanned more than seven decades. He was a vital figure in postwar American art, moving fluidly between avant-garde abstraction and rigorous figuration. Leslie's work has been exhibited widely and is held in major public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the National Gallery of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago. He lived and worked in New York City and North Amherst, Massachusetts, until he died in 2023.

Alfred Leslie: Paintings, Drawings & Collages from the 1960s–1980s will be on view at George Adams Gallery from November 7 through December 20, 2025. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. For further information, please contact the gallery at info@georgeadamsgallery.com