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TriBeCa Gallery Guide: New York's Most Vibrant Art Scene

The large-scale arrival of new and veteran dealers has given the neighborhood its first unifying theme in 60 years. Here are three walks with our critics, a springboard to explore.



Works by Milton Graves, the visionary drummer who died this year, at Artists Space. In his remarkable practice and worldview, art, medicine, plants, human perception, the nervous system and the cosmos are all connected. Simbarashe Cha for *The New York Times*.

Milford Graves, Artists Space, 11 Cortlandt Alley

Milford Graves was a percussionist who treated drumming as something more expansive than merely establishing a rhythm or tempo. Graves, who died this year, played with jazz musicians like Albert Ayler, the pianist Don Pullen and the experimental percussionist Toshi Tsuchitori, but he was also a botanist and herbalist, a professor at Bennington College, a cardiac technician, a visual artist — and he invented his own martial art, which synthesized popular Western dance moves with African warriors' poses and the gestures of the praying mantis. Percussion connected with the human heartbeat and the energy flowing through plants, and made its way into art objects, as you can see in *Fundamental Frequency* at Artists Space, easily one of the best shows in town right now.



Installation view of Milford Graves's *Fundamental Frequency*, easily one of the best shows in town right now. An Rong Xu for *The New York Times*.

Graves's sculptures, assemblages and diagrammatic drawings are the most visually captivating. His *Yara Training Bag*, from around 1990, incorporates painted boxing gloves, punching bags, a samurai sword and an acupuncture model — elements from Yara, Graves's invented martial art form. Other sculptures include gongs, tribal sculptures, medical and astronomical diagrams, videos and printouts of electrocardiogram readings. Costumes created by Graves's wife, Lois Graves, are here, as well as hand-painted album covers and photos documenting a 1981 concert in Osaka, Japan, for children with disabilities, who responded ecstatically. This show follows a survey at the ICA Philadelphia (and an excellent documentary, *Milford Graves Full Mantis*, from 2018), but also includes contributions from Graves's collaborators: the Japanese modern-experimental dancer Min Tanaka and the artist Yuji Agematsu, who studied Yara with Graves (and whose sculptures made of scavenged materials are in *Greater New York* at MoMA PS1). The gallery handout includes Graves's *Herbal Chart*, detailing the effects of various herbs on the human body. All these elements combined offer an excellent introduction to Graves's remarkable practice and worldview, in which art, medicine, plants, human perception, the nervous system and the cosmos are all connected.