

ARTISTS SPACE

# THE NEW YORKER

Andrea K. Scott

**"Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency"**



Milford Graves, *Yara Training Bag*, c. 1990. Dimensions variable. Wood, punching bags, hand-painted boxing gloves, springs, samurai sword, rubber balls, acupuncture model, tape, metal fixtures, athletic socks, rope. Image courtesy Artists Space, New York. Photo: Filip Wolak.

The extraordinary percussionist Milford Graves, who died in February, at the age of seventy- nine, didn't keep time—he set it free, seeing beyond the convention of drummer-as-metronome and tuning into the body's polyrhythmic vibrations. (His interest in heartbeats led to training as a cardiac technician and years of EKG-inspired improvisations.) This cosmic vision enriched far more than free jazz, as *Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency* (at Artists Space through Jan. 8) makes abundantly clear. An herbalist and an esteemed music professor, he also invented a unique martial-art form called Yara—Yoruba for “nimble.” The hand-painted “Yara Training Bag” Graves made circa 1990 (pictured) prefigures the bristling, shamanic sculptures he began to create near the end of his life, forever breaking new ground.

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