

New York Gallery Beat: 5 Critics Review

by Sarah Cascone

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Woodward Gallery, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, presents “Art From Within,” an exhibition of work by Alabama folk artist Sybil Gibson (1908–1995). Gibson took up the brush late in life, utilizing acrylic and tempera paint and makeshift canvases of cardboard, newspaper, and grocery bags for her landscapes, portraits, and floral still lifes. Her bold, vibrant colors and free, easy brushstrokes lend an air of refinement to her unconventional materials, but the gallery has somewhat underscored her outsider status with prominently placed quotes by the artist. Gibson describes her process of soaking grocery bags in water and creating “the pictures” with paint that she had previously “used in the classroom with the children.” Another sign of her self-taught background is her signature, which adorns each work in large, child-like cursive. The paintings can sometimes be unsettling, featuring blobby people with dark, soulless eyes. Others are more cheerful, straddling the line between childlike whimsy and elegant abstraction

