

GLADSTONE GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Robert Bechtle

December 1, 2006 through January 6, 2007

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to announce its first exhibition of work by Robert Bechtle. For over forty years, Bechtle's paintings and works on paper have consistently mined a uniquely American terrain, depicting with awe-inspiring accuracy his friends, family, and most notably the car-lined streets of his San Francisco neighborhood. Throughout, Bechtle has continually honed his remarkable ability to capture the stilled atmosphere of life through complex compositions and a constant exploration of painting technique. The recent body of work on view in this exhibition does not diverge in terms of content; however, as Linda Nochlin notes in her accompanying catalogue essay, "There is a new sense of finality, of pathos, of darkness, in subject matter, color, and composition."

In his essay on Bechtle's work, Michael Auping noted that he "is an artist who never allows his vision to take light for granted. His paintings subtly but invariably pull our focus from observable details to the conditions of luminosity that makes these things visible." Whether it is the irradiated glint of afternoon glare reflecting on a car's metallic bumper, or the burnished glow of a streetlight bathing the hood of a truck, Bechtle manipulates paint to capture the particular temperaments of light and creates an atmosphere at once so recognizable, yet so distant. His compositions literally come from the other side of the street, opening for contemplation the seemingly common vistas of American life.

In a recent series of self-portraits, Bechtle turns a somewhat uncanny eye towards himself, humbly depicting himself and his art through the vantage of his age. Set against the humdrum backdrop of a working-class town, these ruminations on the artist's own maturity reveal his artistic practice to be his very life-line. The gaze of Bechtle as himself and as artist become one: The vacillations of light he observes on his own face are the same atmospheric changes he has witnessed in his daily surroundings throughout his career. Despite the shifts of age, and with them the makes and models of the cars, Bechtle's view has remained the same, and he has continued to find those moments so embedded in American life that when he captures them in paint, he reveals the austerity and anxiety that runs below the shimmer of new cars and suburban streets.

Robert Bechtle was born in 1932 in San Francisco, where he continues to live and work. His paintings have been included in major group exhibitions internationally since the 1960s, including "The Artist as His Subject" at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Documenta 5 in Kassel, Germany; "The American Century: Art and Culture, 1950-2000" at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; "Les Années Pop" at the Centre Pompidou, Paris; and "Infinite Painting," at Villa Manin Centro d' Art Contemporanea, in Codroipo, Italy. In 2004, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art organized a lauded retrospective of his work that traveled to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. Bechtle was awarded the Francis J. Greenberger Award for continued excellence in painting in 2003. A fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by noted art historian Linda Nochlin will accompany the exhibition.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm
For further information please contact Miciah Hussey
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