

GLADSTONE GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Catherine Opie

“American Cities”

September 9–October 14, 2006

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to announce its first exhibition of work by Catherine Opie. Since the 1990s, her photographs have garnered high praise for their reworking of traditional genres, from portraiture to landscape. Blending documentary aspects with a conceptual program emphasizing the contribution of identity to the structures of community, her work has drawn from avant-queer culture to the makeshift dwellings of icehouse fishermen. With each series a strong respect for the subject and a formal elegance elevate the image from mere document to empathic creation: Freeways become ancient ruins, while a turned back becomes the wellspring of dreams.

For much of her career, Opie’s interest in community has led her to document different suburban and urban environments in America, from the elaborate facades of Beverly Hills homes, to the rural signage and storefronts that peopled her cross-country treks. Her blended style of formal documentary and her conceptual investigation into community lends a quasi anthropological feel to her work. As she says, “This work might exist as documentation 700 years from now when somebody comes across the photographs and they are able to put together some notion of civilization through the city and the structures that existed. I am really interested in the idea of an archeologist being able to figure out how we lived through found artifacts and what was constructed.”

Exhibited for the first time together, the gallery will show Opie’s black and white photographs of architecture particular to five cities: Los Angeles, St. Louis, Minneapolis, New York, and Chicago. Because Opie spent so much time in each of these environs, she cannily captures those unique aspects that readily inform and recall the life of each. In Los Angeles, she turned her lens to nondescript mini-malls, while in Minneapolis she focused on the skyways that circulate above snowy ground. The winding narrow alleys off Wall Street open into soaring urban vistas in her views of New York. For St. Louis and Chicago she captured the sprawling panoramas as well as the telling details of these diverse metropolitan areas. Aesthetized and austere, these formally complex images show the deserted cities as the matrices for society. Although emptied of the people that have populated her other series, these artifacts of urban life hold sympathy for the communities that built them and the diversity of the individuals there.

Catherine Opie’s work has been featured in acclaimed exhibitions in the United States and Europe. She has had solo exhibitions at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, The Saint Louis Art Museum, the Photographers’ Gallery in London, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Her work appeared in the exhibitions “Rose is a Rose is a Rose: Gender Performance in Photography” at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Whitney Biennials in 1995 and 2004. Currently, her work can be seen in an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and in the SITE Santa Fe Biennial while a touring survey will be on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland this fall.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10am-6pm
For further information please contact Miciah Hussey
mhussey@gladstonegallery.com