



The 100 best paintings in New York: 80-71

Leading artists, gallery owners, curators and critics pick the best paintings to be seen in NYC

By Time Out New York contributors
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'61 Pontiac (1968–69), Robert Bechtle

Where can I see it?: [Whitney Museum of American Art](#)

Bay Area painter Robert Bechtle could be described as the great luminist of midcentury suburban America. His work revels in the light bouncing off that most conspicuous symbol of the era's prosperity: the family car. However, his paintings have never been characterized by the sharply delineated, dazzling reflections that are such a feature of '70s Photorealism, a genre he has been often—and wrongly—associated with. Rather color, as in this self-portrait of the artist with his family, seems to emanate from the surface of the canvas—most notably in the creamy tones of the station wagon that stands just behind the young couple and their small children, unifying them with the composition. As in the best of the Dutch still-life tradition, '61 Pontiac is a scene in which the matter-of-fact becomes transcendent.—Howard Halle

Photograph: Courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from the Richard and Dorothy Rodgers Fund 70.16 © Robert Bechtle