

Marlborough

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RICHARD ESTES *ANTARCTICA, NEW ENGLAND, AND NEW YORK* MARLBOROUGH GALLERY October 14–November 15, 2008

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to announce that an exhibition of new work by the contemporary American realist painter, Richard Estes, will open on October 14th at Marlborough Gallery, 40 West 57th Street, and continue through November 15th. This exhibition marks the artist's fifteenth year with Marlborough.

Estes' exhibition will feature approximately twenty-five paintings, all oil on canvas, ranging from his quintessential subject, New York City, to icy glaciers in Antarctica and landscapes of New England, specifically Maine and Massachusetts. In the recent Estes monograph by noted art historian John Wilmerding (Rizzoli, New York, 2006), the author remarks that "One of the visual themes that runs through nearly all of Estes' work is his fascination with reflections in glassy surfaces, from windows and polished metals to extended surfaces of water. These reflections become agents of the most subtle perceptual ambiguity and visual complexity. . . . They variously define space, bend it, expand and contract it, in relation to what is before us. Seldom have simplicity, ordinariness, even emptiness been so deceptive and optically engaging. Thus his art calls attention to ways of seeing as much as to what is seen."

Estes' new body of work continues his engagement with these "glassy surfaces," especially in a series of five paintings, all 2008, that depict views from the Staten Island Ferry as it travels to and from Manhattan. Here the "glassy surfaces" are multitudinous: windows reflect the interior of the ferry and the bright light of the sun – be it the clear white of morning or the orange glow of sunset – as well as the artificial light of the fluorescent bulbs imbedded in the ceiling. Metal window frames and partitions and hard plastic seats reflect the light as well. In *View of Manhattan from Staten Island Ferry* (36 x 60 in.), Estes depicts streaks of dirt on the window pane, open above and below to the fresh air and flowing water of the Hudson River. Especially noticeable here are the swirling strokes of Estes' brush as he paints the water's wake. Calligraphic and lush, they are in sharp contrast to the tightly controlled passages with which he depicts the reflections.

Turning his eye far from the hard angles and dizzying reflections of Manhattan, Estes will present eleven canvases that comprise a series devoted to Antarctica, where with each work he creates stunning effects as both the smooth expanse of water and the boats' ripples reflect the high peaks of glaciers in that semi-frozen world. *Antarctica I*, 2007 (38 1/8 x 66 1/2 in.) and *Antarctica II*, 2007 (26 3/8 x 57 in.), depict a far horizon, ice piled high, both seen from the plunging perspective of the side of a boat as the viewer seems to peer out to the cool surface beyond. Estes' interest in nature is continued with a number of paintings that depict the flora and waterways of Provincetown and Maine, the latter of which is the site of his summer residence for many years. In *The Coastline of Maine*, 2006 (13 7/8 x 19 1/2 in.), Estes presents such a deeply foreshortened view of the coast that the moment of recognition is delayed by the protruding rocky shoals' sharp edges. Only upon looking closely does the viewer notice the beachcombers as they climb and sit upon the rocks.

Estes is widely considered the master of Photorealism, a form of hyperrealist painting where a photograph is projected onto the canvas as the source of the image and then painted. In Estes' case, however,

photographs are used only as a starting point. The main difference between Estes and other artists practicing this style is that Estes does not project an image onto a canvas and then paint it. He uses different photographs in order to stimulate the idea of the picture and then paints the work free handedly using the photographs and intuition to create the image. His mastery of painting and technical virtuosity allows him to create surfaces that evince an allover tonal richness, which combined with crystalline clarity of detail, engender a striking magnetic presence. While the ostensible subject is reality his work is, as Linda Nochlin has pointed out, "concerned with conveying the non coincidence of tactile and visual reality," or to put it a different way as the critic John Perreault has written, "Estes in his paintings through sharp focus and highly selected detailing, conveys tactility more than a photograph ever could." Perreault goes on to say, "In his own way Estes is making paintings, moving from one carefully defined format to another within his cityscape genre, that bear comparison with the greatest representational and abstract art of the past. . . . Depending on one's angle of view, Estes is a contemporary Realist utilizing some of the techniques of Photorealism – the undisguised use of photo sources, for instance, to create high-information representations – or, alternately, a Photorealist who employs perspective and compositional devices inherited from historical forms of representation." Estes himself has said, "The photograph is like a reference, a sketch. The great thing about the photograph is that you can stop things. I always thought of myself as a Realist painter. The photo is just a convenience." In regard to seeing Estes' work as visual organization, Perreault aptly notes, "Working within a tradition that emphasizes formal arrangement, precise information and the subject matter of everyday life—a tradition that is discontinuous, but apparently perennial—Estes has updated, if not totally reinvented, the cityscape as a vehicle for visual invention. In this area he has no peer."

Estes was born in Kewanee, Illinois in 1932. From 1952 to 1956 he studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. He moved to New York in 1959 and had his first New York show in 1967 at the Allan Stone Gallery. In 1996 he was awarded the MECA Award for Achievement as a Visual Artist at the Maine College of Art in Portland. A retrospective of the artist's work, *Richard Estes: The Sensuousness of the Real*, was recently held at Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid and Palazzo Magnani, Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Estes works can be found in many public collections. Among the most prominent are the following: Académie Française, Paris, France; The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; Des Moines Art Center, Iowa; Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Modern Art, Kansas City, Missouri; Neue Galerie der Stadt Aachen, Ludwig Collection, Aachen, Germany; Teheran Museum of Contemporary Art, Iran; Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York.

A full color catalogue will be available at the time of the exhibition.

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