



NEWS RELEASE

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MAJOR RICHARD ESTES RETROSPECTIVE, ORGANIZED BY THE PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART AND THE SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM, OPENS IN 2014

(Portland, Maine) *Richard Estes' Realism* is the most comprehensive exhibition of Estes' paintings ever organized. A master of contemporary realism, Estes is primarily known as a painter of the urban landscape. The exhibition features nearly 50 paintings from Estes' first mature New York City facades from the late 1960s to panoramic views of Manhattan and other cities and natural sites around the world.

Jointly organized by the Portland Museum of Art in Portland, Maine and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the artworks in *Richard Estes' Realism* are selected by Patterson Sims, an independent curator, and Jessica May, curator of contemporary and modern art at the Portland Museum of Art. Virginia Mecklenburg, chief curator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, is coordinating the exhibition in Washington, D.C. The exhibition will be on view at the Portland Museum of Art from May 22 through September 7 and at the Smithsonian American Art Museum from October 10 through February 8, 2015.

The exhibition explores the full range of Estes' career as a painter. Widely acknowledged as a pioneering practitioner of photorealism, Estes' sharply focused technique goes beyond the photographic to create complex constructions of light, reflection, and perspective. Paintings in the exhibition balance Estes' interest in cities with his explorations of the Maine coast and the woods on Mount Desert Island, where he has spent part of each year since the late 1970s. Most recently, Estes turned from luminous sunlit scenes to nocturnal images of New York City. Several of Estes' rare portraits also are included in the exhibition.

Estes' compositions—amalgamations of the multiple photographs he takes for each composition—are dramatic and complex to the point of ambiguity. He layers and merges multiple viewpoints to create dense and detailed scenes. Though figures are often present in his work, they are—like most passersby in public spaces—anonymous and uncommunicative. His seemingly effortless technical finesse captures the intricate geometries of the city, the subtle contours and nuanced tones of natural landscapes and the shimmering fluidity of water. Estes' realism is a compelling record of the appearance of urban and natural environments in the late 20th and early 21st century.

Born in 1932 and raised in central Illinois, Estes studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1952 to 1956. In 1959, he moved to New York City, where he has lived ever since. For several years, he worked in commercial publishing and advertising as a paste-up, layout and illustration artist. In the mid-1960s, Estes began to paint from his own photographs, developing paintings that are rooted in Dutch, Venetian and American representations of urban architecture. In 1978, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston organized the first major career survey of his work, which was followed by his 1991 retrospective at the Portland Museum of Art in Maine. Estes is considered the foremost practitioner of the international group of artists known loosely as photorealists and has been celebrated for more than 45 years as one of the premier painters of American cityscapes.

Richard Estes' Realism is accompanied by a catalogue with essays on Estes' by Sims and May. The book also includes a detailed chronology by independent art historian Helen Ferrulli. It is published by the Portland Museum of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and distributed by Yale University Press.

Richard Estes' Realism is organized by the Portland Museum of Art, Maine, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The museums thank the following donors for their generous support of the exhibition: Gabrielle Bekink and the Honorable Rudolf Bekink, Isabelle and Scott Black, Thelma and Melvin Lenkin, The Lunder Foundation —Peter and Paula Lunder, Debbie Frank Petersen, Walter and Lucille Rubin Foundation, Holly and Nick Ruffin, and John Wilmerding. Local corporate sponsorship is provided by Bank of America. Local media sponsorship is provided by WCSH 6, *Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram*, and Maine Public Broadcasting Network.

At the Portland venue, a \$5 special exhibition surcharge will added to each adult admission (total cost \$17). Admission is free for members.

About the Portland Museum of Art

The Portland Museum of Art (PMA), Maine's premier art museum, showcases fine and decorative arts from the 18th century to the present. From Winslow Homer and Andrew Wyeth to Pablo Picasso and Claude Monet, the PMA features three centuries of art and architecture. The museum is located at Seven Congress Square in downtown Portland. Hours are: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday, and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday. Memorial Day through Columbus Day, the PMA is open on Mondays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and students with I.D., \$6 for youth ages 13 to 17, and children 12 and under are free. Special exhibition fees may apply. Admission is free on Friday evenings from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. No admission is required to visit the PMA Café and Store. Winslow Homer Studio tours are available by reservation. For more information, call (207) 775-6148 or visit portlandmuseum.org.

About the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. Its National Historic Landmark building is located at Eighth and F streets N.W., above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Museum hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free. Follow the museum on Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, Flickr, iTunes U and ArtBabble. Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000. Website: americanart.si.edu.

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