

GLADSTONE

Robert Bechtle

March 16 – April 29, 2023

Opening Reception: March 16, 5–7pm

515 West 24th Street

New York, NY 10011

Gladstone is pleased to present the first posthumous exhibition of works by Robert Bechtle, spanning nearly six decades of his practice. Highlighting important subjects he returned to throughout his lifetime, this expansive selection of paintings, watercolors, and drawings demonstrates the technical and conceptual ingenuity of his process that evolved over time and radically transformed approaches to realistic figurative painting in the United States.

In Bechtle's works, classic cars, urban and suburban streetscapes of his native Bay Area in California, and portraits of himself and those close to him are transposed with a candor and familiarity that allows the viewer to absorb quotidian scenes with a heightened and sharpened awareness. Formally flawless, the artist captures every detail, shadow, and reflection to further draw the viewer into each quiet scene. While many of his works are depicted with realist precision, others are portrayed by employing a looser, Impressionistic technique, demonstrating the artist's fluid ability to memorialize moments in time without one set approach. Beyond these physical attributes, Bechtle has an astute aptitude for bringing to life the unseen facets of an instance in time: isolation, emptiness, contemplativeness, and the passage of time and light are transformed from invisible characters to palpable features that seem to become secondary subjects of the works. Through an unmatched ability to depict light and details with the exactitude of a Renaissance painter, subtle details, and textures, these overlooked, everyday vignettes are transformed into significant life moments that tell a deeply personal story of contemporary life.

Another important component of this exhibition are a series of significant portraits and self-portraits made throughout his career. In *Potrero Table* (1994), Bechtle depicts himself and his wife of more than 50 years, art historian Whitney Chadwick, sitting at the dining table at their house in Potrero Hill. With astonishing clarity, the artist meticulously captures every detail of the late-night scene. Frequently turning the lens back onto himself for the entirety of his artistic practice, Bechtle's self-portraits lay bare the process of aging, and the physical and psychological changes that come with the lived experience. These tender and honest chronicles are essential clues to understanding Bechtle's overall artistic oeuvre, the care he had for Whitney, and highlight his ability to separate from the constantly moving and evolving world in order to pause and reflect on his surroundings with clarity and rigor. Through intense concentration and sensitivity, Bechtle's wide-ranging body of work chronicles a remarkable life, filled with the beautiful, overlooked, and often discarded instances that make it so special.

Robert Bechtle was born in 1932 in San Francisco, and passed away in 2020 at the age of 88. 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. His paintings have been included in major group exhibitions internationally since the 1960s, including "America is Hard to See," Whitney Museum of American Art; "The Artist as His Subject," Museum of Modern Art, New York; Documenta 5, Kassel, Germany; "The American Century: Art and Culture, 1950-2000," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; "Les Années Pop," Centre Pompidou, Paris; and "Infinite Painting," Villa Manin Centro d'Art Contemporanea, Codroipo, Italy. Bechtle was awarded the Francis J. Greenberger Award for continued excellence in painting in 2003.

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com