



NEWS RELEASE

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MAJOR RICHARD ESTES RETROSPECTIVE THIS SUMMER AT THE PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART



(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. This exhibition features 50 paintings ranging from Estes' first New York City façades in the late 1960s to panoramic views of Mount Desert Island in the 2000s.

Widely viewed as a pioneering practitioner of photorealism, Estes' sharply focused technique goes beyond the photographic to create complex constructions of light, reflection, and perspective. The paintings included in

this exhibition provide undeniable insight into Estes' equal interest in cities as well as the Maine coast and the woods on Mount Desert Island in particular. Several of Estes' rarely seen portraits from such exotic places as Japan and Antarctica are also featured in the exhibition.

Estes' paintings, 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 unassuming. His 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.

Jointly organized by the Portland Museum of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the artworks in *Richard Estes' Realism* were 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.

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.

\$5 special exhibition surcharge applies. (total cost \$17). Admission is free for PMA members.

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.

(Image credit:Richard Estes (United States, born 1932), *Brooklyn Bridge*, 1991, oil on canvas, 84 x 84 inches. Private collection. © Richard Estes, courtesy Marlborough Gallery, New York)

MUSEUM INFORMATION

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.