

# Blanchette

## Bruce's Studio News

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### Summertime... Museum-hopping



The Portland Museum of Art in the special exhibition gallery / Richard Estes' Realism

I had an opportunity on my recent visit to Maine's Portland Museum to take in the exhibit of photo-realist Richard Estes. If you are unfamiliar with his work (2 shown here), Richard is a key figure in the return to realism that began in the late sixties and early seventies. He was painting during the Pop Art movement's heyday and is still painting today. At 82 he is doing some of his finest paintings yet, and splits his painting between his Maine home and NYC.



You might think it odd that a mixed media abstractionist like me would want to call your attention to an artist seemingly doing artwork in another genre, but it is not so hard to understand when you look at his paintings. What Estes does with his compositions is as abstract (in their realism) as artists who concentrate on purely non-objective themes.

*In fact, in his commentary from the show catalog, Patterson Sims states:*

*"Richard Estes avows that his realism has no hidden meanings, special messages, or stories to tell. Political positions or posturing about the human condition are alien to his art. ... his art is not so much about what he paints as how he paints. ...by using his [own] photographs he neutralizes and sublimates his own point of view and allows his images to become more open-ended for the viewer. For him "the subject is just the vehicle for doing the painting.""*<sup>1</sup>

*"Estes' use of reflection has been a defining aspect of his realism." But observing further, Mr. Sims notes: "These reflections offer fragments of what is left behind, beside, beneath, or above the subjects being photographed. They expand and alter space, soften and contort hard edges, switch verticals to horizontals, turn forward to back as they fracture, twist, multiply, and re-represent what would be otherwise unseen or unremarkable... Especially in his car reflection paintings, they flip and upend the world above and bring the sky to earth. Adding wit to metaphor, Estes' reflections confound and abstract traditional representation as they de- and reconstruct form, space, and perception. Reflections allow Estes to compose abstractly without ceasing to be a devout realist."*<sup>2</sup>



Yes, that's me on the ladder, again, installing "Ice Out" on my studio exterior. (See last month's newsletter)

<sup>1,2</sup> Richard Estes' Realism, Patterson Sims, Yale University Press, Pages 1 & 11