

BERGGRUEN

GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DAVID BATES

Southern Coast

September 7 – October 28, 2017

“David Bates makes painting look easy. Laying on color with thick, assured brushstrokes, he conveys a sense of ease, confidence, even inevitability to his paintings.” – Jeremy Strick, Director, Nasher Sculpture Center

Berggruen Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of twenty new paintings by American artist, David Bates. *Southern Coast* marks David’s twelfth solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view September 7 through October 28, 2017. The gallery will host a reception for the artist on Thursday, September 7, 2017 from 5:00 to 8:00pm. There will be an illustrated catalogue to accompany the exhibition.

Steeped in experience and tempered by personal memory, the twenty paintings included in this exhibition celebrate Bates’ penchant for capturing the raw emotional immediacy of his subject, be it a place, a person, or an object. In taking scope of Bates’s work, one must not overlook the universality of his aesthetic language. His paintings enrapture the viewer, so carefully and intuitively does he characterize his subject. Bates paints not to reproduce an exact likeness of a scene, but rather to give voice to his reaction to what he saw or how it made him feel. Each painting bursts with subjective creativity.

Throughout his artistic career, spanning more than forty years, Bates has revisited the most classical forms of painting—still life, landscape, and portraiture—each firmly rooted in biographical references most often from his experiences hunting and fishing in East Texas and along the Gulf Coast. The artist excels at profoundly defining the geographical specificity of each location he depicts. For Bates, all aspects of a painting—the people, the landscape, the animals, even the weather—are all one big portrait. Of his still life paintings, for example, Bates describes them as “anything but still or dead. [Rather], a painting has the ability to extend the life of its subject. It’s not a plant on a table, it’s a painting. That realization and that reality is liberating. It’s not a copy of nature, it’s a translation of nature into paint.” There is an intimacy to his subjects—they are real people, real stories. This distinction is noted by Bates, whose tenure as an art student at Southern Methodist University and later as a participant in the Whitney Museum of American Art’s Independent Study Program taught the young artist an important lesson: to not concern oneself with an art world that was not essentially and fundamentally your own, and instead cultivate a personalized artistic identity even if it opposes the avant-garde notions of the time. In an interview with Michael Auping, longtime Chief Curator of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Bates discloses, “I wasn’t good at making art about art. Once I had a real person or a story, I could use painting to magnify it. Magnifying reality is much more interesting to me than just making things up. For me to make art...I need a place to go, an adventure, and the challenge of re-creating that experience in paint.” In this way, Bates can revisit the same subject time and again, each time gleaning new meaning, as well as creating a barometer for calibrating changes in his artistic practice over the years. Consequently, the subject matter of his paintings also invests greatly in what he calls, “blue-collar heroism,” referring to his figures or subjects that, in the vein of a Cézanne or a Courbet, are interesting because of, not despite, their anonymity.

The spectacular richness and vitality of Bates’s subjects is echoed in what might be described as the “brut formalism” of his painting style. The roughness and directness of his figuration is not unlike that of Picasso, who similarly embraced sharp angles as well as shadows and depth delineated by flat planes of a single, unbroken color. Thick, even sculptural swathes of oil paint evoke “the textured freshness of nature” and a color scheme in which colors do not blend together take on an abstract quality that the artist likens to playing chords on a guitar, that is “different and similar notes all bouncing off each other.” Thus, visual directness permeates all aspects of the artist’s approach.

10 HAWTHORNE STREET
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94105
TEL 415 781 4629
INFO@BERGGRUEN.COM
BERGGRUEN.COM

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David Bates was born in 1952 near Dallas, Texas. He had an early introduction to the arts through his mother, who had studied illustration at the Art Institute of Chicago and was passionate about modern design and aesthetics. Bates developed as a painter in the 1970s with his enrollment in the arts program at Southern Methodist University. Eventually receiving both his BFA and MFA from SMU, Bates also spent 1976 in New York as a student in the highly acclaimed Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Today he lives and works in Dallas. Bates has had numerous solo exhibitions at John Berggruen Gallery, his first in 1985. His work is featured in numerous public collections including the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas; National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.; Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

David Bates: Southern Coast, September 7 – October 28, 2017. On view at 10 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. Images and preview are available upon request. For all inquiries, please contact the gallery by phone (415) 781-4629 or by email info@berggruen.com.

Gallery Hours: Monday – Saturday, 10:00am – 6:00pm

About Berggruen Gallery

John Berggruen first opened his pioneering gallery in the spring of 1970 on Grant Avenue in downtown San Francisco. Berggruen Gallery opened in its new 10,000-square-foot space at 10 Hawthorne Street, an historic three-story brick building across from the recently expanded San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, on January 13, 2017. The gallery specializes in contemporary art and 20th-century American and European paintings, drawings, sculpture, and limited edition prints. The gallery exhibits the work of major American post-war artists as well as established and emerging contemporary artists, such as Alicia McCarthy, Julie Mehretu, Richard Serra, Mark Tansey, George Condo, Bridget Riley, and Tauba Auerbach. In addition, Berggruen Gallery presents curated exhibitions of historic works by artists, including those of the Bay Area Figurative movement, such as Richard Diebenkorn, Nathan Oliveira, and David Park, as well as Alexander Calder, Willem de Kooning, Mark di Suvero, Ellsworth Kelly, Henri Matisse, Georgia O'Keeffe, Ed Ruscha, Frank Stella, and Wayne Thiebaud.

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