

GALLERY-GOING

Rendering Reality

Since the 1970s, William Beckman has been best known for meticulously detailed, full-length portraits. Posed frontally and often nude, his figures wear expressions — almost always of impassive self-possession — that perfectly reflect his technique.

Most of the artist's 10 paintings at Forum are self-portraits. Masterfully modeled in front of empty backgrounds, the subjects stare

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matter-of-factly at the viewer, their soft flesh and clothing contrasting tellingly with the hard glints of eyeglasses. While the artist's technique never changes in the portraits, the illumination varies subtly and specifically from open shadow to glancing light. One very large canvas from a recent series of double portraits features the artist standing next to a sport motorcycle. A far smaller painting, however, stands out for its accessibility of expression. "Deidra" (2003), a likeness of the artist's daughter, betrays a trace of vulnerability, while indications of farmland beyond provide spacious relief.

Mr. Beckman is no photo-realist, and indeed his dense hues demonstrate the utterly different capabilities of color in painting and photography. At the same time, he seems to take photography's factual, evenly weighed de-



William Beckman, "Studio No.3 (Ducati)" (2004-05).

FORUM GALLERY

tail as a paradigm of truthful rendering. His single-minded modeling — unmoved by the tension of a supporting neck, or the sudden emergence of an ear — deprives his images of the passion and, arguably, the individual truthfulness of the Northern Renaissance artists to whom his work has a technical resemblance.

By JOHN GOODRICH

*Beckman until November 24
(745 Fifth Ave., between 57th and
58th streets, 212-355-4545),*