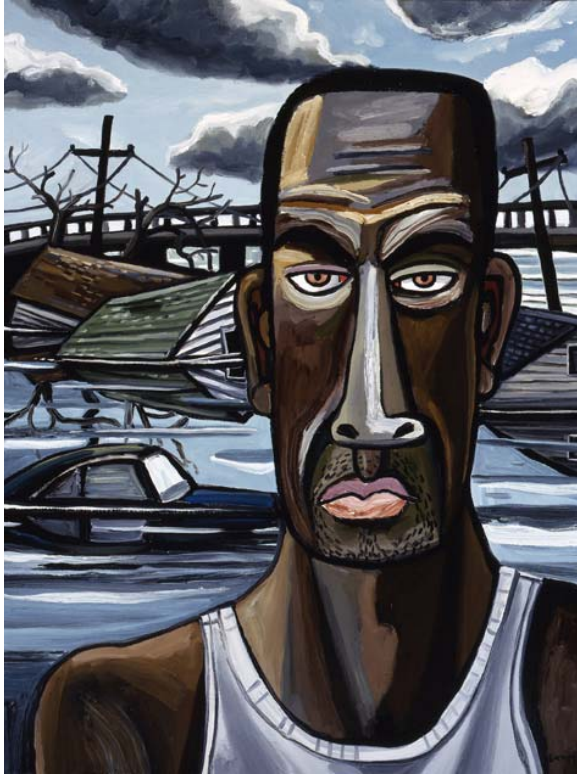


## David Bates

November 15 - December 22, 2006

*In a tour de force of portraits, wildlife and landscape studies, flower paintings and swamp scenes, David Bates shows us images of despair and reaffirmation that flow from nature's unsentimental cycles of pain and joy, life and death. Bates also demonstrates his mastery of diverse modes of expression that allow him to take full advantage of his enormous gifts as a painter, draftsman and passionate social observer.*

Jacqueline Days Serwer



*Katrina Portrait I*, 2006, oil on canvas, 48 x 36"

Water. It is probably the single most essential element of life. The human body itself consists of more than half water. Likewise, approximately three-quarters of the earth's surface is covered with it. Water provides almost limitless opportunities for recreation and alternately can be one of the most destructive forces in nature.

David Bates, a native of Texas, has spent much time over the years visiting New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. From early memories of family beach vacations to adult adventures spent along the Coast, observing and interacting with the people who live there, many of whom make a living by fishing, crabbing, or working on the water.

Along with a group of Southern coastal landscape and still life paintings, Bates has recently completed several works dealing with the human tragedy facing the area following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. *The Storm I* is a virtual tour de force in which the viewer is confronted by a tightly packed group of people. They are all African American, most are middle-aged. The expressions on their faces convey anger, disappointment, sadness, blame. A sign in the background reads "HELP!" There is a feeling of pent-up energy, of a powder keg ready to explode. *Katrina Portraits I, II* and *III* offer closer looks at three of the more haunting visages from *The Storm I*, isolated and set against backgrounds of either the ominous water itself or a tangle of floating cars, crushed buildings, and downed power lines and trees. *Gulf Coast Portraits I* and *II* give us two more unforgettable faces, this time Caucasian. Their expressions veer more towards exhaustion and resignation.

Water is a factor in a number of Bates's other recent paintings as well. In *First Light II* we see a lake at dawn. A lone figure, possibly the artist himself, is shown gliding through the water in a small fishing boat. Egrets fill the trees. Here the water is a gentle force providing space for solitude and contemplation. In *The Deadening II* another figure steers a small boat through the narrow channel of a cypress swamp. The sky is dark, the boat is tilted at a precarious angle, the trees are bleached white. We are reminded that one of the reasons Katrina struck the Gulf Coast with such terrible force is that the marshes and swamps which formerly protected the coast



*First Light II*, 2006, oil on canvas, 48 x 60"

against the onslaught of hurricane force winds and surging water are disappearing. They have been disappearing for decades. *Broken Top* shows a cypress swamp in fall color. The sky and sod are an eerie but surprisingly beautiful orange. A lone egret looks on, as if in witness. *Bait House II* depicts a lake at night, it looks peaceful, stars are visible in the sky, all seems well, but still, an unsettling tension pervades.

Bates's pre-Katrina *Self Portrait - Gulf Coast* shows the artist with palette in hand, a painting of palm trees in progress on his easel. In the background the sky is blue, two houses on stilts stand intact. And there are further reminders that life goes on. Bates offers a group of flower paintings, including two of Magnolias, the Southern flower that has served as a touchstone for Bates for years. He paints the flower every year in order to assess where he and his art are going. And in a group of paintings and works on paper of birds, Bates calls upon us to admire the beauty and resilience of these owls and egrets as they attempt to cope with an increasing number of unpredictable changes in weather and habitat.

A 40 page color catalogue is available with an essay by Jacqueline Days Serwer, Supervisory Museum Curator of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

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DC Moore Gallery specializes in twentieth century and contemporary art. The gallery is located on the eighth floor of 724 Fifth Avenue between 56th and 57th Streets and is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 to 5:30. Press viewings can be arranged prior to the exhibition. **For more information, for photographs, or to arrange a viewing, please call Sandra Paci at 212-247-2111.**