



475 Park Avenue at 57th Street, New York, New York 10022
Tel: (212) 355-4545 Fax: (212) 355-4547 www.forumgallery.com

Robert Fishko, *Director*

For Immediate Release

William Beckman: Five Decades of Self-Portraits
September 23 – November 6, 2021



Self-Portrait with Hat (detail), 1979-80, oil on panel, 21 1/8 x 16 3/4 inches

New York, NY – From September 23 to November 6, 2021, **Forum Gallery** will celebrate William Beckman's 50 years of self-portraiture with an exhibition of seventeen paintings and drawings made between 1976 and 2021. The exhibition, ***William Beckman: Five Decades of Self-Portraits***, will present important examples from each decade beginning with 1976 and will include a group of current paintings, illuminating the Artist's singular and ongoing contribution to the field.

One of America's foremost artists, **William Beckman (b. 1942)** is rightly known for the intimacy, communicative strength and emotional power of his figurative paintings and drawings. Working in larger-than-life and intimate scales, Beckman draws from life and memory to create compelling works that engage the viewer directly while penetrating the psyche of the individual subject. His self-portraits are uncompromising, analytic and layered portrayals of reality.

The earliest work in the exhibition, *Self-Portrait*, 1976, oil on panel 11 x 9 ¼ inches, not only draws immediate parallels to Albrecht Dürer but reveals Beckman's keen study of the masters of self-portraiture throughout art history. In his essay for the exhibition catalogue, David Ebony observes: "Self-portraits...from Rembrandt to Vincent van Gogh and Lucien Freud, have inspired Beckman over the years; but having mastered the technique of the Renaissance painters—creating oil-on-panel compositions with countless layers of pigment, glazing, and extremely labor-intensive detail—Beckman's works are stylistically closer to Jan van Eyck and Hans Holbein."

In the monumental *Overcoat with Plowed Field*, 2018-2021, oil on canvas, 100 x 73 inches, the largest painting in the exhibition, William Beckman revisits the iconography of the "overcoat," a symbol of survival for Beckman and a nod to the Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol, whose influential short story, "The Overcoat," has long impressed the Artist. Characteristically, Beckman renders himself standing motionless, in fact immovable, with stoic demeanor against the farmland and granaries of his youth, evoking the work of Grant Wood, painter of *American Gothic* who, like Beckman, sprung from America's heartland.

Six recent small-scale self-portraits created over the past two years in the quiet solitude of his studio in upstate NY, unapologetically reflect the Artist's aging features against fields of saturated color. Two self-portraits in charcoal on paper created in 1983 and 1997 reveal William Beckman's masterful handling of this medium, honored by a retrospective exhibition in 2014 of William Beckman's drawings organized by the Columbus Museum in Georgia (traveled to the Arkansas Art Museum in Little Rock).

A Minnesota native, William Beckman first exhibited in New York in 1969 and joined Forum Gallery in 1993. In 2006, his portraits were the subject of a one-person exhibition at the opening of the newly-situated National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. His work is included in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, NY), Joseph H. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, D.C.), National Portrait Gallery (Washington, D.C.), The Art Institute of Chicago (IL), Museum Moderne Kunst (Vienna, Austria), The Carnegie Museum of Art (Pittsburgh, PA), Flint Institute of Arts (MI), Milwaukee Art Museum (WI), Columbus Museum (GA), Des Moines Art Center (IA) and Frye Art Museum (Seattle, WA).

###

Forum Gallery is located at 475 Park Avenue at 57th Street, New York, NY 10022. Forum Gallery is open to the public from Monday through Saturday, from 10am to 5:30pm. Please visit <https://www.forumgallery.com/exhibitions/william-beckman-five-decades-of-self-portraits> to view the entire exhibition online. The exhibition begins on September 23, 2021 and will be on view through November 6, 2021. A full color catalogue is available from the gallery.

Forum Gallery is pleased to greet all vaccinated visitors during our public hours, and provides hand sanitizer and face coverings, on request. We comply with New York laws and the protocols recommended by the US CDC.

For press inquiries, please contact **Ambrose Monahan**, 212-355-4545; ambrose@forumgallery.com.

For sales inquiries, please contact **Nicola Lorenz**, Executive Director or **Marjorie Van Cura**, Associate Director, 212-355-4545; gallery@forumgallery.com.