Tracing Robert Bechtles career from his earliest paintings of the 1960s to the present day, this is the definitive book on one of the founders and foremost practitioners of American Photorealism. Created in close collaboration with the artist, Robert Bechtle will accompany the distinguished painter's first retrospective exhibition. Lavish plates feature reproductions of approximately ninety of Bechtles most significant artworks, from large-scale oil paintings to intimate watercolors and drawings. These magnificent illustrations portray the range of the San Francisco-based painter's iconic imagery of California--the rows of palm trees, stucco houses, and the ubiquitous automobiles that spurred suburban expansion--as well as his lesser-known but equally compelling family scenes and stark interiors. Bechtles preference for wide, empty spaces; his flat, sun-bleached palette; and his detached mode of recording random details impart a singular sense of alienation to his subjects. His deadpan paintings capture the essence of the postwar American experience, in which California often serves as the testing ground for the realization of national dreams.

My Personal Review:
Robert Bechtle has been a creative force in California art since the 1960s, yet his name remains practically unknown outside the Bay Area artists group. This very fine monograph by Janet Bishop, designed as a catalogue to accompany the traveling exhibition of this works, should help to mend that sin of omission. The style of writing is warm and informative and, in many ways, in keeping with Bechtle's vision of the world he paints!

One quick perusal of the many reproductions of his major works in this book quickly leaves the impression that Bechtle understands and successfully captures the quality of light that is peculiar to California. His street scenes of angled cars and bungalows are flooded with light and shadow. Though his art movement classification is Photorealism, Bechtle goes beyond mere photo copying techniques. His work is more about our
lifestyle and our living compartments normally looked upon as mere blocks of space in which we function. Bechtle enhances everything he paints with a sunny 'romanticism' if you will. His art is more about a love affair with the atmosphere’s effect on the mundane places we inhabit than it is with simple reproduction of images and landscapes.

For the art lover of realism and for those who respect the prodigious gifts of representational artists, this book is a must for the library. Highly recommended. Grady Harp, December 05