

CORCORAN

GALLERY OF ART • COLLEGE of ART + DESIGN

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CORCORAN PRESENTS *RICHARD DIEBENKORN: THE OCEAN PARK SERIES*

Corcoran the only East Coast venue to exhibit the artist's most celebrated series

June 30–September 23, 2012

WASHINGTON, D.C.— This summer, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design will open *Richard Diebenkorn: The Ocean Park Series*, a retrospective of one of the most important bodies of work in American abstract painting. On view on the East Coast exclusively at the Corcoran, *The Ocean Park Series* is the first major museum exhibition to focus on this influential series made between 1967 and 1988. The exhibition features nearly 80 works—large-scale paintings, smaller paintings made on cigar box lids, mixed-media drawings on paper, monotypes, and prints—brought together for the first time to offer a full exploration of the series through the varied media in which Diebenkorn worked.

Richard Diebenkorn (1922–1993) was a pivotal figure in the history of modern painting. The Ocean Park series is distinguished by large, luminous paintings that build upon a grid-like system, with extensive reworking and scraped layers of translucent paint—processes that are discernible to the viewer. His works on paper, including prints, drawings, and collages, are equally important, exploring the same visual territory as the large-scale canvases.

Consisting of monumental, geometric panes of saturated color, the ethereal and powerful paintings in the Ocean Park series capture the psychology of place that defined the California coast during this time and showcase the innovations and improvisations of an artist whose work inspired legions of artists and greatly advanced the lexicon of abstraction.

“These works are powerful investigations of space, light, composition, and the fundamental principles of modern abstraction, bringing together concepts forged by artists like Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso,” said Philip Brookman, chief curator and head of research at the Corcoran and the coordinating curator of the exhibition. “Diebenkorn investigated the tension between the real world and his own interior landscape to produce some of the most innovative,



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influential, and timeless works of art during this decisive period of his career. These are not landscapes or architectural interiors but topographically rooted abstractions in which a sense of the skewed light and place of that time emerges through the painting process.”

Exhibition curator Sarah C. Bancroft explains, “It is a rare and unique opportunity to bring to a broader audience this well-known yet under-exhibited body of work, and it is my sincere hope that those who visit the exhibition will experience the riotous calm, joy, and contemplation that these stellar works can offer.”

Visitors have the opportunity to view the exhibition for free every Saturday during the Corcoran’s popular Free Summer Saturdays from Memorial Day (May 26) weekend through Labor Day (September 1) weekend.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

“The idea is to get everything right—it’s not just color or form or space or line—it’s everything all at once.”
—Richard Diebenkorn

Born in Portland, Oregon, in 1922, Richard Clifford Diebenkorn, Jr., grew up in San Francisco and attended Stanford University (see *Diebenkorn Artist Bio*). After serving in the U.S. Marines, he took advantage of the G.I. bill and began studying art at the California School of Fine Arts, where his teachers included Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still. He later studied at the University of Illinois, Champaign, and the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. During the early stages



of his career, abstract expressionism loomed as a significant influence. In the mid-1950s, as a leader of the Bay Area Figurative Movement, he pioneered an expressive, figurative style that merged the brushwork and compositional strategies of his early work with representational imagery depicting familiar people and landscapes.

In 1966, he moved from the Bay Area to Santa Monica for a teaching position at UCLA. Diebenkorn first found a small and windowless studio in the same building as the painter Sam Francis. Eventually, he took over Francis’s light-filled studio. Around this time, he abandoned the figurative style he had become known for, surprising the art establishment, his family and close friends, and himself.

As with previous series by the artist, the Ocean Park works were named for the place where they were created, a beachside community a few miles south of his home in Santa Monica. Thus began a series of more than 140 abstract paintings and works on paper that he would continue until nearly the end of his life and that would become his seminal body of work. Even more than his previous work, the Ocean Park series was acclaimed by critics and pursued by collectors, yet his place in art history narratives was less established than that of his East Coast peers. In the wake of major retrospectives in 1976 and 1997, however, his reputation has moved into the front rank of post-War American painters, and his dedication to the art of painting and the power of abstraction continue to inspire today’s artists.

PRESS PREVIEW

Media are invited to a press preview for *Richard Diebenkorn: The Ocean Park Series* on June 27 at 10 a.m. at the Corcoran, 500 Seventeenth St. NW, Washington, D.C. RSVP to pr@corcoran.org by June 23.

RICHARD DIEBENKORN AND THE CORCORAN

Richard Diebenkorn: The Ocean Park Series includes a major painting from the Corcoran collection, *Ocean Park #83* (1975), which was acquired the year it was painted, but the relationship between Diebenkorn and the Corcoran arguably extends back to 1973, when a 20-year-old Philip Brookman—who would go on to become the Corcoran’s chief curator and head of research—organized the first retrospective of Diebenkorn’s drawings while an undergraduate at UC Santa Cruz (see *Philip Brookman Interview*).

In 1977, the Corcoran presented *Richard Diebenkorn: Paintings and Drawings 1943–1976*, an exhibition organized for the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Jane Livingston, who was then the Corcoran’s chief curator and associate director, also organized the 1981 Corcoran Biennial Exhibition of American Painting, which featured Diebenkorn’s work, and the 1997 Diebenkorn retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Today, she is project director and editor of the Richard Diebenkorn Catalogue Raisonné Project.

EXHIBITION-RELATED PROGRAMMING AT THE CORCORAN

The Corcoran will organize a full calendar of public programs and events inspired by the exhibition (see *Diebenkorn Ocean Park Programs Release*).

EXHIBITION-RELATED CURRICULA IN THE COLLEGE

The Corcoran College of Art + Design will offer “California Dreaming: Art and Culture, 1945–1980” in the summer as a 6-week graduate elective course, as a two-week intensive course for Continuing Education students, and in the fall as a 15-week undergraduate elective course. Taught by Dr. Stephen Petersen, adjunct instructor in the Arts and Humanities department, the course examines the unique art and culture of California in the decades following the end of World War II. The course covers the counterculture of San Francisco, which produced assemblage, collage and the poetry of the Beats, the beach and car culture of Los Angeles, the Chicano art movement, Pop, conceptual, and body art, the relationship of jazz and visual art, and mid-century modern furniture and housing design.

The College will also offer a fall undergraduate elective studio course, “Advanced Painting: Diebenkorn as Mentor” will be offered by Steven Cushner. In this painting course, students will use Richard Diebenkorn as a de facto



“mentor,” and his body of work as examples of directions that a painter might investigate.

In addition, the Corcoran will organize a five-day summer teacher institute focusing on Diebenkorn’s work. Teachers will learn about Diebenkorn and his times through lectures, gallery activities, and studio workshops.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

A full-color, hardcover catalogue, *Richard Diebenkorn: The Ocean Park Series*, features essays by exhibition curator Sarah C. Bancroft; Susan Landauer, independent curator; and Peter Levitt, a poet who has also published journalism, essays, fiction, and translations from Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish; with contributions by Anna Brouwer. It includes a chronology, bibliography, and index. Published by Prestel USA, 2011. 256 pages. \$65.

SPONSORSHIP OF THE EXHIBITION

Richard Diebenkorn: The Ocean Park Series is co-organized by the Orange County Museum of Art and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. The exhibition is curated by OCMA curator Sarah C. Bancroft.

The exhibition is made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation.
BNY Mellon Wealth Management is the National Presenting Sponsor.



The catalog is underwritten by Lilly and Paul Merage. Additional support for the catalog is provided by The Broad Art Foundation.

Major support is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Pamela and James Muzzy, and Jean and Tim Weiss.

Significant gifts are provided by Dr. James B. Pick and Dr. Rosalyn M. Laudati, Barbara and Victor L. Klein, and the Beall Family Foundation.

Additional support is provided by Toni Berlinger, Kingsley and Jack Croul, the Robert Lehman Foundation, Linda P. Maggard, Twyla and Charles D. Martin, Joan Riach-Gayner, and the Visionaries.

The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

The presentation at the Corcoran Gallery of Art is funded in part by The Brown Foundation, Inc., of Houston, the Women’s Committee of the Corcoran, the Dedalus Foundation, Carolyn S. Alper, the Bollerer Family, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hopper III, Eleanor F. Hedden, Gilbert and Ann Kinney, and the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, an agency supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.



VISITOR INFORMATION

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission to *Richard Diebenkorn: The Ocean Park Series* will be FREE every Saturday during the Corcoran's popular FREE Summer Saturdays promotion, Memorial Day to Labor Day, May 28 to September 3. Visit www.corcoran.org/freesummersaturdays for information. Regular admission is \$10 for adults, and \$8 for seniors (62+), students (with valid ID), children 12 and under, and military (with valid ID). Corcoran members enter for free.

MEMBERSHIP

Corcoran Gallery of Art membership offers special access to the Corcoran's renowned collection, temporary exhibitions, lectures, films, concerts and an array of social events. Members also receive valuable discounts at the Corcoran Shop and the Corcoran College of Art + Design. Corcoran Members may visit *Richard Diebenkorn: The Ocean Park Series* an unlimited number of times for free. Member Preview Day is Thursday, June 28 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. For more information, contact the Membership office at (202) 639-1753, membership@corcoran.org or online at www.corcoran.org/membership.

ABOUT THE CORCORAN

The **Corcoran Gallery of Art**, a privately funded institution, was founded in 1869. It was America's first dedicated art museum and today is Washington's largest nonfederal museum of art. It is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. In addition, a dynamic schedule of special exhibitions is complemented and enhanced by a range of educational programming, which together seek to enrich perspectives, support the local arts community, and encourage interpretation. The **Corcoran College of Art + Design** was founded in 1890 and stands as Washington's only four-year college of art and design, offering BFA degrees in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Fine Art Photography, Graphic Design, Interior Design, and Photojournalism; a BA in Art Studies; a five-year Bachelor of Fine Arts/Master of Arts in Teaching (BFA/MAT); an AFA in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Graphic Design, and Photography; and MA degrees in Art and the Book, Art Education, Exhibition Design, Interior Design, Master of Arts in Teaching, and New Media Photojournalism. The College's Continuing Education program offers part-time credit and non-credit classes for children and adults and draws more than 2,500 participants each year. For more information about the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design**, visit www.corcoran.org.



Images:

Page one: Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park #83*, 1975. Oil on canvas, 100 x 81 inches. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Museum Purchase with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, the William A. Clark Fund, and Mary M. Hitchcock 1975.30. ©The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

Page two: Richard Diebenkorn, *Cigar Box Lid #4*, 1976. Oil on wood, 8 3/8 x 7 1/8 inches. The Grant Family Collection. ©The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

Page three: Richard Diebenkorn, *Ocean Park #43*, 1971. Oil and charcoal on canvas, 93 x 81 inches. Collection of Gretchen and John Berggruen, San Francisco. ©The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation. Image courtesy The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation