

Artist Resources – Richard Diebenkorn (American, 1922-1993)

[The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation](#)

[Diebenkorn at John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco](#)

Diebenkorn received his [first solo museum show](#) in 1948 at age twenty-six at the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco.

[Watch Diebenkorn](#) at work in the studios of [Crown Point Press](#) in Oakland during two weeks in 1986 as he completed a series of large etchings including [Green](#) and [Red-Yellow-Blue](#) with printer Marcia Bartholme. Diebenkorn's [printmaking](#) is a widely undervalued part of his practice, which he returned to throughout his career. [Greenberg Van Doren Gallery](#) organized an exhibition of thirty years of the artist's prints in 2012, exploring his etchings at Crown Point, his training in woodcuts in Kyoto, and his lithography with [Gemini G.E.L.](#)

Diebenkorn reminisced about his youth in California, education, military service, and artistic influences in an [oral history](#) conducted by the Smithsonian Archives of American Art between 1985 and 1987.

[The John Berggruen Gallery](#) in San Francisco brought together previously unseen works on paper in 2003 to showcase the relationship between Diebenkorn's drawings and paintings, and his thoughtful, enduring explorations of emotion, the figure, landscape, and gesture.

Over 130 paintings and drawings shown at the [de Young Museum](#) in San Francisco in 2013 concentrated for the first time on the artist's prolific years in Berkley between 1953 and 1966, during which he shifted between abstraction and quiet figurative studies and still lifes.



Diebenkorn, 1959.

Photograph: Fred Lyon



Diebenkorn, 1984

Photograph: Leo Holub

At the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco's [Richard Diebenkorn Symposium](#) in 2013, his [daughter Gretchen discussed](#) her father's life and legacy, and [art historian Nancy Boas reflected](#) on his creative affinity with fellow artist David Park and Bay Area Figurative Painters.

Diebenkorn's [sketchbooks](#) were the focus of Stanford University's [Cantor Arts Center exhibition in 2015](#).

"I think what an artist does is about what's around him, his environment, cultural, physical, visual," Diebenkorn reflected in a [CBS profile](#) from 2016. "I think it's hard for an artist to see himself. I'm aware of a predisposition to spareness, or aloneness, is something I value."

[SFMoMA](#) and the [Baltimore Museum of Art](#) hosted *Matisse/Diebenkorn* in 2016-17, exploring the influential work of French painter Henri Matisse through Diebenkorn's eyes. Forty works by Matisse and sixty by Diebenkorn revealed the artists' shared interests in expressive use of color, subjects, and techniques.

The 2017 exhibition, *Richard Diebenkorn: Beginnings, 1942-1955* was the first to take an in-depth look at the artist's early abstractions and the development of his first figurative turn in the 1950s. Organized by the Diebenkorn Foundation, the show traveled nationally to such sites as the [Crocker Art Museum in LA](#), and the [Portland Art Museum](#), among others.



Richard Diebenkorn (American, b. 1922-93)

Woman in Hat and Gloves, 1963

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:103.1

Richard Diebenkorn was born in Portland, Oregon, but his family moved San Francisco when the artist was a young child. Diebenkorn was an active student and instructor in the Bay Area throughout his career, with ties to the San Francisco Art Institute, the California College of Arts and Crafts, Stanford University, and UC Berkeley. Though he is known for exploring the boundary between representation and abstraction, Diebenkorn focused on portraits in the late 1950s and early 1960s. **Woman in Hat and Gloves** is a well-known example from this oeuvre of figurative and representational work. The subject is defined by Diebenkorn's painterly style; his loose, expressive brush strokes characterize both the woman and her abstract setting. The painting has a long history of display, and has been featured in exhibitions of Diebenkorn's work at institutions including the De Young Museum, SFMOMA, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

On view August 12 – November 14, 2021

Richard Diebenkorn (American, b. 1922-93)

Untitled (Sausalito), 1949

Oil on canvas

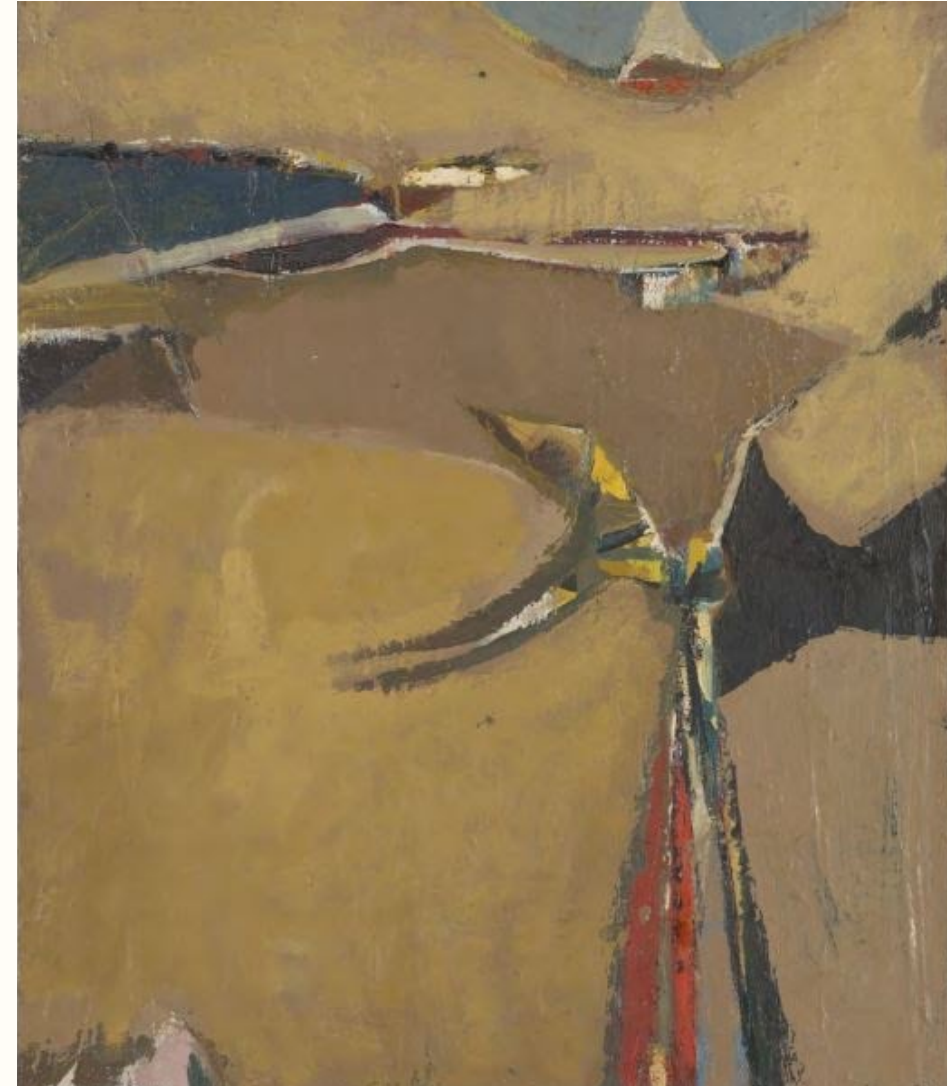
Private Collection; L2020:23.1

Richard Diebenkorn grew up in San Francisco, where he attended Stanford University in 1940 and later, courtesy of the G.I. bill, the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute), where he became a teacher.

Diebenkorn's early stylistic experimentations in the 1940s found affinity with Surrealist motifs and the vivid canvases of the Abstract Expressionist movement, though he was only a distant and temporary participant. In the early 1950s, Diebenkorn returned to his roots as a figurative painter. He spent the next forty years in a restless search exploring the boundaries of both representation and abstraction in the footsteps of one of his biggest influences, Willem de Kooning (also on view).

Untitled (Sausalito) and **Untitled** are characteristic of Diebenkorn's increasingly exhibited early abstractions, which anticipate his late gridwork inspired by aerial views of the California landscape he called home. The dynamic compositional interplay and expressive application of paint create a scene at once active and calm, translating the colors and textures of verdant sun-kissed terrain. The pair form a study of light, space, and mood informed by Diebenkorn's perception of the world around him, rendered palpable through his confident yet subtle handling of the emotional and optical impact of form and color.

On view October 7, 2020 – January 10, 2021





Richard Diebenkorn (American, b. 1922-93)

Untitled, ca. 1948

Watercolor, graphite, ink, and colored pencil on paper

Private Collection; L2020:23.2

On view October 7, 2020 – January 10, 2021