

Richard Diebenkorn

WORKS ON PAPER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2024

Preview:

14 February - 27 March 2024

Exhibition:

27 March - 11 May 2024

Opening reception:

27 March 2024, 6 - 8 p.m.

Media Contact:

Darius Sabbaghzadeh
darius@hellowhirdye.comKyle Hinton
kyle@hellowhirdye.com45 N Venice Blvd
Venice CA 90291
info@lalouever.com
310 822 4955
lalouever.com

Richard Diebenkorn
Untitled (CR 1455), c.1955

ink on paper

paper: 11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm)
framed: 15 3/4 x 13 1/4 in. (40 x 33.7 cm)

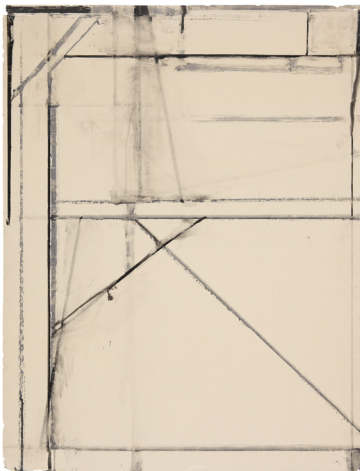
© Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

Venice, CA – L.A. Louver is proud to present works on paper by the celebrated American painter, draftsman, and printmaker Richard Diebenkorn (1922–1993). Dating from the 1950s, 1970s, and 1980s, the three groupings of artworks in this exhibition demonstrate the recurring formal preoccupations with structure, movement, and perspective that define Diebenkorn’s endlessly powerful and mysterious oeuvre. These artworks also illuminate the approaches and motifs that captured the artist’s attention at particular points in his career, including the meaningful employment of color, the translation of landscape into two-dimensional terms, and a fascination with spade and club forms. Intimate in scale and medium, this exhibition communicates the poetic sensitivities inherent to Diebenkorn’s work and deepens our understanding of the artist’s distinct visual vocabulary.

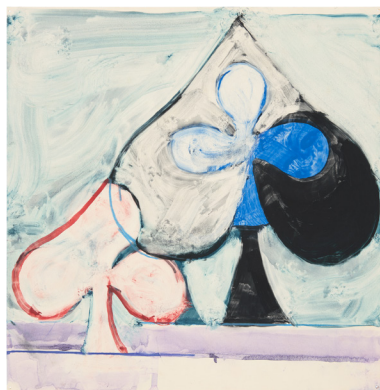
The earliest works in this presentation, dating from 1950 to 1955, are characterized by harmonized arrangements of blue and black ink, crayon, and charcoal, set against a white paper ground. Cups and patterns appear as quotidian markers within fields of abstraction, expressions of Diebenkorn’s known reverence for his immediate surroundings: “I could then look, and did, at the table beside me where I found a legitimate poetry attached to the facts of an ashtray and a coffee cup.”¹ In this rendering of everyday objects a reversal occurs, grounding the lyricism of free-flowing shapes in reality and signaling that these images are drawn from life. The use of just one color, a ‘Diebenkorn blue,’ underscores the philosophical weight the artist perceived in humble observations and the spiritual satisfaction he found in the distilled hues of the sky and ocean.

Diebenkorn’s gouache paintings and etchings from the 1970s similarly engage with the beauty and truth to be found in simplicity as dynamic achromatic lines prudently dissect each picture plane. Expanding on the legacy of Mondrian, a significant influence, Diebenkorn’s works diagram land- and cityscapes through transcendent geometric delineations, a feature which also defines the epic Ocean Park cycle of paintings and drawings. Aerial photographs taken by the artist verify that these compositions are akin to maps, distinguishing Diebenkorn from other Modernists as a figure who created across the continuum of abstraction and representation.

¹ Richard Diebenkorn, studio note, RDFA.157, Richard Diebenkorn Foundation Archives © Richard Diebenkorn Foundation.



Richard Diebenkorn
Untitled (CR 4162), 1974
gouache on paper
26 x 20 in. (66 x 50.8 cm)
© Richard Diebenkorn Foundation



Richard Diebenkorn
Untitled (CR 4496), 1981
gouache and crayon on paper
13 x 12 5/8 in. (33 x 32.1 cm)
© Richard Diebenkorn Foundation

The spade and club are significant motifs which captivated Diebenkorn's attention and appear in full force in the mixed media works from the 1980s. Prior artworks, like those of the 1950s, anticipate this fascination through bulbous curves and other sensuous forms. It was primarily, however, from 1980 to 1982 that the artist devoted himself to these symbols, first encountered as a child, as if to process a lingering subconscious fixation. The personal significance of these shapes to the artist is unknown and secondary to their iconic value, dubbed 'heraldic imagery' by contemporary critics. These works stand out not only for their mysterious symbolic allusions, but also through a clear figure-ground relationship that suggests an association with the human figure.

Even in a presentation across three time periods of the artist's oeuvre, this collection of artworks illustrates the distinct and ranging poetry of Diebenkorn's creative inquiries. Indeed, a trajectory of thought is detectable between the inky dividing lines of the earliest works and the thoughtfully segmented compositions from the 1970s, and the curvature of the symbolic spade appears more evident with each consideration. What is offered by these works on paper are the revelations of an extraordinary mind, one which saw composition in all things.

About the artist

All paintings start out of a mood, out of a relationship with things or people, out of a complete visual impression.

—Richard Diebenkorn

Born over 100 years ago, Richard Diebenkorn (1922–1993) produced a body of work whose beauty and mysteriously empathic nature has long attracted many devotees worldwide. He lived during the period of America's great surge onto the world stage of visual art, working alongside the likes of Willem de Kooning, Philip Guston, and Joan Mitchell, but forging a decisively independent style. While still in his twenties he moved briefly to New York from his San Francisco region, realizing that its artistic climate was the most stimulating locus in the United States, but soon returned to California where, aside from two important early years in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and a year teaching in Urbana, Illinois, he remained.

From a glorious early flowering in the language of Abstract Expressionism, where he responded directly to the light and landscapes of New Mexico and the urban Midwest, Diebenkorn turned to a prolonged period of making figurative and landscape art, going very much against the grain of his generation. A leader in Bay Area figurative painting, Diebenkorn produced work that was received with enormous affection and excitement by a wide audience. Then, quite abruptly in 1966, he turned to a new form of abstraction, again decisively different from his peers. Moving from Berkeley to Los Angeles, he proceeded to make the monumental abstract works known as the "Ocean Park" series, incorporating the lessons of two of his key influences, Henri Matisse and Piet Mondrian.

—Jane Livingston