



The Art of Richard Diebenkorn

By Jane Livingston, Richard Diebenkorn, John Elderfield

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Recognized as a major figure in postwar American painting, Richard Diebenkorn (1922-1993) was an artist strongly identified with California but whose work is beloved throughout the United States and the rest of the world. This catalog is the most comprehensive volume on the artist now available.

Jane Livingston's extensively researched biographical essay covers Diebenkorn's entire career and concentrates on the artist's inner life and purposes as revealed in his paintings. Ruth Fine deals primarily with the figurative aspect of Diebenkorn's work (1955-67), and John Elderfield concentrates on the Ocean Park period (1967-93). All three authors provide valuable insights based on their personal relationships with the artist and his widow, Phyllis. On both page and canvas, the reader can sense Diebenkorn's complexity and highly self-conscious working methods, as well as his formidable integrity.

The Art of Richard Diebenkorn will give readers with an interest in all phases of modernism new thoughts about the relationship between abstraction and representation. Stunningly illustrated, with 192 full-color reproductions, this book is an exhilarating testament to a distinctive American artist.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2461032 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Whitney Museum of Art
- Published on: 1997-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 12.50" h x 10.00" w x 1.00" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 276 pages

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Editorial Review

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On the process of painting, American painter Richard Diebenkorn once wrote, "I want painting to be difficult to do. The more obstacles, obstructions, problems ... the better." In part, he meant that the freest artistic expression was often the result of some sort of restraint. Much like Shakespeare writing within the rigorous poetic form of the sonnet, Diebenkorn found his format in the vertical, rectangular, human-size canvases that he used to paint his famed Ocean Park series, which occupied a large portion of his magnificent career and included many figurative works. This sequence consists of more than 100 paintings created primarily over the course of the 1970s. There is a tranquil, mystical quality to his works: geometric lines define fields of color evoking the tones, landscape, atmosphere, and quality of light in Ocean Park. His paintings thus hover on the boundary between abstraction and landscape.

This paperback exhibition catalog of the retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City contains a beautifully produced plate section, arranged chronologically, that spans nearly the entire second half of the 20th century. A special highlight are Diebenkorn's notes to himself on beginning a painting.

From Library Journal

Inspired by the openness and light of the California landscape, the American painter Diebenkorn (1922-93) developed a unique modernist style, characterized by geometric forms, a bright palette, and thick brushwork. Once his career was established, he made a sudden shift to representational art. Still later, the figures disappeared, and he resumed the abstract mode marked by a series of paintings entitled "Ocean Park." This comprehensive catalog, which accompanies the first retrospective exhibition of Diebenkorn's works since his death, is intended to enhance understanding of his devotion to modernism and the influences upon his accomplishments. Livingston, who curated the exhibition, and two other notable art scholars (all acquaintances of the artist) provide lengthy essays complementing about 200 color plates. Recommended for all libraries that collect in American modern art. —Joan Levin, MLS, Chicago

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About the Author

Jane Livingston is an independent author and curator living in Rappahannock County, Virginia. **John Elderfield** is Chief Curator-at-Large at The Museum of Modern Art. **Ruth Fine** is Curator of Modern Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery.

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