Manetti Shrem Museum ‘exhibition in two parts’ to explore Wayne Thiebaud’s evolving influence through 18 contemporary artists

As the region celebrates longtime UC Davis art professor Wayne Thiebaud’s 100th birthday in November, his profound influence on a new generation of contemporary artists will be the focus of an exhibition coming soon to the Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, at the University of California, Davis.

“Wayne Thiebaud Influencer: A New Generation” considers his impact from the vantage point of 18 artists carrying his legacy forward into the next 100 years. The exhibition will open with a Virtual Winter Season Celebration on Feb. 7 providing live-streamed highlights of the physical exhibition, and an introduction to the comprehensive exhibition website.

Thiebaud is one of the world’s most recognizable, beloved and active artists, known for his cakes and pies, landscapes and cityscapes, and figurative paintings. The professor emeritus of art first joined the university’s fledgling art department in 1959, where he taught for 40 years.

“He is a profoundly dedicated teacher and more than that, he believes that his artistic practice is enriched by his work as a teacher,” said Manetti Shrem Museum Founding Director Rachel Teagle. “It became really obvious for us that what we wanted to do was a group show of a lively array of artists working today who celebrate Thiebaud’s influence in surprisingly diverse ways.”

“Wayne Thiebaud Influencer: A New Generation” highlights contemporary artists who have been inspired by Thiebaud as a fellow painter as well as former students: Andrea Bowers, Robert Colescott, Jason Stopa, Jonas Wood and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, along with mid- and late-career artists who studied with Thiebaud directly: Julie Bozzi ('74, M.F.A. '76), Christopher Brown (M.F.A. '76), Gene Cooper, Richard Crozier (M.F.A. '74), April Glory Funcke ('87, M.F.A. '89), Fredric Hope, Grace Munakata ('80, M.F.A. '85), Bruce Nauman (M.A. '66), Vonn Cummings Sumner ('98, M.F.A. '00), Ann Harrold Taylor (M.F.A. '85), Michael Tompkins ('81, M.F.A. '83), Clay Vorhes and Patricia Wall ('72). Nauman and Sumner share the distinction of being the first and last graduate students Thiebaud taught, as well as serving as teaching assistants.

Select pairings of Thiebaud’s works with those of the exhibiting artists explore how he forecast the future of painting through his personal journey to find meaning and reinvention in the medium’s history — and inspired his students to do the same. “As we move more into the 21st century, he was among the few who saw painting as a serious intellectual pursuit,” said Teagle, who is curating the exhibition along with Associate Curator Susie Kantor. “He brought innovation to his teaching in ways that continue to inspire and teach many future generations of students.”

Expanding the experience
A rich exhibition website will provide a deeper dive into each artist, including videos and written interviews, long reads, conversations with curators, and links to artist webpages. Visitors will be able to access the exhibition information, including exhibit labels, directly via the website on their mobile devices within the gallery and remotely.
Currently, An Exhibition in Progress website invites the public behind the scenes as the museum documents the development and installation process, introduces the exhibition’s “New Generation” artists through exclusive video interviews, and provides a window into the challenges and innovative approaches that are part of building an exhibition during a global pandemic.

Related exhibit of Thiebaud prints
Although Wayne Thiebaud is better known as a painter, he has also been a prolific printmaker, working in print for most of his career and producing over 200 designs. Drawn from the university’s Fine Arts Collection, “Working Proof: Wayne Thiebaud as Printmaker” features numerous printing “proofs,” many worked by hand, that were created as part of the printmaking process. These works underscore the importance of printmaking in Thiebaud’s artistic practice, as well as his dedication to donating works to the university that can function as teaching tools. Shown adjacent to “Wayne Thiebaud Influencer: A New Generation,” is curatorial Assistant Quintana Heathman.


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Art Wide Open
The Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at the University of California, Davis, is a contemporary art museum and cultural resource dedicated to making art accessible and approachable to all. It builds on UC Davis’ legacy of exceptional teaching and practice of the arts to offer engaging experiences and exhibitions that reflect and serve the community, now and for generations to come. The museum shares the university’s core values of innovative research, interdisciplinary experimentation and a commitment to educational programming: It’s a hub of creative practice for thinkers, makers and innovators. One-third of the museum’s 50,000-square-foot space is devoted to instruction, including a 125-seat lecture hall, classroom space and the drop-in Carol and Gerry Parker Art Studio. Opened in November 2016, the museum has earned LEEDv3-NC Platinum status, and has won numerous awards for its distinctive architecture.