

Crown Point Press

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Three California Masters: Robert Bechtle, Richard Diebenkorn, and Wayne Thiebaud
Figures & Landscapes
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Crown Point Press announces *Three California Masters*, an exhibition featuring etchings by Robert Bechtle, Richard Diebenkorn, and Wayne Thiebaud. On view from December 13th until February 2nd, it focuses on figures and landscapes.

Robert Bechtle, who lives in San Francisco, is known for his photorealist approach to painting and is a pioneer of the genre. Wayne Thiebaud works from life and from memory in his unique illustrative style. Although his depiction of commonplace objects has been associated with Pop Art, Thiebaud describes himself as “just an old-fashioned painter.” Both Bechtle and Thiebaud were influenced by Richard Diebenkorn, an important leader in the Bay Area figurative movement. Printmaking has been an integral part of the creative careers of all three painters. This exhibition features prints that each artist has created in the Crown Point Press studio since the nineteen-sixties. Early works include Robert Bechtle’s *‘60s T-Bird* (1967), two prints from Richard Diebenkorn’s *41 Etchings Drypoints* (1965), and Wayne Thiebaud’s *Cherry Stand*, from the book *Delights* (1964).

Robert Bechtle works from his photographs of Bay Area residential neighborhoods. He first worked at Crown Point Press in 1967. His project at that time was originally titled *The Alameda Book* after the town he grew up in, but he did not release it then. Forty-four years and one earthquake later, the unpublished copper plates from *The Alameda Book* were found during a cleaning of the Crown Point studio basement and *‘60 T-Bird* emerged as one of the survivors. In it, a man is exiting a parked 1960 Ford Thunderbird in front of a house; the work is an intimate look into suburban Bay Area life. Many of the prints Bechtle has created in subsequent visits to the Crown Point studio use soft ground etching, a technique that gives the image a crayon-like line. In *Three Houses on Pennsylvania Avenue*, he emphasizes the beauty of natural light as it falls upon rows of houses with cars sitting idly in driveways. Peter Schjeldahl has written in *The New Yorker* that Bechtle’s paintings are “a feat of resourceful painterly artifice” that he gradually realized were “beautiful.”

Richard Diebenkorn’s *41 Etchings Drypoints* were created from 1962 to 1965 at Crown Point Press. Diebenkorn made more than a hundred prints during that time at the press and he selected forty-one for this project. When Diebenkorn started experimenting with drypoint in the ‘60s, he called it “a way of drawing.” He embraced “flaws” as a way of seeing something new and his revisions sometimes can be seen in the prints as traces of the changes he made. Included in the show are two etchings from 1965: a drawing of his wife reclining in a striped chair, and a scene of a street with lawns, houses, and trees. These works possess a diaristic quality, a moment-to-moment observation of the artist’s life. After creating his early prints in the 60’s at Crown Point, Diebenkorn didn’t work in printmaking for about a decade. Then, starting in 1977, he spent a week or two in the Crown Point Press studio nearly every year until his death in 1993.

In the 1960’s, one of the etching projects published by Crown Point Press was *Delights* by Wayne Thiebaud, who recently turned 98. Thiebaud’s first day at the press was in 1964 when he started drawing his lunch, a sandwich, onto a copper plate. He was working then in Kathan Brown’s Berkeley basement studio. His subjects over the years have ranged from portraits of pastries to whimsical clown characters like those in the portfolio *Clown Memories*, a recent Crown Point publication. It is also joined in the exhibition by several small black and white landscape etchings and a group of recent works titled *Canyon Mountains*, *Dark Canyon Bluffs*, and *Canyon Bluffs*. Thiebaud describes his style of investigation as “forming things.” In an interview with *The Sacramento Bee*, Thiebaud explains “I was interested in what you could do with the space. A mountain painting should not allow you to apprehend it or overcome it. It should overcome you.”

The gallery hours are Monday 10-5, and Tuesday through Saturday, 10-6.