



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Wayne Thiebaud Papers,
1944-2001, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Wayne Thiebaud papers
Identifier:	AAA.thiewayn
Date:	1944-2001
Extent:	1 Linear foot
Creator:	Thiebaud, Wayne
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of Sacramento painter, printmaker, and teacher Wayne Thiebaud date from 1944 through 2001 and measure 1.0 linear foot. Thiebaud's prolific painting career is documented in this collection mostly through exhibition catalogs, printed materials, original artwork, photographs, and ephemera. His career as an art professor at the University of California at Davis is documented to a lesser extent.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Wayne Thiebaud donated his papers in 2001 to the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Rosa Fernandez in 2002.

Preferred Citation

Wayne Thiebaud papers, 1944-2001. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection is open for research. Use requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

Wayne Thiebaud was born in Mesa, Arizona in 1920 and raised in Long Beach, California. After graduating high school, he worked as a free-lance cartoonist, commercial artist, and stage technician. He later landed a job at the Walt Disney studios as an 'in-betweenner' filling in individual film frames started by animators. Thiebaud joined the Air Force in 1942 where he painted murals and began to create cartoons and illustrations.

After his service in the war, Thiebaud went to California State College in Sacramento to study art and art history. His work remained figurative but gained a conceptual dimension as he read, studied, taught, and exhibited a great deal in Northern California. During the late 1950s, Thiebaud spent time in New York City with artists such as Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Barnett Newman and other painters of their generation.

Thiebaud's work found its national audience in 1962 with his first exhibition, Wayne Thiebaud: Recent Paintings, at the Allan Stone Gallery in New York and his participation in the "New Realists" exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery during the same New York season. In that memorable year, when Pop Art burst upon the American cultural scene, Thiebaud's more painterly images of food and other familiar objects found an audience that has grown with each passing decade. Thiebaud's exhibition of store counters, suburban consumers, tie racks, cakes and pies seemed to comment upon American consumer culture as did his New York contemporaries. However, his thickly painted strangely illuminated forms had a pathos and a humor that was seldom found in Pop Art. Thiebaud's roots were more likely in the urban melancholy of Edward Hopper and the robust painterly style of Willem de Kooning.

Wayne Thiebaud has served as faculty member of the art department at the University of California at Davis for more than thirty years. At this writing, he lives and works in Sacramento, California while also maintaining a studio in San Francisco. He is still affiliated with the Allan Stone Gallery. Thiebaud's work is currently found in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. His recent 2000-2001 retrospective exhibition organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, California Palace of the Legion of Honor, traveled the nation to critical acclaim and great interest from the general public.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Sacramento painter, printmaker, and teacher Wayne Thiebaud date from 1944 through 2001 and measure one linear foot. Thiebaud's prolific painting career is documented in this collection mostly through exhibition catalogs, printed materials, original artwork, photographs, and ephemera. His career as an art professor at the University of California at Davis is documented to a lesser extent.

Of particular interest in the collection are ten large format sketchbook pages with numerous ink, graphite, and watercolor drawings of his typical imagery of pies, cakes, tie racks, San Francisco street scenes, Sacramento Delta landscapes, many figures, storefronts, counters, and personal notations regarding color, light, and ideas for the transformation of his imagery. There are also ten smaller cartoon drawings in ink on plain copy paper. In addition to several folders of exhibition catalogs, announcements, and other printed material, there is one folder of teaching notes and one folder of photographs, many of which include other artists, such as Chuck Close, Richard Diebenkorn, Richard Estes, Gregory Kondos, Roy Lichtenstein, Barnett Newman, Claes Oldenburg, Philip Pearlstein, Mel Ramos, Harold Rosenberg, and others. Also found are ephemera items, including a collectible watch with his imagery printed onto the face and band, a palette, brushes, and plastic lids from tennis ball containers used for mixing paints.

Arrangement

The Wayne Thiebaud papers are arranged as five series.

- Series 1: Printed Material, 1965-2001, undated (Box 1-2; 12 folders)
 - Series 2: Writings, 1981, 2001, undated (Box 2; 1 folder)
 - Series 3: Photographs, 1944-1990, undated (Box 2; 1 folder)
 - Series 4: Original artwork, undated (Box 2, OV3; 1 folder, 1 oversize folder)
 - Series 5: Original artwork, undated (Box 2, OV3; 1 folder, 1 oversize folder)
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Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Artists' preparatory studies

Types of Materials:

Cartoons (humorous images)

Drawings

Photographs

Sketches

Names:

University of California, Davis. Art Dept. -- Faculty

Occupations:

Art teachers -- California -- San Francisco

Painters -- California -- San Francisco

Container Listing

Series 1: Printed Material, 1965-2001, undated

(Box 1-2; 12 folders)

Printed materials consisting of exhibition catalogs, announcements and invitations primarily from Thiebaud's later career and incomplete. Also found are photocopies of early comic strips by Thiebaud and numerous postcards, notecards, and greeting cards depicting Thiebaud's imagery. This series also includes a 1989 interview with Wayne Thiebaud conducted by Constance Lewellan for Crown Point Press and an undated press packet for *A Piece of Cake*, a short documentary on the artist's work.

Box 1, Folder 1	Exhibition catalogs, 1967-1972
Box 1, Folder 2	Exhibition catalogs, 1976-1990
Box 1, Folder 3	Exhibition catalogs, 1990-1993
Box 1, Folder 4	Exhibition catalogs, 1993-1997
Box 1, Folder 5	Exhibition catalogs, 1998-2000
Box 1, Folder 6	Exhibition announcements and invitations, 1973-2001, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Miscellaneous printed material depicting Thiebaud's artwork, 1981-2000, undated
Box 2, Folder 1-2	Greeting cards, note cards, post cards depicting Thiebaud's artwork, 1965-1999
Box 2, Folder 3	Printed Interview Transcript by Constance Lewallen (Crown Point Press), 1989
Box 2, Folder 4	Photocopies of comic strips by Wayne Thiebaud, 1949, undated
Box 2, Folder 5	Press material for documentary film, <i>A Piece of Cake</i> , undated

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Series 2: Writings, 1981, undated

(Box 2; 1 folder)

One folder containing undated photocopies of teaching notes for a color drawing class Thiebaud taught at the University of California at Davis. Also found is a 1981 article Thiebaud wrote for the New York Times on the Italian painter Giorgio Morandi.

Box 2, Folder 6

Notes and writings by Wayne Thiebaud, 1981, undated

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Series 3: Photographs, 1944-1990, undated

(Box 2; 1 folder)

Fourteen photographs dating from the mid-1940s through the 1990s (color and black and white copy photographs) depicting Wayne Thiebaud teaching classes, and with various artists, including Chuck Close, Richard Diebenkorn, Richard Estes, Gregory Kondos, Roy Lichtenstein, Barnett Newman, Claes Oldenburg, Philip Pearlstein, Mel Ramos, Harold Rosenberg, and others. Also found are 4 x 5 inch negatives of photographs of artwork and the images above.

Box 2, Folder 7

Photographs, 1944-1990, undated

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Series 4: Original artwork, undated

(Box 2, OV 3; 1 folder, 1 OV folder)

Original artwork by Thiebaud including ten cartoon ink drawings on plain copy paper, ten large format sketchbook pages (drawings on front and back on many pages) with numerous drawings in ink, graphite, or watercolor of his typical imagery of pies, cakes, tie racks, San Francisco street scenes, Sacramento Delta landscapes, many figures, storefronts, counters, and personal notations regarding color, light, and ideas for the transformation of his imagery.

Box 2, Folder 8 Ten pen and ink cartoon drawings on plain paper, undated

Box OV 3 Ten oversized sketchbook pages with ink, graphite, and watercolor imagery, undated

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Series 5: Ephemera, undated

(Box 4; 3 items and one shoe box)

Found here are several of Thiebaud's paint brushes, a paper palette with multiple colors of acrylic paint, plastic lids from tennis ball containers used for mixing colors, and a wrist watch with Thiebaud imagery.

Box 4 Loose items: paint brushes, paper palette, one wristwatch, undated

Box 4 Shoe box with plastic lids used for mixing paints, undated

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