

HACKETT | MILL

As I Am Painting the Figure in Post-War San Francisco

Curated by Francis Mill and Michael Hackett

OPENING RECEPTION February 4, 2016, 6-8pm

EXHIBITION DATES February 4 - March 13, 2016

LOCATION New York Studio School, 8 W 8th St., New York, NY 10011

TRAVELING to Hackett Mill, San Francisco, April 7 - May 27, 2016



Details (Left to Right): Elmer Bischoff, 'Two Figures', 1958, oil on canvas, 57 x 57.5 inches, Richard Diebenkorn, 'Man's Head', 1958, oil on masonite, 15.75 x 9 inches, David Park, 'Seated Figure', 1960, gouache on paper, 14.75 x 13 inches

Hackett | Mill presents *As I Am: Painting the Figure in Post-War San Francisco* the first major survey in New York of 24 artworks by the founding members of the Bay Area Figurative Movement. Artists included are David Park, Elmer Bischoff and Richard Diebenkorn, as well as Joan Brown, William Theophilus Brown, Frank Lobdell, Manuel Neri, Nathan Oliveira, James Weeks and Paul Wonner. The exhibition will be presented at the New York Studio School, the original site of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and will examine the time period of 1950-1965, when a group of artists in the San Francisco Bay Area decided to pursue figurative painting during the height of Abstract Expressionism.

San Francisco was the regional center for a group of artists who were working in a style sufficiently independent from the New York School, and can be credited with having forged a distinct variant on what was the first American style to have international importance. The Bay Area Figurative movement, which grew out of and was in reaction to both West Coast and East Coast varieties of Abstract Expressionism, was a local phenomenon and yet was responsive to the most topical national tendencies. Many artists on both coasts, distressed by the rapid degeneration of Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s, sought to infuse fresh meaning into their work by exploring an alternative trajectory from abstraction back to figuration. But it was only in San Francisco that this enterprise took on the characteristics of a coherent movement, most notably led by the work of artist David Park, who in the words of Roberta Smith, art critic for the New York Times, "could do with another New York retrospective. He's the kind of artist who can light a fire under a young artist and also teach the public a great deal about looking at painting, a skill we seem to be in danger of losing."

The new figurative works created by the Bay Area artists were neither reactionary nor merely illustrational—instead they were rooted in the affectionate scenes of everyday life. Returning to recognizable subject matter after a period of abstraction allowed these artists to celebrate the simple, everyday activities and objects of human life, and to restore a level of intimacy to American painting. The paintings in *As I Am* show the artists idealizing the beauty of the familiar while incorporating aspects of Abstract Expressionism, including strong gesture and visceral paint application.

In *As I Am* we invite you to visit and participate in looking at a sophisticated dialogue between abstraction and representation—images oscillating between recognizable subjects and boldly colored, abstract arrangements of paint.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the New York Studio School will host a lecture with Nancy Boas, author of *David Park, A Painter's Life* on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 at 6:30pm. Additionally, during the Armory Modern fair in March 2016, there will be a VIP tour of the exhibition on Friday, March 4, 2016. An exhibition catalogue will also be available featuring an essay by Nancy Boas.

Shortly after the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's planned grand opening in 2016, the museum will show the first David Park retrospective in three decades with the exact dates of the exhibition to be announced. David Park's last museum retrospective was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1988.

Hackett | Mill is the exclusive representative of the Estate of David Park.