

Sheldon Treasures

January–July 2021

Learning Guide

Sheldon Treasures

January–July 2021

Home to two art collections, Sheldon Museum of Art cares for works acquired by the University of Nebraska and stewards a collection assembled by the Sheldon Art Association, which was founded by community members in 1888 as the Haydon Art Club. Among these works are masterworks by renowned artists, beloved favorites of museum visitors, and works that have traveled great distances for inclusion in national and international exhibitions.

This installation highlights the unparalleled treasures in both collections through five different pairings. In doing so, it also features a foundational method of analysis first championed by the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin in the late nineteenth century: compare and contrast. Through new juxtapositions of these works, this iteration of *Sheldon Treasures* seeks to facilitate fresh and unexpected conversations between the works and among the museum's visitors.

Exhibition support is provided by Kristen and Geoff Cline, Dillon Foundation, Karen and Robert Duncan, Melanie and Jon Gross, Roseann and Phil Perry, Union Bank & Trust, Donna Woods and Jon Hinrichs, Nebraska Arts Council and Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and Sheldon Art Association.

Additional support is provided by Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services Community CARES Stabilization Grant, Humanities Nebraska and the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and Nebraska Arts Council CARES grant.

Sheldon Treasures

January–July 2021



Albert Bierstadt
River Landscape



Norman Rockwell
The County Agricultural Agent



Wayne Thiebaud
Salads, Sandwiches, and Desserts



Tom Wesselmann
Still Life No. 15



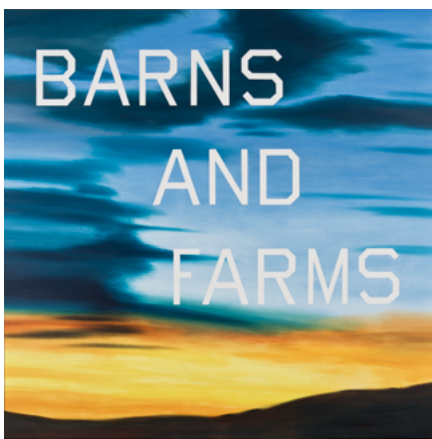
Helen Lundeborg
Cosmicide



Kay Sage
This Is Another Day



Richard Diebenkorn
Ocean Park #89.5



Edward Ruscha
Barns and Farms



Edward Hopper
Room in New York



Robert Adams
**Colorado Springs, Colorado
Pikes Peak, Colorado
Springs, Colorado**



Robert Frank
Mary
Covered Car, Long Beach, California



Lee Friedlander
Hotel Room, Portland, Maine



Albert Bierstadt

Solingen, Germany 1830–New York, NY 1902

River Landscape 1867

Oil on canvas mounted on panel

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, gift of
Mr. and Mrs. Abraham M. Adler, N-137.1961



Norman Rockwell

New York, NY 1894–Stockbridge, MA 1978

The County Agricultural Agent 1947–1948

Oil on canvas

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, gift of
Nathan Gold, U-563.1969



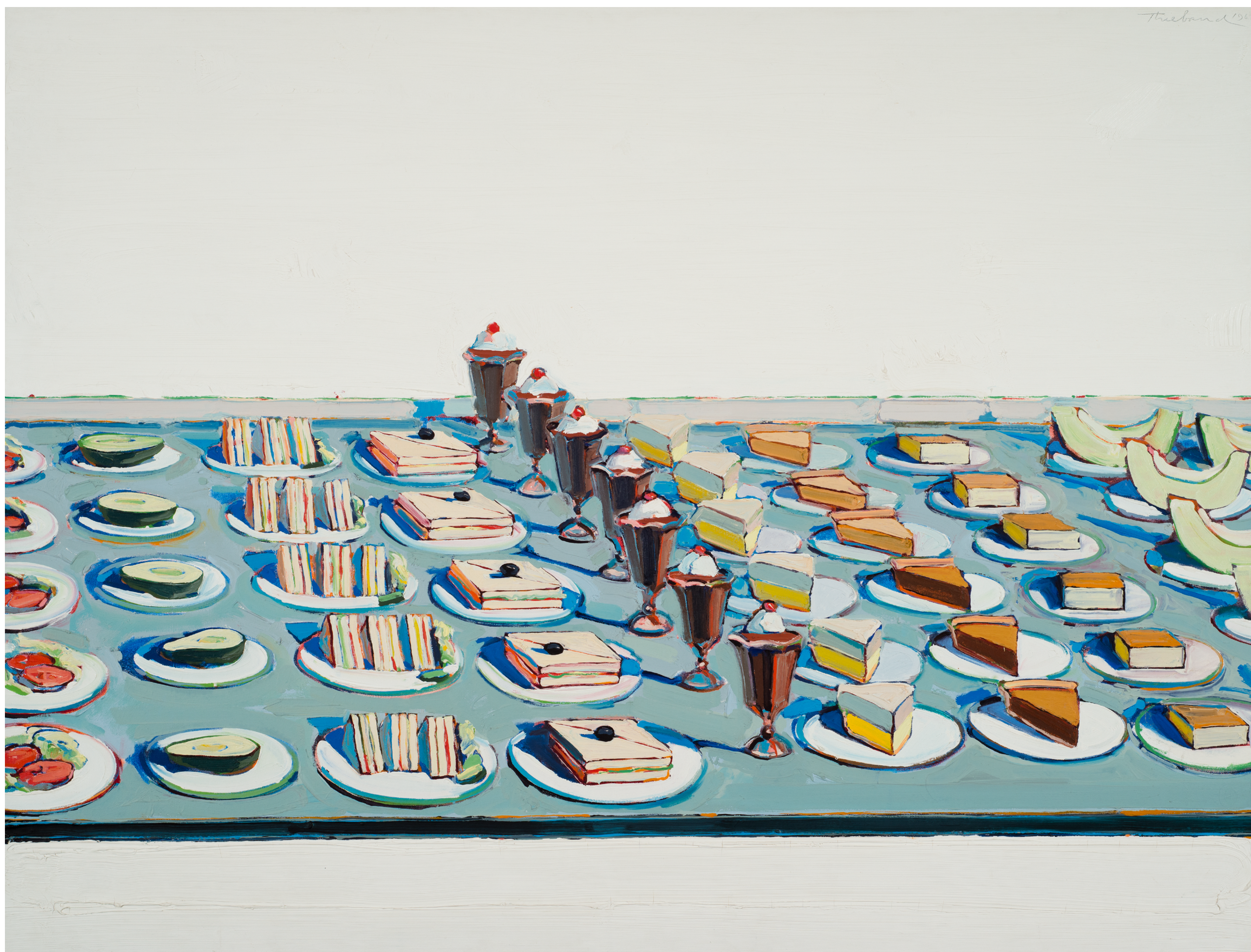
Albert Bierstadt
River Landscape



Norman Rockwell
The County Agricultural Agent

At first glance, both canvases seem so naturalistic that one could imagine Albert Bierstadt and Norman Rockwell had set up their easels and painted the scenes directly from life. Yet neither painting was made in that way, and each, instead, reveals the artistic liberties that the artists took with their compositions through their combinations of disparate elements.

Bierstadt’s landscape combines the shores of California’s Lake Tahoe in the foreground and Mount Starr King in Yosemite in the background, while Rockwell composed his painting from a number of photographs to create this idyllic view of a family’s farm.



Wayne Thiebaud

born Mesa, AZ 1920

Salads, Sandwiches, and Desserts 1962

Oil on canvas

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Thomas C. Woods
Memorial, N-138.1962

 [Back to
Contents](#)



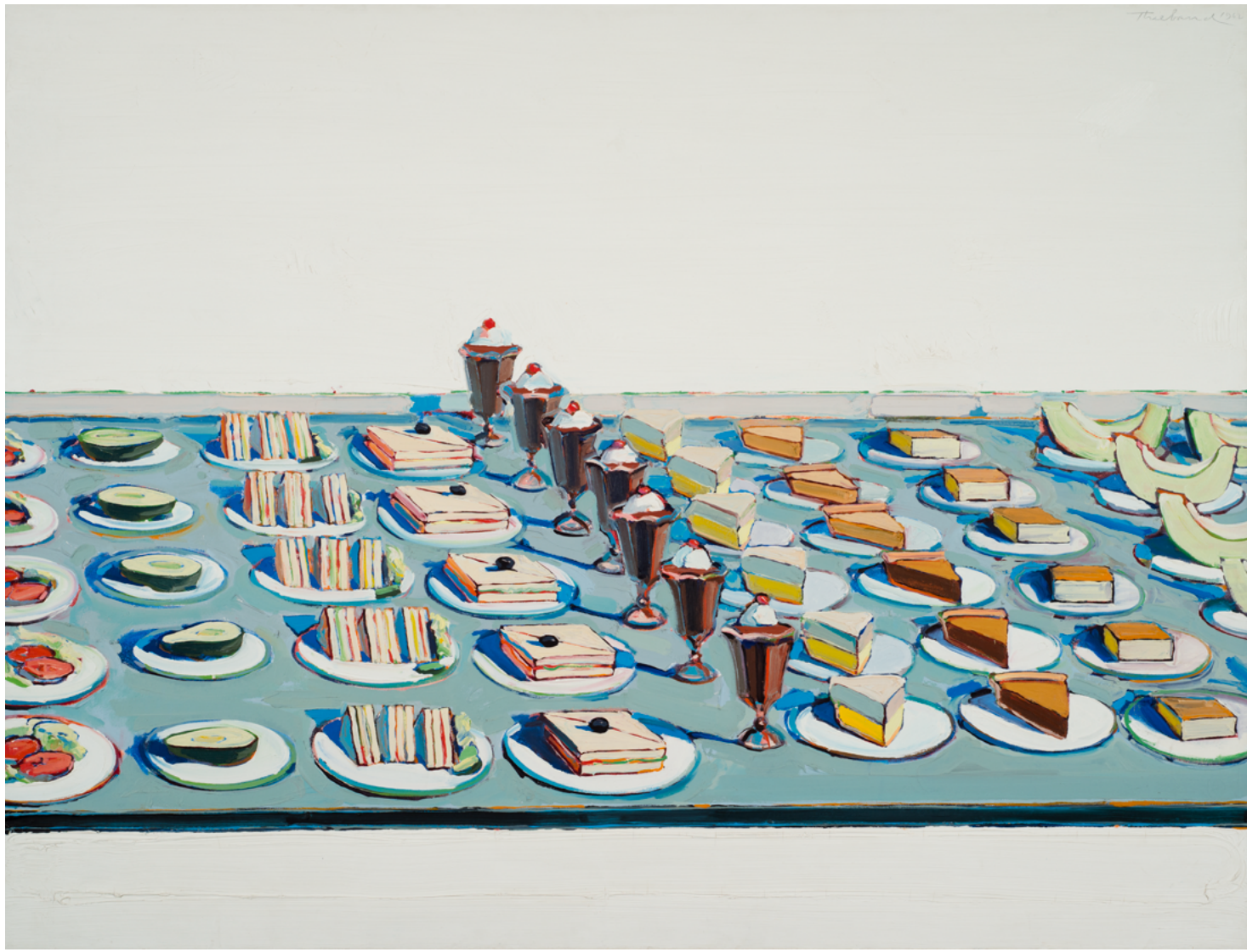
Tom Wesselmann

Cincinnati, OH 1931–New York, NY 2004

Still Life No. 15 1962

Oil, printed papers, photographs, and fabric on canvas

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, gift of
Mrs. Olga N. Sheldon, U-3282.1975



Wayne Thiebaud
Salads, Sandwiches, and Desserts



Tom Wesselmann
Still Life No. 15

In these canvases, both made in 1962, Wayne Thiebaud and Tom Wesselmann approached the practice of painting in vastly different ways. Thiebaud's still life epitomizes rich traditions of painting through the use of his signature precise and luscious paint application. He depicts a sumptuous buffet where naturalistic food items are lined up neatly in rows and recede convincingly into space. Conversely, Wesselmann subverts the basic principles of painting by depicting oversized fruits in a way that highlights their flatness and contrasts greatly with billboard images that used photographs of steak and whiskey that he collaged onto the canvas. Through Thiebaud's emphasis on repetition and Wesselmann's manipulation of scale, both painters highlight how artists in the 1960s used consumer goods to make meaning in their work.



Helen Lundeborg

Chicago, IL 1908–Los Angeles, CA 1999

Cosmicide 1935

Oil on Masonite

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, gift of the
Peter Kiewit Foundation, N-583.1981



Kay Sage

Watervliet, NY 1898–Woodbury, CT 1963

This Is Another Day 1949

Oil on canvas

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, gift of the artist's estate, U-474.1963



Helen Lundeborg
Cosmicide

This pairing explores the very idea of surrealism and its legacy. An art movement that originated in 1920s Paris, surrealism initially emphasized using the unconscious mind to drive art making. Kay Sage, who lived in Paris between 1937 and 1940, knew first-hand surrealism’s ideals, which are exemplified in Sheldon’s painting. The scaffolding motif at left, which resembles a tired ox trudging through the landscape, has been described by James Thrall Soby, her friend and curator, as a “pavilion of dreaming.” Helen Lundeborg’s painting, on the other hand, appears to combine randomly a number of unrelated objects. The deeper meaning the canvas conveys through the juxtaposition of carefully selected objects is characteristic of post-surrealism, a movement begun by Lundeborg and others in Los Angeles in the 1930s. Here, Lundeborg presents a view of universality, picturing the endless cycle of life and death.



Kay Sage
This Is Another Day



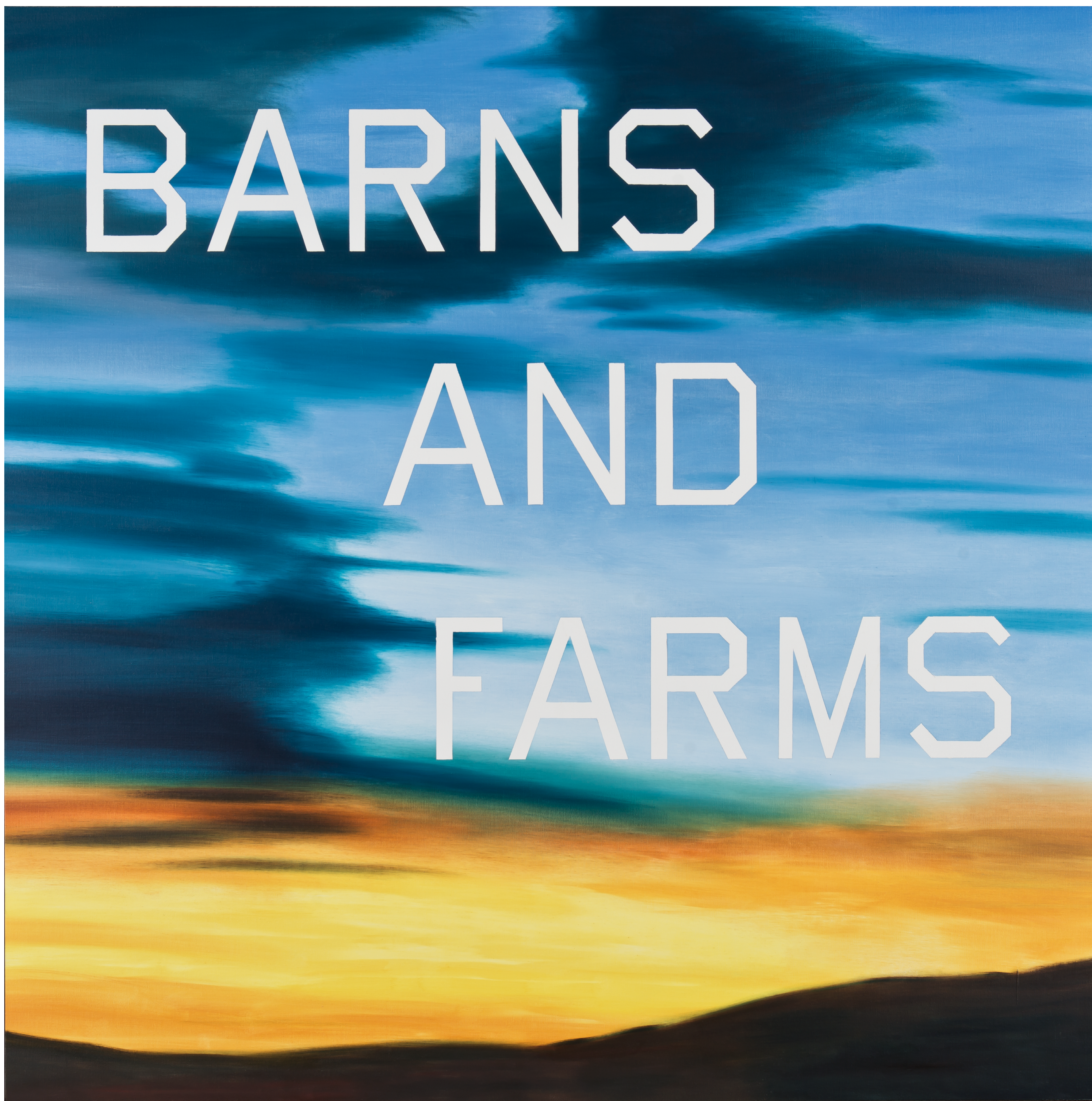
Richard Diebenkorn

Portland, OR 1922–Berkeley, CA 1993

Ocean Park #89.5 1975

Oil and charcoal on canvas

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Anna R.
and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust by exchange, H-3091.1999



Edward Ruscha

born Omaha, NE 1937

Barns and Farms 1983

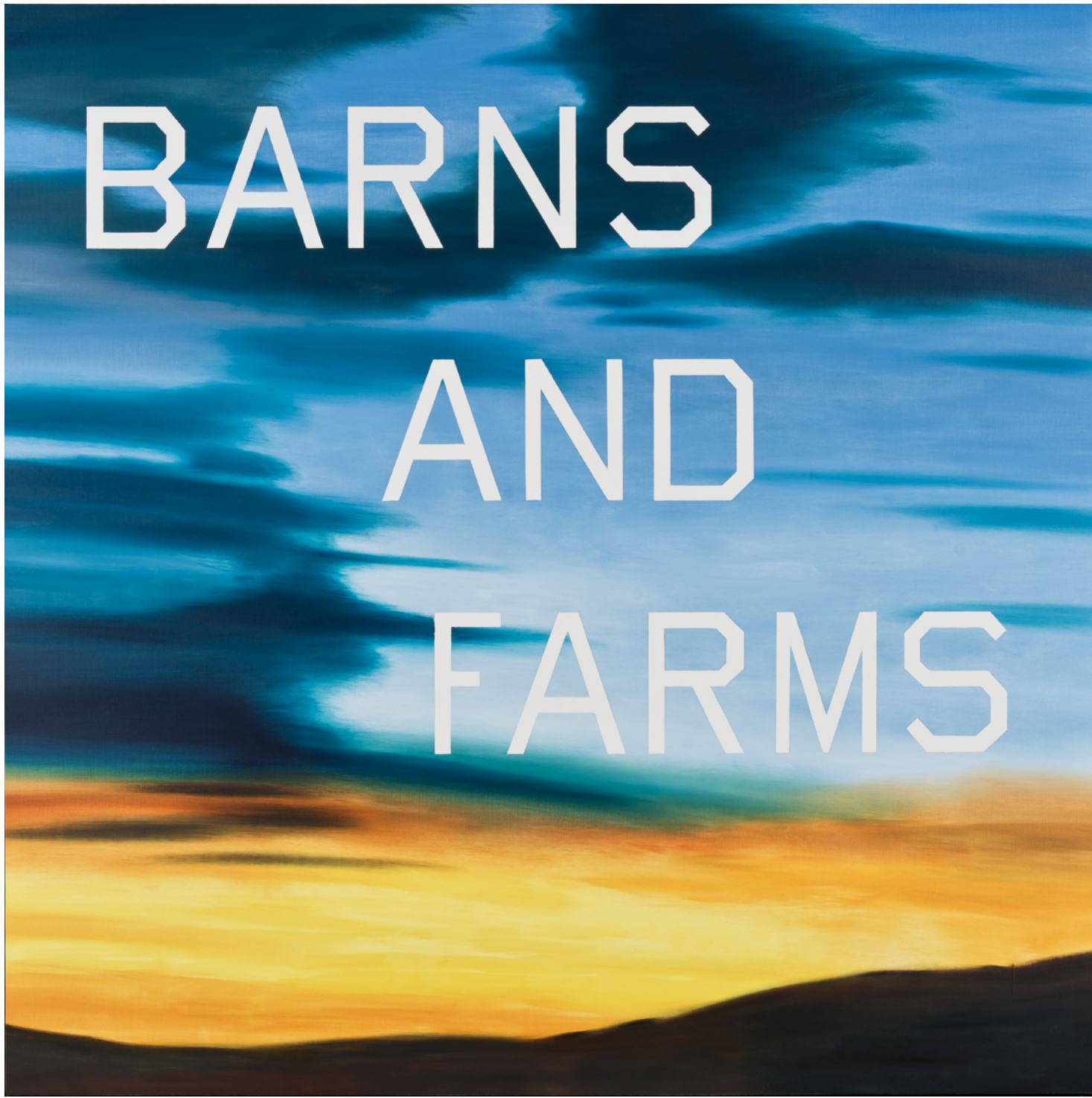
Oil on canvas

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts Purchase Grant Award, the Nebraska Art Association Acquisitions Committee, the Collectors' Forum of the Nebraska Art Association, Mr. Gene Tallman and the estate of Harold Stebbins courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Sidles, N-695.1989

 [Back to Contents](#)



Richard Diebenkorn
Ocean Park #89.5



Edward Ruscha
Barns and Farms

In this pairing, Richard Diebenkorn and Ed Ruscha upend expectations of the landscape through their different uses of abstraction. Diebenkorn deployed large planes of color to represent the beach and Pacific Ocean in his Los Angeles neighborhood, depicting an aerial view of the California light glittering against the sand and water. Ruscha, on the other hand, used capital block letters, not the actual structures of a barn or a farm, to represent the agricultural enterprises that he saw in 1956 when he drove from Oklahoma to California, a formative road trip that shaped the rest of his career.



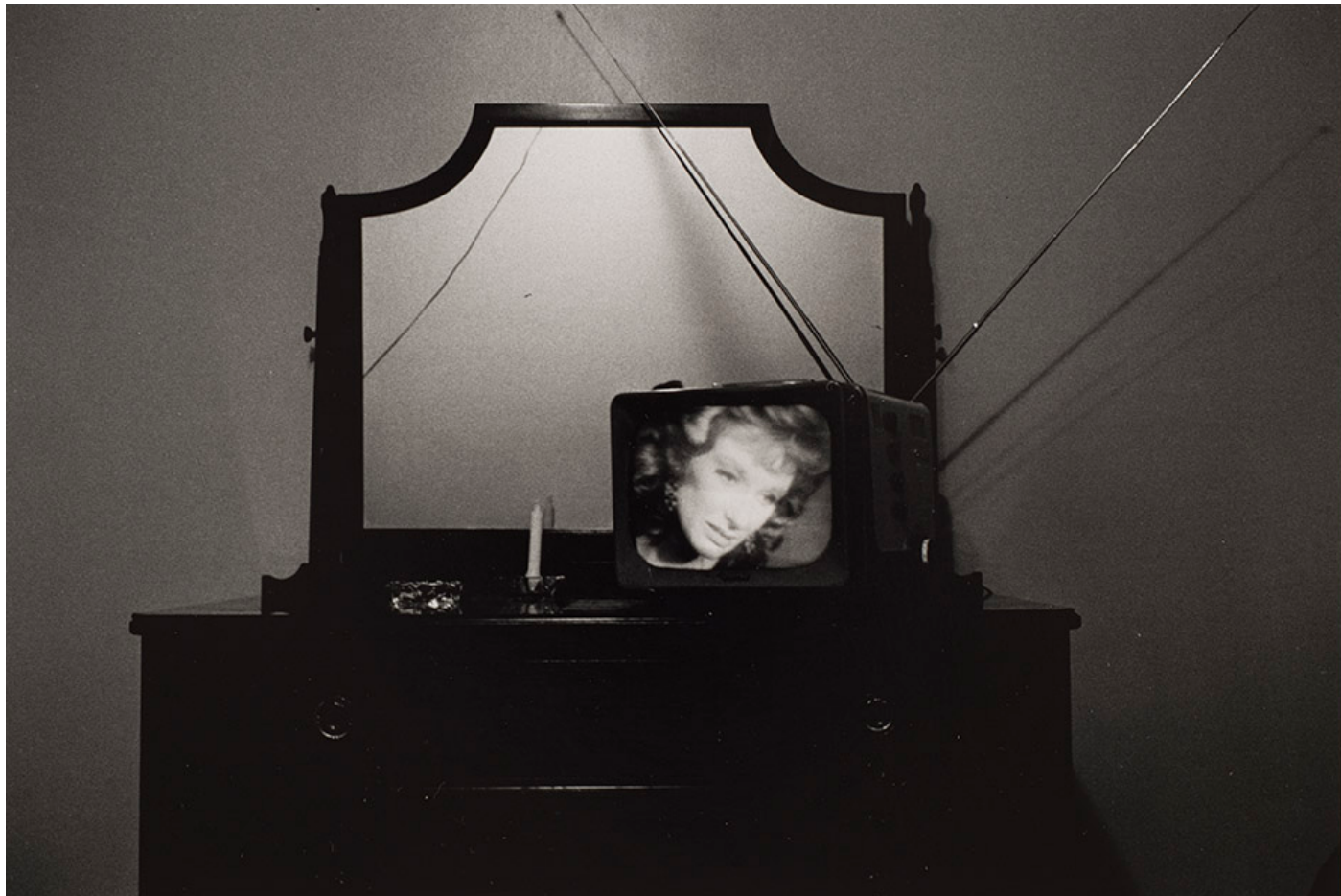
Edward Hopper

Nyack, NY 1882–New York, NY 1967

Room in New York 1932

Oil on canvas

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Anna R.
and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-166.1936



top row

Robert Adams

born Orange, NJ 1937

Colorado Springs, Colorado 1970

Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs, Colorado 1970

Gelatin silver prints, printed 1974

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, N-388.1977 and N-387.1977

middle row

Robert Frank

Zurich, Switzerland 1924–Inverness, Nova Scotia, Canada 2019

Mary 1952

Covered Car, Long Beach, California 1956

Gelatin silver prints

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-2434.1981 and H-2474.1982

bottom

Lee Friedlander

born Aberdeen, WA 1934

Hotel Room, Portland, Maine 1962

Gelatin silver print

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, N-372.1976



Edward Hopper
Room in New York

Room in New York, painted in 1932, embodies Edward Hopper’s noirish, cinematic style, employing voyeuristic perspectives, dramatic interaction of light and shadow, and emotionally isolated figures who inhabit anonymous spaces. His love of the painting process and astute observations of roadside diners, gas stations, and hotels resulted in pictures that illustrate a gothic side of these settings and the American spirit: empty, lonely, and vast.

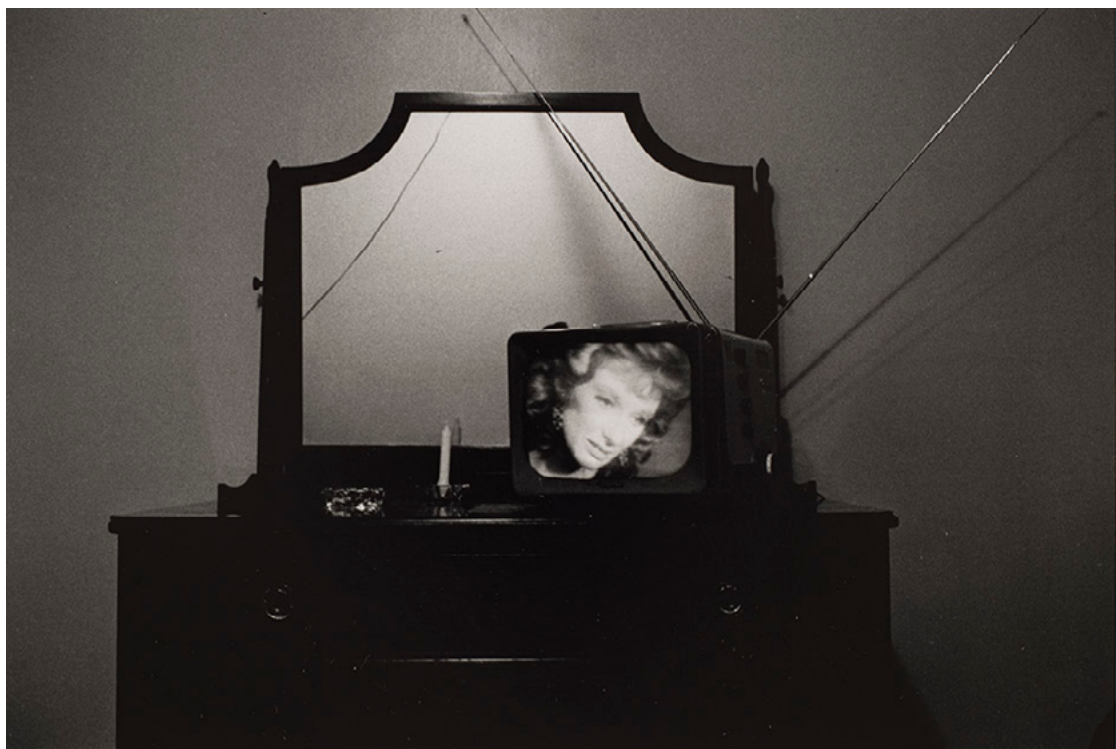


Robert Adams
Colorado Springs, Colorado
Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs, Colorado

British novelist Geoff Dyer stated in his 2005 meditation on photography that Edward Hopper “could claim to be the most influential American photographer of the 20th century even though he didn’t take any photographs.” Here, the sensibilities of the photographers whose works accompany *Room in New York* reveal or mirror aspects of Hopper’s spirit. Like him, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, and Robert Adams acted upon interest in new types of American subject matter. Their unvarnished documentary style, which started in the 1950s, elevated photographs well beyond the service of the snapshot. Through their respect for humble subjects, practice of cogent observation, and interest in the psychological, each photographer shares the traits that distinguish Hopper, one of America’s best observers and commentators.



Robert Frank
Mary
Covered Car, Long Beach, California



Lee Friedlander
Hotel Room, Portland, Maine