

## CLYFFORD STILL MUSEUM OPENS IN DENVER NOVEMBER 18

**Designed by Allied Works Architecture, New Museum Houses 94% of Still's Creative Output and Provides Unprecedented Opportunity for New Scholarship and Public Appreciation of One of America's Greatest Painters**

**Inaugural Exhibition Sheds New Light on Still's Broad Influence and Impact, With Never-Before-Seen Paintings, Sculptures, Drawings, and Prints**



The new Clyfford Still Museum, designed by Allied Works Architecture. Photos by Raul J. Garcia.

**Denver, CO**, November 15, 2011 – The Clyfford Still Museum opens its doors to the public on November 18, 2011, reintroducing the life and work of one of America's most significant yet least understood artists. The new museum, which houses 94% of Clyfford Still's total creative output, allows the public to explore the full trajectory of the artist's 60-year career for the first time, including his rarely seen figurative works from the 1930s, paintings from the 1960s and 1970s created after Still's retreat from the commercial art world, and the hundreds of works on paper that the artist created, often on a near-daily basis. The museum's collection of approximately 2,400 paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures, the majority of which have never been on public display before, provides an unprecedented opportunity to reflect on the full scope of Still's legacy and his profound influence on American art.

Designed by Brad Cloepfil and Allied Works Architecture, the new museum provides visitors with an intimate environment to experience the art of Clyfford Still. The museum's inaugural exhibition, co-curated by Director Dean Sobel and Adjunct Curator David Anfam, features approximately 110 works drawn from the Still collection, exploring both the artist's early arrival at complete abstraction as well as the ongoing significance of figuration on his later work. The exhibition includes a number of never-before-displayed paintings, works on paper, and objects from Still's personal archives, as well as the only three sculptures by Still in existence.

"Still is considered among the most important and influential painters of the twentieth century, though the vast majority of his work has never been exhibited publicly," said Dean Sobel, Director of the Clyfford

Still Museum. “Our prior knowledge of Still was based on a small fraction of works that were in the public realm, a mere six percent of the artist’s creative output. The opening of the museum provides unprecedented insight into the life and work of Clyfford Still, and redefines how the artist is considered within the art historical canon. Our inaugural exhibition, which traces the arc of Still’s career from his early figurative paintings, through his monumental abstract canvases, to his late works on paper, provides an overview of the artist’s primary imagery and establishes Still as one of the first of his American peers to realize the concept of a monumental, pure abstraction.”

After achieving national recognition and prominence for his abstract works in the 1940s and early 1950s, Still ended his relationship with commercial galleries in 1951, infrequently exhibiting his work thereafter. Following the artist’s death in 1980, the Still collection, comprising approximately 2,400 works by the artist, was sealed off completely from public and scholarly view. Still’s will stipulated that his estate be given in its entirety to an American city willing to establish “permanent quarters” dedicated solely to his work, ensuring its survival for exhibition and study. In August 2004, the City of Denver, under the leadership of then Mayor John Hickenlooper, was selected by Still’s wife, Patricia Still, to receive the substantial Still collection. In 2005, Patricia Still also bequeathed to the city her own estate, which included select works by her husband as well as his complete archive.

“Seven years ago Patricia Still, the wife of Clyfford Still, entrusted us with her husband’s legacy and asked us to build a home for his work in Denver,” said Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper. “Colorado’s growing arts community is gaining the world’s attention. Having one of the most comprehensive single-artist museums in the world reside in Denver is an incredible collection for the city and our state.”

## Inaugural Exhibition



*Self Portrait* (PH-382), 1940  
Photo: Peter Harholdt

Curated by Director Dean Sobel and Adjunct Curator David Anfam, the museum’s inaugural exhibition presents a comprehensive survey of Still’s artistic career from 1925 through the late 1970s, documenting the evolution of his primary imagery and motifs, his early arrival at abstraction, and the range of his media. The exhibition is the first to explore Still’s striking figurative work created before World War II, which points to the significance of figuration throughout the artist’s oeuvre, even in his most apparently non-representational compositions. The exhibition also considers rarely seen paintings and drawings produced by Still after he retreated from the New York art world to Maryland in 1961, providing visitors with a greater understanding of Still’s impact on and relevance to Abstract Expressionism, as well as later artistic movements.

“Still spearheaded what would become known as Abstract Expressionism, attaining a powerful, singular idiom early on that owed little or nothing to contemporary developments in New York,” said David Anfam. “The inaugural show of the Clyfford Still Museum aims to redefine our grasp of Still’s vision in both its scope and sustained intensity—highlighting his extraordinary use of color, draftsmanship, gesture, figuration, serial procedures, and scale. Overall, Still’s achievement reveals him as a momentous eminence of modern art—and one still meaningful for the present.”

Installed over the course of nine discrete galleries on the museum’s second floor, the exhibition establishes a chronology of Still’s 60-year career to provide an overview of the stylistic evolution of his oeuvre and the places where he created these works—including Alberta, Canada; eastern Washington

State; Richmond, Virginia; San Francisco; New York City; and rural Maryland. The first exhibition galleries present Still's figurative and landscape paintings from the late 1920s and early 1930s, which demonstrate his representational style and introduce characteristics that mark his later work, including his emphasis on the vertical form. At the center of the exhibition are a number of never-before-seen paintings, drawings, and prints made by Still in the 1940s that reveal the artist's arrival at characteristics of Abstract Expressionism earlier than his peers, including Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Willem De Kooning. Later galleries show Still's dramatic expansion of scale, his rarely displayed works on paper from all periods of his career, and his works from the 1960s and 1970s, which are marked by a lighter palette and greater economy of imagery. Visitors will gain further insight into Still's personal history and creative process through the presentation of select objects from the Clyfford Still Archives on the museum's first floor, including letters, photographs, tools and materials, and various personal effects.

Exhibition highlights includes:

- PH-77 – A figurative work painted in 1936 that portrays field workers with oversized hands and arms—a feature common to Still's work at the time. Still's highly expressive interpretation of the subject denotes his increasing interest in abstracting the human form.
- PH-343 – This 1937 painting demonstrates Still's transition from figuration into abstraction, with a canvas that loosely depicts a farmer and his farming tools. Divided left and right between the warm earth tones used to paint the human form, and the black and white farmer's tools, the work shows early techniques that Still used in his later abstractions.
- 1944-N No. 1 (PH-235) – Featuring jagged streaks of blue, red, yellow, and white, Still's oversized, predominately black canvas is widely believed to be the first example of Abstract Expressionism as we conceive of it. Though Abstract Expressionism is identified as a New York movement, this painting was made during Still's stay in Richmond, Virginia, where he was a visiting professor from 1944 to 1945, three years before Jackson Pollock's drip paintings were made.
- 1957-J No. 2 (PH-401) – This 9-by-13-foot mural features Still's iconic red, black, and white forms that seem to be simultaneously drawing towards each other and breaking apart. Like many artists working in New York at this time, this painting is indicative of Still's use of scale to create immersive environments for the viewer.
- PH-1023 – After a decade of living in New York, Still moved to rural Maryland in 1961, where he lived and worked in virtual seclusion until his death in 1980. Compared with his densely populated canvases of the late 1940s and 1950s, this painting from 1976 demonstrates Still's exploitation of the bare canvas and more minimal gesture that marked the artist's final works.

### **Building Design**

Designed by Brad Cloepfil and Allied Works Architecture, the Clyfford Still Museum is a dense, cantilevered two-story building of richly worked concrete. Featuring nine light-filled galleries on its second level, as well as a library, educational and archival resources, a conservation studio, and collection storage on its first floor, the 28,500-square-foot museum creates a compelling environment in which to view and appreciate Still's work and learn about his life and impact.

“This new building for the work of the artist Clyfford Still provides an intensely intimate and introspective relationship with his art,” said architect Brad Cloepfil. “The building is conceived as a nearly geologic experience, one that firmly holds both visitor and art in spaces amplified by natural light. The sequence from city, to park, to building creates a ceremony of repose that prepares the visitor for a

personal and very physical relationship with this incredibly important body of drawings and paintings—whose power and presence are revealed in natural light for the first time.”

One first encounters the museum through a grove of trees and landscaped forecourt, which provides a place of contemplation, decompression, and transition from the museum’s surrounding urban context. Through the trees, the structure of the building is visible, consisting of cast-in-place architectural concrete walls with a variety of surface relief and texture. The façade features thin, vertical lines of concrete that project from the building’s surface in a fractured, organic, and random pattern, creating a rich surface that changes in the intense Denver sunlight and forms varied shadows across the building.

The entry is revealed beneath a canopy of trees, and visitors are welcomed into the museum by a low, long reception lobby. Visitors rise from the lobby and reception area toward the natural light falling from the galleries on the second floor. The museum’s second level features nine light-filled galleries, totaling approximately 10,000 square feet. Each gallery is distinctly defined and proportioned to respond to specific aspects and needs of the collection and helps trace the different phases of Still’s career in chronological sequence. Gallery heights vary to accommodate changes in scale and media; those with 18-foot-high ceilings showcase Still’s monumental Abstract Expressionist canvases, some of which extend to over 12 feet tall and 16 feet long, while smaller galleries with 11 ½ foot ceilings create a more intimate viewing environment for the presentation of smaller-scale paintings and works on paper. Two outdoor terraces and an education gallery offer visitors a moment of reflection and investigation during the gallery sequence, and allow them to re-orient themselves with the surrounding and distant landscape. Moving between galleries, visitors are provided glimpses down into the collection storage and interpretive galleries on the first level.

The visitor’s experience of the collection is enlivened by natural light that enters the galleries through a series of skylights over a cast-in-place, perforated concrete ceiling. The geometry of openings in the ceiling creates an even field of soft and changing daylight in the galleries. Diffusing glass, motorized shades, and electric light give curatorial flexibility to the gallery spaces, helping to support different gallery configurations and the museum’s rotating exhibition program.

Upon completing the primary gallery sequence, visitors may descend back to the museum’s first level to explore the painting storage, archive, and exhibition spaces viewable from above. An open double-high corridor connects these facilities and serves as an exhibition hall allowing visitors to further their learning of the history and life of Clyfford Still. A “timeline” section of the corridor places the artist’s work in context with historic events and other artistic movements, and an “archive” hallway presents the everyday artifacts of the artist’s life and information about his painting technique and media. From this corridor, visitors are also able to view the collection storage rooms, and assess the number of paintings produced during the artist’s prolific career. A visible conservation lab and a research center offer visitors additional resources for furthering their knowledge of Still’s career. This open corridor speaks to the institution’s founding principle of unveiling this once-private and very personal collection to the public, as it invites a gradual immersion in the works of Still.

### **About Allied Works**

Allied Works Architecture is a leading American architecture practice founded and led by Brad Cloepfil from offices in Portland, Oregon, and New York City. The practice works to discover and distill the elemental principles that drive each building project. It is this essence, revealed in the architecture, which resonates within a culture, creating new experience and understanding which endures through time. Current and recent commissions include the National Music Centre of Canada (2014); a feature animation facility in Emeryville, California (2011); a masterplan and new studio building for the Pacific Northwest College of Art (2013); a private residence for major contemporary art collectors in Dutchess County, New York (2011); the Portland Heights Residence (2010); a four-story, 13,000-square-foot residence in the

heart of New York City; and the Vancouver Community Connector, a major civic space and structure, in Vancouver, Washington. Recently, Allied Works has been commissioned to re-envision the estate of one of Oregon's first wineries. In 2010 and 2011, Allied Works was a finalist in two major international competitions to design a 100,000-square-foot pavilion for the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec and to master plan a new cultural arts district in Central Lausanne, Switzerland, which included the design of a fine arts museum and other exhibition facilities. Some of the firm's notable works include the expansion of the University of Michigan Museum of Art in Ann Arbor (2009); the re-design of 2 Columbus Circle for the Museum of Arts and Design (2008); the Dutchess County Residence Guest House and Art Barn (2007, 2008); the expansion of the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in the Dallas Arts District (2008); the vertical expansion of the Seattle Art Museum located on Elliot's Bay in Downtown Seattle (2007); the Sun Valley Residence in Ketchum, Idaho (2005); the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis (2003); the Maryhill Overlook (1999); and a radical transformation of an historic warehouse into the global headquarters of Wieden+Kennedy Agency in Portland's Pearl District.

### **About The Clyfford Still Museum**

The Clyfford Still Museum was founded to promote public and scholarly understanding of the late artist's work and legacy, through the presentation and preservation of the Clyfford Still and Patricia Still estates, donated to the City of Denver in 2004 and 2005 respectively, and totaling approximately 2,400 artworks. Considered one of the most important painters of the twentieth century, Still (1904 – 1980) was among the first generation of Abstract Expressionist artists who developed a new, powerful approach to painting in the years immediately following World War II. The Stills' estates—now understood to contain 94 percent of the artist's total output—as well as his extensive archive, have been sealed off from the public since 1980.

Designed by Brad Cloepfil and Allied Works Architecture and located in Denver, Colorado, the new museum resides in the heart of the city's Civic Center Cultural Complex, near the Denver Art Museum and its Daniel Libeskind-designed building, the Denver Public Library designed by Michael Graves, and History Colorado designed by David Tryba. For more information about the Clyfford Still Museum, please visit [www.clyffordstillmuseum.org](http://www.clyffordstillmuseum.org).

#### **Museum Address**

1250 Bannock Street  
Denver, CO 80204

#### **Museum Hours**

Tuesday – Sunday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Friday: Open until 8 p.m.

#### **Admission**

Members and Children under 5 Free  
Adults \$10  
Students/Seniors (65+) \$6  
Youth (ages 5-17) \$3

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