

For Immediate Release

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SUMMER RE/TREAT: A LIGHT OF HIS OWN: CLYFFORD STILL AT YADDO OPENS FRIDAY, MAY 4

Against the odds and 2,500 miles from home, an artist got his first big break.



Left to right: Clyfford Still, PH-645, 1935. Oil on window shade, 8.5 x 6.5 in.; PH-653, 1934. Oil on window shade, 8.375 x 10.75 in. Images © City and County of Denver / ARS, NY

A Light of His Own: Clyfford Still at Yaddo

May 4 – September 9, 2018

Clyfford Still Museum, Denver

Denver, CO—What do Truman Capote, Aaron Copland, Langston Hughes, and Sylvia Plath have in common with abstract expressionist painter Clyfford Still? Each attended Yaddo, a legendary artists' retreat in Saratoga Springs, New York. Visitors to the Clyfford Still Museum in Denver can uncover the creative breakthroughs Still accomplished there in [*A Light of His Own: Clyfford Still at Yaddo*](#), opening Friday, May 4. A full-color catalogue accompanies the exhibition, available at the Museum Shop and at shop.clyffordstillmuseum.org.

At the center of this exhibition and its catalogue are 19 small paintings Still created at Yaddo during the summers of 1934 and 1935. Installed in two of the Museum's intimate, low-ceiling galleries, *A Light of His Own* also includes ephemera from the Clyfford Still Archives and twelve later works from Denver's collection, as well as a hand/head study by Still on loan from the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute in Utica, New York. The exhibition is curated by **Patricia Failing**, professor emerita, Division of Art History, University of Washington–Seattle.

Composed with oil paints on window shade fragments—an inexpensive material employed by Still during the Great Depression—Still’s farming scenes and rural landscapes created at Yaddo illustrate his first shift away from direct observations of rural scenery and reveal an artist beginning to look inward for inspiration. Later works on view demonstrate ways Still repurposed his Yaddo images into enormous creative breakthroughs as his career progressed. “As the metaphorical content of these post-Yaddo compositions begins to intertwine and grow, figures merge, fragment, and dissolve,” notes Patricia Failing. “Still’s time at Yaddo ignited visual energies that ultimately inspire Clyfford Still to create some of the mid-twentieth century’s most unprecedented modernist paintings.”

MORE

Yaddo guests have collectively won 74 Pulitzer Prizes, 29 MacArthur “Genius” Fellowships, and a Nobel Prize. Clyfford Still was just a 29-year-old graduate student and teaching assistant at Washington State College when he was improbably awarded a Yaddo residency for August, 1934. Writer and painter Peter Neagoe—a colleague of Constantine Brancusi and publisher of Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound—was among the friends Still met there. Martha Gruening, a writer and activist who was associated with NAACP co-founder W.E.B. Du Bois, was another. Gruening introduced Still to her sister, Clara Gruening Stillman, a first-wave feminist who worked with Margaret Sanger. Both Neagoe and Stillman corresponded with Still for more than a decade.



Portrait of Berenice Robinson Morris, Maurice Becker, Martha Gruening, Allan Porter, and Clyfford Still at Yaddo, ca. 1934–35. Unknown photographer, courtesy the Clyfford Still Archives

A Light of His Own is surrounded by [a new display of the permanent collection](#) installed throughout the Lanny and Sharon Martin Galleries at the Museum. The display features more than 60 works created between 1927 and 1978, including 12 works that have never been exhibited publicly. Among the newly displayed works is **PH-1062**, a monumental red canvas created in New York in 1951, the year that Still famously severed ties with Betty Parsons Gallery and withdrew from the commercial and institutional elements of the art world. The canvas is a striking counterpoint to PH-247—another bold 1951 painting, affectionately known as “Big Blue”—and is exhibited with that work at the center of the Museum in the Frederic C. Hamilton Family Foundation Gallery.

Apart from the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute loan, all of the works in the exhibition can be explored in the Museum's online collection at clyffordstillmuseum.org/yaddo. More than 2,200 works of art—approximately 470 paintings and 1,750 works on paper by Still—are now available at collection.clyffordstillmuseum.org in high resolution. More than 1,900 objects from the Clyfford Still Archives are also now public for the first time at clyffordstillmuseum.org/database.

A Light of His Own is the Museum's 23rd exhibition since opening in the fall of 2011. The Museum has also created seven full-length publications; organized three national symposia; co-produced an hour-long documentary film; collaborated with artists including Matthew Barney, Mark Bradford, Roni Horn, and Julian Schnabel; presented keynotes by Michael Kimmelman, Jerry Saltz, and Roberta Smith; built an innovative free school visit program; and made its public programs and youth admission free to all. The Museum has exhibited 815 different works of art by Clyfford Still to date. Slightly more than 2,500 works in Denver's collection remain to be exhibited.

EXHIBITION LECTURE AND CATALOGUE

“New Friends to Paint For:” Clyfford Still and the Yaddo Artists' Community
Patricia Failing, professor emerita, Division of Art History, University of Washington–Seattle

Thursday, May 3, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

Free | Registration required via clyffordstillmuseum.org

A Light of His Own: Clyfford Still at Yaddo

\$35 (\$31.50 Members)

This softcover exhibition catalogue published by the Clyfford Still Museum includes 32 color reproductions as well as several never-before-seen images from the Clyfford Still Archives. With a foreword by CSM director Dean Sobel and a captivating essay by Yaddo exhibition curator Patricia Failing, this limited edition publication is available exclusively from the Museum Shop and shop.clyffordstillmuseum.org.

ABOUT THE CLYFFORD STILL MUSEUM

A breathtaking art museum dedicated to the mysterious life and revolutionary art of a modern master, the Clyfford Still Museum opened in November of 2011. Considered one of the most important—yet mysterious—painters of the 20th century, Clyfford Still (1904–80) was among the first generation of abstract expressionist artists who developed a new, forceful approach to painting in the years during and immediately after World War II. In addition to approximately 9,000 square feet of exhibition space devoted solely to the artist's output, the Museum also houses the Clyfford Still Archives and the Clyfford Still Museum Research Center. The *Los Angeles Times* calls the Museum “a marvelous model for what a single-artist museum can be.” *Smithsonian Magazine* describes the Museum as “among the best art museum experiences anywhere.” The Museum was designed by Allied Works Architecture, which received the 2013 Design Award, 2012 Honor Award, and 2012 Craftsmanship Award from regional chapters of the American Institute of Architects for the project.

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