

Moxie University

Wayne Thiebaud

Wayne Thiebaud was a highly influential artist who defied genres and easy classification. His work continues to rise in popularity as he seems to have hit upon some kind of critical nerve that continues to fascinate to this day. He stands as one of America's most honored living painters.



Thiebaud's work is best known for representing popular American culture of consumables of the 1950's and 1960's. He filled his compositions with a warmth of comfort food like cake and pie slices, candy suckers and gumball machines.

People gravitated to his work because it made them feel good, you could FEEL the pastries and consumer goods the way he painted them. His brushstrokes so thick, like the frosting on the cakes he depicted, invited and delighted. His expression had a tangible, tactile quality to it. His work just “felt good” to look at.

Perhaps Thiebaud's most unique and affecting technique was the delicate and precise line of color that enveloped his subjects and the way he portrayed shadows, implying importance and reverence.

Thiebaud grew up in depression era California where he worked as a commercial artist learning the tools of modern/corporate art communications. Later, in the late 1950's, he traveled to New York City where he was exposed to the Abstract Expressionists and then the burgeoning Pop art movement. In 1962 he was included in an exhibition of Pop Art along with Andy Warhol. Because of his art's subject matter, people often confuse Thiebaud with Pop Art, though he did not like the comparison. Thiebaud felt his work reflected affection for objects unlike the impersonal consumerism represented in Pop Art. The personal sincerity of his work can be seen here in his painting titled, “Student” completed in 1968.



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