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News Releases

Wayne Higby Retrospective Opens Oct. 4 at the Renwick Gallery

August 14, 2013

Wayne Higby's vision of the American landscape appears in ceramic forms ranging from vessels and sculptures to architectural installations that have brought him national and international recognition. Higby (b. 1943) is a leading artist of the contemporary ceramic studio movement. "Infinite Place: The Ceramic Art of Wayne Higby" is the first major retrospective exhibition to provide an in-depth critical analysis of the artist's body of work created during a 40-year period.

"Infinite Place: The Ceramic Art of Wayne Higby" is on view at the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C., from Oct. 4 through Dec. 8. The exhibition is organized by Peter Held, curator of ceramics at the Arizona State University Art Museum Ceramics Research Center. The Renwick Gallery is the second stop on a national tour.

"Wayne Higby has redefined the medium of ceramics and influenced a new generation of artists with his imaginative and evocative landscapes in clay," said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The exhibition explores the forms, techniques and firing processes used throughout Higby's career, focusing on his groundbreaking work in raku earthenware as well as his later production in porcelain. It includes 54 ceramic objects, drawings and architectural maquettes from the Arizona State University Art Museum's permanent collection, the artist's holdings and other private and public collections. The range of objects represents Higby's ongoing investigations into different ceramic forms and includes sculptural landscapes, jars and bowls produced using a raku-firing process and Chinese inspired-porcelain forms glazed in celadon. Two works from the Smithsonian American Art Museum's permanent collection are included in the exhibition: "Temple's Gate Pass" (1988) and "Lake Powell Memory—Winter Rain" (1998).

Higby is a professor and the Robert C. Turner Chair of Ceramic Art at the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University. Since the early 1970s he has explored the fusion of form and surface decoration through the creation of panoramic western vistas. Landscape imagery covers the interior as well as the exterior of his objects, creating the illusion of depth and distance. Higby credits his years growing up in Colorado with instilling a deep appreciation for the natural environment that continues to influence his artwork.

"Higby has the remarkable ability to express an immense concept, such as an entire landscape, as an intimate work of art," said Robyn Kennedy, chief of the Renwick Gallery. "The exhibition showcases artworks that embody the natural beauty of the West as well as Higby's explorations of the interplay of art and the natural world."

Free Public Programs

A conversation between Held and Higby will take place Saturday, Oct. 5, at 2 p.m. in the Renwick Gallery's Grand Salon. Sunday, Oct. 20, at 2 p.m. in the Grand Salon, Ezra Shales, associate professor of art history at Alfred University, will moderate a panel discussion with artists who studied with Higby. Eleanor Harvey, senior curator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, will discuss the western American landscape and its relationship to Higby's ceramic vessels with Henry Sayre, professor of art history at Oregon State University, Thursday, Nov. 21, at 7 p.m. in the museum's McEvoy Auditorium (located at Eighth and F Streets N.W.).

Additional programs include a gallery talk by Kennedy Tuesday, Nov. 5, at noon and a discussion of Higby's "Temple's Gate Pass" by Rebecca Robinson, assistant to the chief, Wednesday, Nov. 20, at noon. Additional information is online at americanart.si.edu/calendar

Media only

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Media preview

Thursday, Oct. 3, at 10 a.m.

Media website

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Publication

A beautifully illustrated monograph, published and distributed by Arnoldsche Art Publishers in Stuttgart, Germany, accompanies the exhibition. It is edited by Held, and includes contributions by Carla Coch, Helen W. Drutt English, Tanya Harrod, Higby, Mary Drach McInnes, Sayre and Shales. The book will be for sale at the museum store for \$85.

Credit

"Infinite Place: The Ceramic Art of Wayne Higby" is organized by the Arizona State University Art Museum Ceramics Research Center, Tempe, Ariz., and curated by curator of ceramics Peter Held. Major funding is provided by the Windgate Charitable Foundation with additional support from the Marlin Miller Jr. Family Foundation; The Robert C. Turner Chair Endowment Fund, Alfred University; and the Friends of Contemporary Ceramics. The James Renwick Alliance supports the presentation at the Renwick Gallery.

National Tour

The exhibition debuted at the Arizona State University Art Museum in April. Following its presentation at the Renwick Gallery, the exhibition will travel to the Reading Public Museum in Reading, Pa., the Philadelphia Art Alliance, the Racine Art Museum in Racine, Wis., and the Memorial Art Museum in Rochester, N.Y.

About the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. The museum's branch for craft and decorative art, the Renwick Gallery, is located on Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th Street N.W. It is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free. Metrorail station: Farragut North (Red line) and Farragut West (Blue and Orange lines). Follow the museum on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Flickr, ArtBabble, iTunes and YouTube. Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Smithsonian information: (202) 633-1000. Website: americanart.si.edu (<http://americanart.si.edu/>).

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SI-329-2013

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