

William Eggleston

September 10–October 17, 2020

5–6/F, H Queen's, 80 Queen's Road Central
Hong Kong



William Eggleston, *Untitled*, c. 1973-1978

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Courtesy Eggleston Artistic Trust and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of the American photographer William Eggleston's medium- and large-format photographs from the 1970s, many of which have never been exhibited before. On view at the gallery's Hong Kong location, this exhibition marks the artist's debut solo presentation in Greater China.

Over the course of nearly six decades, Eggleston has established a singular pictorial style that deftly combines vernacular subject matter with an innate and sophisticated understanding of color, form, and composition. His vividly saturated photographs transform the ordinary into distinctive, poetic images that eschew fixed meaning. A pioneer of color photography, Eggleston helped elevate the medium to the art form that it is recognized as today. His watershed 1976 solo exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, curated by John Szarkowski, would come to herald the medium's acceptance within the art-historical canon.

Throughout the 1970s, Eggleston worked with a variety of cameras and photographic formats. In addition to using 35mm Canon and Leica cameras, he also photographed in medium and large formats. Historically, larger negatives and cameras had primarily been used for traditional portraiture or formalist photography such as that of the modernists Imogen Cunningham and Edward Weston. Eggleston began exploring these formats, which were less popular in the snapshot, street-photography ethos of the 1960s and 1970s, for the high level of detail they offer, spearheading their use with color film and using them to further his investigation of the distinctive character of the American visual and material landscape. As Eggleston notes, "I was thinking about pictures made in portrait studios, mostly before my time, with the 5 x 7 camera, prints big enough to hand retouch and I was thinking: I want to do a series in that format because of the incredible detail."¹ Capturing the storefronts, restaurants, homes, cars, and people of the cities, towns, and settings to which he traveled, these richly detailed images reveal the breadth and individuality of everyday life in often overlooked locations. The photographs provide a captivating portrayal of the artist and his encounters—an image of a street light framed against the sky or one of cars resting in a parking lot are as much portraits of these places as works depicting local individuals posing for Eggleston on the street.

¹ Eggleston quoted in Michael Almereyda, "Forever Changes: Eggleston in '73," *William Eggleston: 5 x 7* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Twin Palms Publishers, 2007), n.p.

The photographs also illustrate Eggleston's singular ability to capture the unique qualities of color, surface, and light. In one image, brightly colored gas pumps and a pastel green sign with red Coca-Cola logos stand out against the pale, sun-bleached siding and oil-slicked asphalt of a service station. In another work, a plastic sailfish—with an arching blue fin—hangs in a restaurant and contrasts with the shiny wood paneling of the wall and tables while playing off the yellow and green vinyl of a group of tucked-in, padded chairs. The powerful yet diffuse Southern light pervades these images. Photographs taken at dawn and dusk contain a soft radiant glow that calls to mind the remarkable luminosity contained in the paintings of Vermeer, while those shot during the height of the afternoon visualize the Southern sun's unrepentant glare. As Michael Almereyda writes of Eggleston's large-format work, the artist applies "remarkable resources—an unerring eye for detail and gesture, an intimate sense of form—to produce images that remain joltingly fresh, lucid, indelible. Reviewing this work, it feels possible to gain entry to a vanished time while looking backward into photography's future."²

William Eggleston was born in 1939 in Memphis, Tennessee, where he lives today. *William Eggleston: The Democratic Forest*, an exhibition of works drawn from the artist's encyclopedic project, marked his first solo show at David Zwirner New York in 2016. *2 ¼*, an exhibition of Eggleston's medium-format, square photographs, was presented in 2019 at David Zwirner London. In 2007, several of the images in the present exhibition were featured in *5 x 7*, a monograph published by Twin Palms of the artist's large-format photographs.

Since the 1970s, Eggleston's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions worldwide. Important solo presentations were held at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, in 1990; Barbican Gallery, London, in 1992 (traveled to Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Museum Folkwang, Essen; and Fotomuseum Winterthur); documenta IX, Kassel, in 2002; and Museum Ludwig, Cologne, in 2003 (traveled to Museu Serralves, Porto; Nasjonalmuseet – Museet for samtidskunst, Oslo; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Albertina, Vienna; and Dallas Museum of Art). In 2008, a major career-spanning survey, *William Eggleston: Democratic Camera, Photographs and Videos 1961–2008*, was organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and Haus der Kunst in Munich; it subsequently traveled to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Art Institute of Chicago; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among other institutions.

More recent solo exhibitions have included those held at Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, in 2009 (traveled to Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, and Hasselblad Foundation, Gothenburg, Sweden); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 2013; and Foam Fotografiemuseum, Amsterdam, in 2017. In 2018, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York, presented *William Eggleston: Los Alamos*, a solo exhibition featuring a landmark gift to the museum by Jade Lau of the artist's notable portfolio *Los Alamos*. Scheduled to open in summer and fall 2020, the solo presentation *In Focus: Election Eve* at the Getty Center in Los Angeles will feature Eggleston's two-volume photography book made as the country readied for the 1976 presidential race.

Eggleston received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1975 and has been the recipient of numerous notable awards, including the International Center of Photography Infinity Award for Lifetime Achievement (2004) and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, République Française (Order of Arts and Letters of the French Republic) (2016), among others. The Aperture Foundation honored Eggleston in October 2016. Work by the artist is held in major international museum collections.

In 2019 the Eggleston Art Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of Eggleston's work, was founded in the artist's hometown of Memphis, Tennessee. The Foundation

² Ibid, n.p.

houses the Eggleston Archive and serves as a resource for research about the artist, his art, and his subjects.

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