

MUSÉO

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*Image above: © Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Untitled, c. 1960 / courtesy of DC Moore Gallery*

## RALPH EUGENE MEATYARD AT DC MOORE GALLERY

DC Moore Gallery is presents an exhibition of photographs by Ralph Eugene Meatyard (1925-1972). In the space of just twenty-two years, this self-taught photographer created a mesmerizing oeuvre rich in formal, conceptual, and technical innovation that remained rooted in the experience of family life and the landscape of Kentucky. This exhibition will consist of forty photographs highlighting Meatyard's career from the late 1950s through the early 1970s focusing on the subjects of his family, "Motion-Sound," "Zen," and "Light on Water" series.



*Image above: © Ashley Comer, From the Opening Reception*

Meatyard purchased his first camera in 1950 to make family snapshots. This impulse quickly evolved into a full fledged artistic practice in which his wife, Madelyn, and his three children, Michael, Christopher, and Melissa, were the central protagonists. Photographing during weekend breaks from his work as an optician, Meatyard staged his willing family in unconventional poses amidst dilapidated settings. He costumed them in masks and captured them in blurred motion, sometimes alongside dolls and other evocative props. For the artist, the uncanny results suggested “the feeling of being not quite of this world.”



*Image above: © Ralph Eugene Meatyard, #48 ID, 1968-72 / courtesy of DC Moore Gallery*

Meatyard also explored nature, sensory perception, and states of mind in series such as “Motion-Sound” and “Zen.” Turning his camera on rocks, ice, and paintings created expressly for the purpose, Meatyard pushed the possibilities of his medium by experimenting with a deliberate lack of focus, slow shutter speed, and multiple exposures, all key photographic components to the exhibition. Christopher Meatyard, the son of the artist writes about his father’s interest in zen practices of the time: “He let the camera represent his mind in nature observing the flow of thoughts but not grasping after attractive or disturbing moments. He sought a quiet balance and equanimity in the flow of things, thus forms in nature exist both as focus and blur, highlight and darkness, isolated as a singular existential thing yet inextricably bound to associations. By using twigs, as the focal ‘recitation,’ with their ever present phi scaling and rotational ratios, a beautiful mathematical harmony presents itself without a calculated or overbearing design.” Images of “Light on Water,” made by photographing reflected sunlight on the moving surface of a pond or stream, relate to the abstract, gestural painting produced at midcentury.



*Image above: © Ralph Eugene Meatyard, 17 – #9 Motion, c. 1968-72 / courtesy of DC Moore Gallery*

Ralph Eugene Meatyard was born in Normal, Illinois in 1925. He attended Williams College and served in the navy. In 1950, he moved to Lexington, Kentucky, where he worked as an optician and later opened his own business, Eyeglasses of Kentucky. Meatyard began exhibiting nationally in 1954, when he joined the Lexington Camera Club. He showed his photographs at Ann DeCarava’s A Photographer’s Gallery in 1957 and presented his first one person exhibition at Tulane University, New Orleans, in 1959. The following year, he participated in the Museum of Modern Art’s The Sense of Abstraction in Contemporary Photography curated by Grace M. Mayer and Kathleen Haven. During his lifetime, he exhibited at numerous university museums as well as institutions including the Speed Art Museum, KY; George Eastman House, NY; and Denver Art Museum, CO. Meatyard died in 1972, at the age of 46.



*Image above: © Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Untitled, 1961 / courtesy of DC Moore Gallery*

Wildly Strange: The Photographs of Ralph Eugene Meatyard was on view at The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin, earlier in 2015. The Art Institute of Chicago organized the exhibition Ralph Eugene Meatyard: Dolls & Masks in 2011, which traveled to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The International Center for Photography, NY and the Center for Creative Photography, AZ presented a major exhibition of his work in 2005/2006. In 1991, Ralph Eugene Meatyard: An American Visionary traveled to museums including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art, DC; and the High Museum of Art, GA. Meatyard's photography is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MA; and the Pasadena Art Museum, CA, in addition to those mentioned above.



*Image above: © Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Untitled, c. 1963 / courtesy of DC Moore Gallery*

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