

For immediate release

WILLIAM EGGLESTON The Democratic Forest

October 27 – December 17, 2016

Opening reception: Thursday, October 27, 6 – 8 PM

Guided tour of the exhibition with Mark Holborn: 5:30 PM



Untitled, c. 1983-1986
Pigment print
45 x 65 3/8 inches (114.3 x 166.1 cm)

David Zwirner is pleased to present its first exhibition with William Eggleston since having announced the gallery's exclusive worldwide representation of the artist. On view at 537 West 20th Street in New York will be works from Eggleston's monumental project *The Democratic Forest*.

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 photographs transform the ordinary into distinctive, poetic images that eschew fixed meaning. His 1976 solo exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, curated by John Szarkowski, marked the first presentation of color photography at the museum. Although initially criticized for its unfamiliar approach, the show and its accompanying catalogue, *William Eggleston's Guide*, heralded an important moment in the medium's acceptance within the art historical canon, and it

solidified the artist's position as one of its foremost practitioners to this date. Eggleston's work continues to exert an influence on contemporary visual culture at large.

The Democratic Forest is among Eggleston's most ambitious projects and a prime example of his uniquely recognizable aesthetic. Likened to an epic journey or an enduring narrative, it comprises a careful selection of works from over ten thousand negatives he took in the mid-1980s across the southern and eastern parts of America and in several European countries. These photographs of rural back roads, industrial and residential environs, architectural details, restaurant interiors, and parking lots, among other locales, eluded the conventions of both reportage and the black-and-white art photography practiced by many of the artist's peers at the time, and instead shaped their own definition of what a photographic image could be—intuitive and charged with imaginative possibilities. Collectively, the project echoes Eggleston's predilection for the "democratic" vision of the camera, able to render equally what is in front of the lens.

The show will include over forty works from *The Democratic Forest*, the majority of which have not been exhibited previously. Although taken thirty years ago, the photographs appear to cast their subjects in a timeless light. As the art historian Alexander Nemerov writes in a new catalogue published by David Zwirner Books/Steidl on the occasion of the show,

*Eggleston's work—the great flow of it— feels...impelled by the world. It feels, to put it another way, pulled along by the world, by things outside the artist, rather than compelled by something inside him....[O]ne feels him being borne along by a current... [T]he current [he] rides along is simply the proliferation of scenes—the great panoramic film strip of it, never ending in its flow of gas stations and horse buggies and parking lots and roadside trees and filigreed urns stamped in tin. But more than that...there is the feeling that the infiniteness of the world, the sheer extent of it, is its own kind of eternity.*¹

William Eggleston was born in 1939 in Memphis, Tennessee, where he continues to live today. Raised in Sumner, Mississippi, he attended Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee; Delta State College, Cleveland, Mississippi; and University of Mississippi, Oxford.

Since the 1970s, Eggleston's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions worldwide, beginning with his above-mentioned 1976 show at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (traveled to Seattle Art Museum; Santa Barbara Museum of Art; Fredrick Wright Art Galleries, University of California at Los Angeles; Reed College, Portland, Oregon; and University of Maryland Art Gallery, College Park). Subsequent important solo presentations were held at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. in 1990; the Barbican Gallery, London in 1992 (traveled to Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Folkwang Museum, Essen; and Fotomuseum Winterthur); *documenta IX*, Kassel, Germany in 2002; Museum Ludwig, Cologne in 2003 (traveled to Museu Serralves, Porto; Nasjonalmuseet – Museet for samstidkunst, 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, D.C.; the Art Institute of Chicago; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

More recent exhibitions have included those held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Tate Modern, London, both 2013; Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, 2009 (traveled to Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; and Hasselblad Foundation, Gothenburg, Sweden, both 2010). The National Portrait Gallery in London hosted a comprehensive survey of Eggleston's portraits earlier this year.

Eggleston received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1975 and has been the recipient of numerous notable awards, including the University of Memphis Distinguished Achievement Award (1996); Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography (1998); 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 will honor Eggleston in October 2016. Work by the artist is held in major international museum collections.

Founded in 1992, the **Eggleston Artistic Trust** is dedicated to the representation and preservation of the work of William Eggleston and is directed by his sons Winston Eggleston and William Eggleston III.

Mark Holborn is an editor, writer, and curator who has worked with a wide selection of artists, especially photographers, over the last three decades. These include Richard Avedon, Lucian Freud, Lee Friedlander, Irving Penn, Nan Goldin, and many others. He first met William Eggleston in the mid-1980s when he edited the original volume of *The Democratic Forest* (1989), with an introduction by Eudora Welty, and later worked with Eggleston's son, William Eggleston III, on a 10-volume box set, published by Steidl (2015).

¹ Alexander Nemerov, "This Pretty World: William Eggleston's Photographs," in *William Eggleston: The Democratic Forest. Selected Works*. Exh. cat. (New York and Gottingen: David Zwirner and Steidl, 2016), n.p.