



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Easy Rider: Road Trips through America

July 11 - September 8, 2007

Reception for the artists: Wednesday, July 11, 6 - 8 p.m.

Summer Hours: Monday - Friday, 10 to 6

The Yancey Richardson Gallery is pleased to present our summer exhibition *Easy Rider: Road Trips through America* which pays homage to the tradition of road trips in American photography. Highway culture has long been a quintessential part of American identity. *Easy Rider* explores the common themes of social commentary, cultural geography and photographic biography produced by the marriage between the road and photography. Included are photographs and videos dating from 1935 to 2006 by Jeff Brouws, Tim Davis, William Eggleston, Mitch Epstein, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, Allen Ginsberg, Frank Gohlke, Ernst Haas, Todd Hido, Jodie Vicenta Jacobson, Lisa Kereszi, Justine Kurland, William Lamson, Dorothea Lange, Danny Lyon, Nathan Lyons, Christian Patterson, Mike Smith, Ed Ruscha, Lise Sarfati, Vicki Sambunaris, Stephen Shore, Rosalind Solomon, Alec Soth, Mark Steinmetz, Joel Sternfeld, and Garry Winogrand and others.

The road allowed Farm Security Administration photographers Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans to document the plight of Americans suffering floods and dustbowls during the Great Depression. Similarly bleak, Robert Frank's mid 1950s road trips yielded a portrait of the nation at odds with the projected optimism of the era and culminated in *The Americans*, a landmark publication, which influenced generations of later photographers.

The open road as a symbol of freedom is exemplified in Allen Ginsberg's 1964 shot of Neal Cassady at the wheel of Ken Kesey's Merry Prankster bus; Cassady's incessant cross-country journeys were a primary inspiration for Jack Kerouac's definitive Beat generation novel *On the Road*. Having spent four years riding with the motorcycle gang the Outlaws, Danny Lyons produced the book *The Bikeriders*, which emblazoned motorcycle counterculture onto the American psyche and inspired the film *Easy Rider*.

Subsequent generations of photographers continued to take to the road in order to explore the cultural landscape. Traveling on a 1969 Guggenheim to study the effect of the media on public events, Garry Winogrand recorded America's restlessness through its political rallies, peace demonstrations and space shuttle launches. In the 1970s Mitch Epstein looked at recreation across America while Joel Sternfeld's wryly-funny photographs often showed man at odds with nature. Alec Soth followed the watery artery of the Mississippi

River to make pictures of the dreams; both lost and fiercely held, of those he encountered. More recently, Tim Davis traveled the country to seek out the presence of politics in today's life; in St. Louis he found a wall mural of the United States depicted as one grotesquely stretched red state.

Several photographers have looked closely at the details and detritus of American culture for clues to its soul. William Eggleston's photograph of an elegantly wallpapered restaurant wall plastered over with the business cards of its patrons shows commercial aspirations trumping style. On the bare chipboard walls of *Reverend and Margaret's Bedroom*, Soth memorializes a moving display of family photographs while Lisa Kereszi's discovery of a biker bar's photographic collage of women flashing their breasts reveals the misogynist underbelly of road-worshipping motorcycle culture.

Many photographers have constructed a kind of biography of roads traveled, places visited and people encountered, often including themselves and family members. In 1962, Ed Ruscha photographed isolated gas stations along Route 66 filling half the picture frame with the street at his feet. Lee Friedlander frequently incorporated himself into his car images, staring into the camera through the windshield or via the side view mirror. In his witty series *America and Me*, recent Bard graduate William Lamson photographed himself interacting with elements of the roadside landscape, always hiding his face but freely revealing the shutter release. Poolside at a roadside inn, Stephen Shore incorporated his young wife Ginger into a minimalist composition of color and light. Accustomed to working on the road, Justine Kurland adjusted to motherhood by photographing her young son living with her in a camper van on an extended road trip.

Jeff Brouws has made a career of photographing along highways, evolving from cataloguing the relics of small town roadside architecture to documenting the negative impact of thruways in the 21st century. His 2004 image of a rusting red car upended in a field presents a pessimistic view of contemporary road culture: the car as a dinosaur on the road to nowhere.



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