

www.nelson-atkins.org

816.561.4000 Telephone
816.561.4011 Facsimile

The
Nelson-Atkins
Museum
of Art

4525 Oak Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64111

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First Museum Retrospective of Photographer Eugene Richards Opens at Nelson-Atkins

Artist Explores Difficult, Complicated Lives 'That Otherwise Would Go Unnoticed'

Kansas City, MO. Nov. 27, 2017—Eugene Richards’s photographs speak to the most profound aspects of human experience: birth, death, and human resilience amidst dire circumstances. Unflinching yet poetic, Richards’s photographs are firmly rooted in the texture of lived experience. The first retrospective museum exhibition highlighting his internationally renowned career, *Eugene Richards: The Run-On of Time*, features 130 photographs and opens at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City Dec. 9. The exhibition was co-organized by the Nelson-Atkins and the George Eastman Museum and runs through April 15, 2018.

“Eugene Richards confronts challenging subjects with an impassioned honesty that is at once controversial, lyrical, beautiful and melancholy,” said Julián Zugazagoitia, Menefee D. and Mary Louise Blackwell CEO & Director of the Nelson-Atkins. “His photographs illuminate aspects of society that might otherwise remain hidden in plain sight.”



Co-curated by Nelson-Atkins

Photography curator April M. Watson and Lisa Hostetler, Curator in Charge of the Department of Photography at the George Eastman Museum, this exhibition provides a complete understanding of Richards’s career, which is deeply informed by his dedication to social and economic issues.



“Richards places his trust, first and foremost, with his subjects—people who have often led difficult and complicated lives,” said Watson. “He gains their trust, getting to know their experiences of hardship and resilience, hope and despair. From that place of knowledge, as truthfully as he can, he tells their stories.”

Born in Dorchester, Massachusetts to working-class parents, Richards came to photography in the context of the Vietnam War and the civil unrest of the mid- to late 1960s. In 1967, after refusing the draft on moral grounds, Richards studied photography with Minor White at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he learned the techniques of large format photography and the rewards of close observation. In 1969, he joined VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), working as a healthcare advocate in rural Arkansas and photographing the people he came to know there. In 1970, he helped found Respect, Inc., a private, non-profit social advocacy agency.

For much of his career, Richards has worked as a photojournalist: he has been a member of the esteemed photo collective Magnum, and worked independently on assignments, many of which have led to expanded, personal book projects that include first-person texts culled from interviews with his subjects. Other projects have been entirely self-driven. This exhibition weaves together selections from each of his major published projects, as well as previously unpublished work. It highlights recurrent themes: the political, social, and economic realities that shape people’s lives, the strength of familial devotion, and the impact of time and memory on the way we understand personal and societal change.

Eugene Richards: The Run-On of Time is accompanied by a catalogue with essays by each of the curators, published by the Hallmark Family Foundation in association with the Nelson-Atkins and the George Eastman Museum, distributed by Yale University Press.

Image captions: Eugene Richards, American (b. 1944). Wonder Bread, Dorchester, Massachusetts, 1975. Gelatin silver print. Collection of Eugene Richards. © Eugene Richards.

Eugene Richards, American (b. 1944). Final treatment, Boston, Massachusetts, 1979. Gelatin silver print. Collection of Eugene Richards. © Eugene Richards.

This exhibition is co-organized by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the George Eastman Museum, Rochester, New York. In Kansas City, the exhibition is supported by the Hall Family Foundation and the Campbell-Calvin Fund.

Special programs for this exhibition:

Eugene Richards: In Photo and Film

Friday, December 8, 6:30 p.m.–8 p.m.

Atkins Auditorium

To mark the opening of the exhibition, join the photographer for a screening of a selection of his short, documentary films. A Q&A with Richards will follow.

Artist Talk: Eugene Richards

Friday, January 26, 6–7 p.m.

Atkins Auditorium

Eugene Richards will speak about his career and the powerful works in this retrospective exhibition. A book signing will follow.

The Making of an Exhibition

Eugene Richards: The Run-On of Time

Thursday, February 15, 6–7 p.m.

Lens 2

How does an art museum present potentially challenging subject matter? Hear from the Nelson-Atkins team who shaped the exhibition, *Eugene Richards: The Run-On of Time*. Moderated by Suzetta Parks, a participant of the community input group for this exhibition.

The Curator is IN!

Friday, March 9, 7–8 p.m.

Gallery L8

Join curator April M. Watson for a thoughtful conversation about works in the exhibition.

Reel to REAL: Movies & Conversations

Theme: Drug Wars

Saturday, March 10: *The House I Live In* (2012)

Saturday, March 17: *Dr. Feel-good* (2013)

1–4 p.m.

Atkins Auditorium

Engage in this film-and-dialogue series featuring movies and documentaries that spotlight challenging issues, followed by a conversation between film scholars, subject experts and audience members.

March's theme compares and contrasts the effects and aftermath of the 1980s War on Drugs—poignantly captured in Eugene Richards's photographs—with today's opioid and prescription drug crisis.

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

The Nelson-Atkins in Kansas City is recognized nationally and internationally as one of America's finest art museums. The museum, which strives to be the place *where the power of art engages the spirit of community*, opens its doors free of charge to people of all backgrounds. The museum is an institution that both challenges and comforts, that both inspires and soothes, and it is a destination for inspiration, reflection and connecting with others.

The Nelson-Atkins serves the community by providing access to its renowned collection of nearly 40,000 art objects and is best known for its Asian art, European and American paintings, photography, modern sculpture, and new American Indian and Egyptian galleries. Housing a major art research library and the Ford Learning Center, the Museum is a key educational resource for the region. In 2017, the Nelson-Atkins celebrates the 10-year anniversary of the Bloch Building, a critically acclaimed addition to the original 1933 Nelson-Atkins Building.

The Nelson-Atkins is located at 45th and Oak Streets, Kansas City, MO. Hours are Wednesday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday/Friday, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Admission to the museum is free to everyone. For museum information, phone 816.751.1ART (1278) or visit nelson-atkins.org.

For media interested in receiving further information, please contact:

Kathleen Leighton, Manager, Media Relations and Video Production
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art
816.751.1321
kleighon@nelson-atkins.org