

Los Alamos





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William Eggleston, Thomas Weski

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Synopsis

"I had this notion of what I called a democratic way of looking around, that nothing was more or less important," William Eggleston once said. This radical attitude guided his ground-braking work in color photography that has prefigured many recent developments in art and photography. Los Alamos presents a series of photographs that was never shown before, yet it contains a blueprint of Eggleston's aesthetics, his subtle use of subdued hues of color, the casual elegance of his trenchant observations of the mysteries of the mundane. The photographs in Los Alamos were shot in his native Memphis and on countless road trips across the American South from 1964 to 1968 and from 1972 to 1974. Initially, Eggleston wanted to create a vast compendium of more than 2000 photographs to be contained in 20 volumes as he wanted the viewer to look at the photographs the way one looks at the world. But he abandoned the project, and hardly any of the negatives were ever printed. Now, thirty years later, we finally get to see a selection of this encyclopedia of Southern everyday life and vernacular culture. It's a stunning discovery that makes the so-called snapshot photography of recent years look pale. The astonishingly timeless portraits, still lives, landscapes, and photographs of buildings add up to a profound investigation of the world and our way of looking at it, a poetics of pleasures hidden in full-view. They transcend the merely descriptive and uncover the universal encapsulated in the details and the detritus of life in a consumer culture.

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