

# Ralph Eugene Meatyard

## The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater

January 4 – February 3, 2018

Opening Reception: January 11, 6-8pm

DC Moore Gallery is pleased to announce ***The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater***, opening on January 4 and running through February 3, 2018 with a reception on January 11 from 6-8pm. This exhibition, a solo exhibition of photographs by 20<sup>th</sup> century photographer Ralph Eugene Meatyard (1925-1972). Meatyard, a self-taught photographer who was an optician by trade, made this photographic series in the two years prior to his death at age 46. He conceived of the series as a “photographic poem” with a deliberate sequence and captions, which form a loose narrative. A selection from this suite of work view in the gallery’s project space and will be the second Ralph Eugene Meatyard exhibition at the gallery.



Ralph Eugene Meatyard, *Lucybelle Crater and her 45 year old husband's photo-Bell friend's sonshine, Lucybelle Crater*, Gelatin-silver print, 7 5/8 x 7 5/8 in.

Meatyard purchased his first camera in 1950 to document moments of family life and his casual interest in photography quickly turned to a passion. For the next twenty-two years, Meatyard spent his weekends touring the countryside around his suburban Lexington, Kentucky home with his wife and three children, Michael, Christopher and Melissa. His family became his primary subject as he captured them playing alongside streams, frolicking through fields, and exploring abandoned barns. These ostensibly familiar photographs, however, are anything but. Here is a child cavorting through a meadow while wearing a grotesque rubber mask; there lies a decapitated doll resting beside a bucolic rolling stream. Meatyard approached his images with a dark humor that leaves their viewers with a lingering unease. Suffused with a sense of the uncanny through his sharp usage of the macabre, Meatyard’s photographs present a phantasmagoric dream and the body of work he left behind has influenced generations of subsequent artists.

“The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater” focuses on Meatyard’s wife, Madelyn, as she dons a witch mask to become the character Lucybelle Crater. Madelyn appears in each image alongside a rotating cast of characters portrayed by Meatyard’s friends, neighbors, and children. Also dubbed

Lucybelle Crater, they wear a second mask: the semi-transparent face of a very old man. The subjects' postures mimic ordinary family snapshots as they pose with arms slung around each other's shoulders, stand stiffly on front porches, or stoop to a child's height, but with their features obscured by the masks, they morph into inscrutable and unearthly figures. Meatyard cribbed the name Lucybelle Crater, and modified it slightly, from the Flannery O'Connor short story, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own."

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, whose members also included Van Deren Coke and Cranston Ritchie, amongst others. 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. 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, among others.

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DC MOORE GALLERY specializes in contemporary and twentieth-century art. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. For more information, for photographs, or to arrange a viewing, please call 212-247-2111 or email Peter Luke Colon at [pcolon@dcmooregallery.com](mailto:pcolon@dcmooregallery.com).