



WILLIAM CHRISTENBERRY

aperture

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Texts by Elizabeth Broun, Walter Hopps, Andy Grundberg, and Howard N. Fox. Aperture/204 pp./\$50.00 (hb).

William Christenberry presents a comprehensive survey of works in photography, drawing, painting, sculpture, and found object assemblage by this multifaceted artist. This collection offers a totality of Christenberry's complex explorations into cultural identity shaped by his rural Alabama birthplace. More than half the work is previously unpublished, including Kodachrome images of vernacular Southern landscapes and photographs of Ku Klux Klan rallies during the height of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Additionally, works are reproduced from his enigmatic ongoing project room, Klan Room (begun in 1979), weaving viewers through the mindset of a southern, white, male artist who has quietly, obliquely, and without irony wrestled with the system of racial segregation within which he grew up.

For decades, Christenberry has returned annually to photograph the same places, such as the Palmist Building, Havana Junction, AL (1961–88), in order to pursue his unassuming fascination with passing time. [Ed. note: See *Afterimage* Volume 33, no. 3 (November/December 2005) for an interview with Christenberry by Hirsch.] Christenberry's ritual documentation of "home" evokes pensive memories and scrutinizes scenes that unwaveringly record the physical changes brought about by nature and time without evoking nostalgia, establishing a connection between the past and the present. Each fleeting and simple structure can be a sculpture, an anxious agent for aging, decay, fragility, insecurity, and shifting purpose, as well as a signifier for the closing of a way of life.

Much has been made about Walker Evans's influence on Christenberry's photographs, which Evans called "perfect little poems." However, one of the wonderful elements of this compilation is that it extends the continuum of images built upon previous images by making us aware that, without Christenberry's diminutive, dream-like Brownie snapshots, his Memphis friend, William Eggleston, might still be making black-and-white photographs.

This publication coincides with a major exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., which is on view through July 8, 2007, as well as exhibitions that took place at New York's Aperture Gallery during the summer of 2006 and at Pace/MacGill Gallery during the fall of 2006.

ROBERT HIRSCH's next book, *Light and Lens: Photography in the Digital Age*, is due to be published by Elsevier's Focal Press in 2007. His visual and writing projects can be seen at www.lightresearch.net.