Ralph Eugene Meatyard:

An Inventory of His Photography Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

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Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Meatyard, Ralph Eugene, 1925-1972
Title:	Ralph Eugene Meatyard Photography Collection
Dates:	1964-1972
Extent:	Six photographs
Abstract:	The collection consists of six black-and-white photographs taken by Ralph Eugene Meatyard between 1964 and 1972.
Call Number:	Photography Collection PH-02566
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research.

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	2015:0001:0001-0005: Purchased with funds provided by the Charles and Elizabeth Prothro Endowment in Photography and Marlene Nathan Meyerson, 2015 (15-01-001-P). 2014:00001:0001: Purchased with funds provided by the Charles and Elizabeth Prothro Endowment in Photography, 2014 (14-01-011-P).
Processed by:	Deborah Marks, 2017
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

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Biographical Sketch

Ralph Eugene Meatyard was born in Normal, Illinois, on May 15, 1925. During World War II, Meatyard served stateside with the U.S. Navy and studied at Williams College. In 1949, he obtained an optometry license. The following year, Meatyard moved to Lexington, Kentucky, and purchased his first camera to photograph his newborn son. By 1954, he had joined the Lexington Camera Club, where he met Van Deren Coke, and the Photographic Society of America. Two years later, Coke included works by Meatyard in an exhibition at the University of Kentucky. The exhibit, entitled *Creative Photography – 1956*, also featured photographs by Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Aaron Siskind, and Harry Callahan, among others. Meatyard had his first solo show at Tulane University in 1959, the same year *Aperture* ran a feature article on his work. A proudly self-proclaimed "amateur," Meatyard continued to work full-time as an optician, focusing on his photography only during weekends. Meatyard was a voracious reader who counted numerous writers and poets among his friends, including Guy Davenport, Wendell Berry, Hugh Kenner, and Thomas Merton. In 1970, Meatyard was diagnosed with cancer; he died in Lexington, Kentucky, on May 7, 1972.

Sources:

Blumberg, Naomi. "Ralph Eugene Meatyard, American Photographer and Optician." In Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Inc., May 01, 2016. Accessed October 19, 2016. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Meatyard-Ralph-Eugene

Fisher, Meredith. "Ralph Eugene Meatyard," International Center of Photography, Accessed October 19, 2016. https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/ralph-eugene-meatyard?all/all/all/all/0

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of six gelatin silver prints taken by Ralph Eugene Meatyard (American, 1925-1972) between 1964 and 1972. The prints are arranged in chronological order. Five photographs, which feature a masked child, form a pentaptych; masks, children, and staged settings are key elements in many of Meatyard's works. A landscape from his *Motion Sound* series further demonstrates Meatyard's use of blur and multiple exposures to create mysterious abstract photographic images.

Related Material

The Ransom Center holds additional photographs by Ralph Eugene Meatyard in *Portfolio Three: The Works of Ralph Eugene Meatyard* (PH-02648); the Guy Davenport Literary File Photography Collection (PH-02665, see 2014:009:001-0038); the Parker Tyler Literary File Photography Collection (PH-02656, see 975:0090:0003); and the Edward Dahlberg Literary File Photography Collection (PH-02655, see 985:0009:0003).

Index Terms

Subjects

Disguises.

Masks.

Photography--20th century.

Photography, Artistic--20th century.

Document Types

Black & white photographs.

Gelatin silver prints--1950-1980.

Location

Accession Number: 2015:0001:0001a Untitled, 1964. Gelatin silver print, 14.5 x 17.4 cm (image); 27.9 x 22.8 cm (mount).

Meatyard, R.E., Box 6

Accession Number: 2015:0001:0001b Untitled, 1964. Gelatin silver print, 14.8 x 17.4 cm (image); 27.9 x 22.8 cm (mount).

Accession Number: 2015:0001:0001c Untitled, 1964. Gelatin silver print, 14.8 x 17.4 cm (image); 27.9 x 22.8 cm (mount).

Accession Number: 2015:0001:0001d Untitled, 1964. Gelatin silver print, 14.5 x 17.4 cm (image); 27.9 x 22.8 cm (mount).

Accession Number: 2015:0001:0001e Untitled, 1964. Gelatin silver print, 14.6 x 17.4 cm (image); 27.9 x 22.8 cm (mount).

Location

Accession Number: 2014:0001:0001 Motion-Sound #28, 1968-1972. Gelatin silver print, 17 x 17 cm (image); 29.2 x 24.3 cm (mount).

Meatyard, R.E., Box 4