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William Eggleston

**28.09.2023
– 28.01.2024**



Exhibition organised by
C/O Berlin Foundation in collaboration
with Eggleston Artistic Trust
and Fundación MAPFRE

C/O Berlin

KBr Fundación MAPFRE



Untitled, from The Outlands series, c. 1970-1974

William Eggleston (Memphis, Tennessee, 1939) is today considered a living legend of photography. Raised by his mother and his grandparents, as his father died when he was a child, he began taking photographs in his youth. The heir to a cotton-growing family, he grew up in an area of mangroves, swamps and lakes, with large stretches of plantations dotted with small towns and winding networks of narrow county roads. In Eggleston's formative years in the 1960s, this part of the United States – the South – still bore the scars of a slave-owning past and was riven by intense racial conflict, with an emerging middle class that was being transformed by the new consumer society. In 1957 the photographer began his studies at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, and two years later moved to Mississippi University. In 1965 he began to take photographs in colour. Between 1973 and 1974, while teaching



Untitled, from *The Outlands* series, c. 1970-1974

at Harvard University, he discovered the dye-transfer system, which allowed him to achieve levels of colour saturation that were unattainable using any other method. In 1976 John Szarkowski, curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, organised a solo exhibition of the artist's work, making him the first photographer to exhibit colour images on the walls of a museum. Along with Garry Winogrand and Lee Friedlander, among others, Eggleston was part of a generation of photographers who in the 1970s freed their art from many of the rules and restrictive concepts of the medium. One of the most important of these normative constraints was the notion that artistic photography could only be regarded as such if it was done in black and white.

William Eggleston. Mystery of the Ordinary is one of the most extensive exhibitions of Eggleston's work presented to date in Spain. Organised chronologically, it covers a large part of his career, from his early black-and-white images to those he began taking in colour from 1965 onwards, and includes his latest work, *The Outlands*. During his college years, Eggleston discovered the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Walker Evans, who – in his own words – opened his eyes to the possibility of a more freely realised photography. Cartier-Bresson's "decisive instant" made him understand that complex movements and scenes could be condensed into a single image based on prosaic, everyday motifs. In Evans's work, he was interested not only in the subject matter, but also in the simple and balanced frontal framing, which was not lacking in elegance. At that time, the author also had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the painting of the Abstract Expressionists, whose influence revealed to him the



Untitled, from the Los Alamos series, c. 1971-1974

possibilities of colour in his work and lent pictorial qualities to his photographs.

I couldn't imagine doing anything more than making a perfect fake Cartier-Bresson. And finally, I have succeeded. But there comes a time – and it has to have something to do with seeking my roots and coming to Memphis –, because then I didn't have those mentors, a time when I had to face the fact that what I had to do was go out in search of unknown landscapes. What was new at that time were shopping centers – so I took photos of them.

From 1965 onwards, Eggleston immersed himself in a strange and familiar universe while exploring the everyday



Untitled, from the Los Alamos series, c. 1965-1968

life of small towns in the southern United States. He photographed everything that came before his eyes: grocery shops, bars, office desks, supermarkets, gas stations, portraits of his family and friends, etc. The mechanisation of agriculture and the accelerated industrialisation of automobile production made vehicle costs cheaper in the 1960s, so that families began to be able to own more than one car. Neighbourhood shops started to be replaced by large shopping centres, known as malls, which gave rise to a social life that had previously been reserved for the squares of city centres. In the malls, located in the suburbs, everything from restaurants to shops and cinemas could be found in a single space, all accompanied by lots of colour, lights and glitter. A new world of consumption that Eggleston was quick to capture.

Dates

September 28th 2023
to January 28th 2024

Curatorship

Felix Hoffmann

Opening hours

Tuesdays through Sundays
(and public holidays): 11 am-8 pm
Last entry: 7.30 pm

From October 1

Monday (except public holidays):
closed

Tuesdays – Sundays (and
public holidays): 11 am-7 pm

Last entry: 6.30 pm

The exhibition hall will be cleared
10 minutes before closing.

KBr Fundación MAPFRE

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Bookshop

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Tickets

Standard ticket: 5 €
Ticket with reduction: 3 €
Free standard ticket: Tuesdays
(except public holidays)
Groups: 3 € / per person

Guided visit

(mediation service)

Wednesdays & Thursdays: 5-8 pm
Fridays & Saturdays: 12-2 pm, 5-8 pm
Sundays & public holidays: 12-2 pm

From October 1

Wednesdays & Thursdays: 4-7 pm
Fridays & Saturdays: 12-2 pm,
4-7 pm

Sundays & public holidays: 12-2 pm
(Information at reception)

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Cover: *Untitled*, from the *Los Alamos* series, c. 1971-1974

For all the images: © William Eggleston

Courtesy of Eggleston Artistic Trust and David Zwirner

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