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PRESS RELEASE

exhibition: Ralph Eugene Meatyard

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Peter Freeman, Inc. is pleased to present an exhibition of the photography of Ralph Eugene Meatyard which features 40 works spanning Meatyard's career from 1958 through the early 1970s. This exhibition will be the first solo presentation in New York of works from the Estate since the International Center of Photography's 2004-2005 landmark exhibition.

A unifying concept behind many of the series is "exactly the right touch of unusual into an authentically banal American usualness," as poet and close friend of the artist Guy Davenport wrote in 2004. In the influential series *The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater*, what at first glance could be commonplace family snapshots are transformed by the grotesque masks worn by the subjects. In fact, Meatyard commonly used his family and friends in his compositions. In the *Romances* series, figures, particularly his children, are set in wooded landscapes and abandoned houses as if on stage; sharing a sense of melancholia with the *Lucybelle Crater* works, they tempt a yearning to know the story behind the scene, although Meatyard himself never directed the observer how to interpret the images.

Meatyard worked with multiple methods and series at the same time, many of which, both abstract and representational, are included in this exhibition. In his abstract series such as *Motion-Sound* and *Light on Water*, Meatyard saw "no need to resort to tricks and unphotographic methods to maintain our art." Through formal and technical experiments, such as gently shaking the camera or manipulating light sources, he was able to achieve the dream-like effect of these works in the act of taking the photograph instead of in the dark room.

Ralph Eugene Meatyard was born in 1925 in Normal, Illinois. An optician by training, he bought his first camera in 1950 to photograph his newborn son. In 1954 he began to study photography seriously when he joined the Lexington Camera Club and in 1956 his photographs were included in *Creative Photography*, an invitational traveling exhibition organized by Van Deren Coke, together with works by Ansel Adams, Minor White, Aaron Siskind, Harry Callahan, and Edward Weston. A two-person show with Van Deren Coke came the following year at A Photographer's Gallery in New York. Since then his work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions across the US and abroad. Currently the Philadelphia Museum of Art is hosting *Ralph Eugene Meatyard: Dolls and Masks*, a traveling exhibition organized by the Art Institute of Chicago. Meatyard died in Lexington, Kentucky in 1972.

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