

# JAY DUSARD: A Retrospective

## View Camera to Digital Derringer

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### Exhibition Prospectus



© Jay Dusard (b. 1937–), *Julie Hagen, Little Jennie (Wagstaff), Ranch, Wyoming*, 1981, pigment print, 28 ¼ x 22 ¼", The Jay Dusard Collection, Booth Western Art Museum permanent collection, Cartersville, GA

**// POINT OF CONTACT**

Samuel Gerace, Curator of Photography, Booth Western Art Museum  
samg@boothmuseum.org; 770-387-1300 ext 7273

**// EXHIBITION TOUR**

Available 2020 and on

**// EXHIBITION CONTENTS**

*Jay Dusard: A Retrospective* features more than 60 photographs spanning over five decades. First working in architecture and cartography, Dusard began as a self-taught photographer, studying with Ansel Adams and Frederick Sommer, before going on to earn a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Pulitzer Prize nomination and several book awards. This retrospective celebrates the diversity of cultures and peoples that create America's rich cowboy culture, the impressive landscapes of the West and the impact these sometimes harsh environments leave on manmade objects and animals alike.

**// INTERPRETIVE MATERIALS**

Text for: labels, introductory and supporting panels, and a gallery guide. A master list of photographs is also provided for easy reference.

**// SPACE REQUIREMENTS**

335 feet of wall space, with a wall height of 10 feet is recommended

**// EXHIBITION FEE**

\$6,000 for 12 weeks

**// ADDITIONAL COSTS**

Prorated share of packing and crating, shipping, and etcetera.

**// CREDIT**

The Jay Dusard Collection, Booth Western Art Museum permanent collection, Cartersville, GA

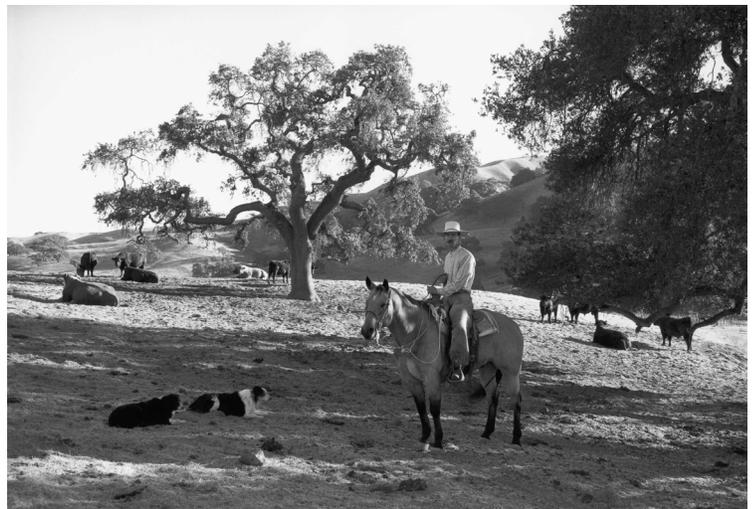
## // Exhibition Description

**Jay Dusard: A Retrospective** consists of 63 black and white and 5 color photographs of working cowboys and Western landscapes from the 1960s to 2017. Dusard's photographs show how the American West is an active, dynamic presence that shapes, and is shaped by, those that live and work on its lands. Dusard captures the diverse traditions of rancher families across the United States, Mexico and Canada, visiting 45 ranches and covering 25,000 miles of land. In his portraits, Jay includes the family's ranching gear, honoring the many histories and traditions of cow herding found across the West. In Dusard's landscapes, he often plays with the placement of the horizon, creating captivating images of landscapes both familiar and distant, where natural patterns emerge and the image balances at the edge of figurative and abstract.

Born in St Louis, Missouri in 1937, Jay Dusard was raised on a southern Illinois farm. Dusard went on to study architecture at the University of Florida, where a friend introduced him to the work of Aaron Siskind, an abstract expressionist photographer who remains a large influence on Dusard's work. During this time, Jay received a travel scholarship to study American architecture, coast to coast. After reaching the West, Dusard fell in love with the land, the people and a ranching way of life.

Jay graduated in 1961, and shortly thereafter enlisted into the U.S. Army. When stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, Dusard spent much of his *"off time working the cattle for nearby ranchers."* After his discharge in 1963, Dusard moved to a family ranch along the Arizona-Sonora (Mexico) border, where he continued to wrangle cattle, *"I'm a cowboy at heart; I like being on horses, I like working cows, and I like helping my neighbors on their ranches."*

In 1965, Jay left a short career as a cartographer and architect — which was *"archi-torture"* as he jokingly recalls — and began pursuing photography in earnest. Dusard studied the work of Ansel Adams, even taking one of his workshops in Yosemite. But it was Frederick Sommer who mentored Dusard in the craft, science and art of photography, and encouraged him to teach. By 1980, Dusard was teaching photography at Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona, and in 1981, Jay won a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, which resulted in his first of many books, *"The North American Cowboy: A Portrait."*



**Justin Fields, Fields Cattle Co., California, 2002**, pigment print, 7½" x 9¼", The Jay Dusard Collection, Booth Western Art Museum permanent collection, Cartersville, GA

Dusard recalls, *"[in the beginning,] I elected to arm myself with my 8x10" camera, the instrument I knew best,"* and later added medium format film to his process. Currently, his smaller analog and digital cameras, equivalent to the 35 mm format — or as Jay calls them, his *"derringers"* — help him to take quick shots of the land, architecture and people that catch his eye. While Jay still favors black and white film, in 2008 he began to find *"a new appreciation for color imagery."* Since then, Jay Dusard continues to explore shooting with digital cameras, along with his traditional methods, in his quest to share the West and how it *"feeds his soul,"* while hoping that his images of the West might also feed the *"souls of urbanites too."*

## // Subjects and Themes



**The Tetons, Wyoming**, 1992, pigment print, 33¾" x 86½", The Jay Dusard Collection, Booth Western Art Museum permanent collection, Cartersville, GA

This retrospective follows the transformation of Jay Dusard's photographic method **From Analog to Digital**, from smaller prints to increasingly larger, **Monumental-Scale** works. Dusard explains, "From 1966 to the present, I have worked in monochrome, exposing black-and-white film in 8x10", 4x10", 8x10", 4x10", 5x7", 4x5", 6x12", and 6x12 and 6x9 cm formats." In 2006, Jay began collaborating with "digital maestro" Carlos Mandeleveitia to create "monumental size archival pigment prints from 8x10 and 4x10 negatives." One **Monumental** print, *The Tetons*, depicts the mountain range as a small band of land under a large sky. What would be towering peaks are instead positioned near the bottom of the print, taking up only one-fifth of the overall area. At 7' long, the physical scale of the print captures the emotive and visceral experience one may feel when standing before an open, expansive landscape; where the sky is just as much a feature as the land itself.



**Winged Victor**, ca. 1970, pigment print, 7¾" x 9½", The Jay Dusard Collection, Booth Western Art Museum permanent collection, Cartersville, GA

The **Balance Between Abstraction and Figurative** is a thread that runs throughout Dusard's work. As seen in his images of rivers, valleys, cliff walls, and even the bones of animals lost to the ravages of nature, Jay's work is carefully composed to highlight patterns and textures, presenting an almost tactical experience. Jay recalls, "Black and white photography really works for me, because the minute you put black and white film into the camera, you've made one giant step into abstraction. And I'm a very design-oriented photographer." Dusard's *Winged Victory* is a still life, presented in rich clarity that abstracts not only through the medium of black and white film, but in the angles and composition Dusard uses to capture the skull. It is fitting that Jay's first foray into color photography, *Chimney Flashing*, is an image of an old metal chimney pipe that the artist kept for over 25 years, due to his interest in its corroded, brittle textures and constricting colors.



***Chimney Flashing***, 2008, pigment print, 8½" x 38", The Jay Dusard Collection, Booth Western Art Museum permanent collection, Cartersville, GA

In his portraiture work, Jay carefully positions his subjects to highlight their relationship to their surroundings, often choosing places that emphasizes their work as ranchers. Dusard is interested in "*the landscape [cowboys] operate in,*" as its own subject. As a trained architect, Jay uses his spatial awareness of the **Space and Land** to compose images that, no matter their physical scale, often have an expansive quality, a feeling that the walls or the hills captured do expand beyond the borders of the print. In *Justin Fields, Fields Cattle Co., California*, Jay places the horseman in the shadows of the lower right, while in the background a brightly lit tree draws the viewer's eyes to the rolling hills. The high horizon creates a feeling of being encircled by the landscape, of which the rider is only one small part.

In *Jesus, Juanito, Guadalupe, and Epimania Munnoz, Reata Makers, Urique, Chihuahua*, Jay takes care to name each of the people before him, while he also includes the materials used by the family in their work as lasso (*reata*) makers and ranchers. Jay positions his subjects to stand facing the camera, evoking images reminiscent of 19th-century documentary photography of settlers in front of their home, fields and equipment. It is not just the rancher or the cowboy that Jay is interested in, but their relationship to the area in which they live and work, from the ranch as landscape, to the ranch as barns, tools, and the hallmarks of the different cultures that make up the **Traditions of the American Cowboy**.



***Jesus, Juanito, Guadalupe, and Epimania Munnoz, Reata Makers, Urique, Chihuahua***, 1988, gelatin silver print, 7½" x 9¼", The Jay Dusard Collection, Booth Western Art Museum permanent collection, Cartersville, GA