William Eggleston

Artist Bio

b. 1939 Memphis, Tennessee

William Eggleston assumes a neutral gaze and creates his art from commonplace subjects: a farmer’s muddy Ford truck, a red ceiling in a friend’s house, the contents of his own refrigerator. In his work, Eggleston photographs “democratically”—literally photographing the world around him. His large-format prints monumentalize everyday subjects, everything is equally important; every detail deserves attention.

A native Southerner raised on a cotton plantation in the Mississippi Delta, Eggleston has created a singular portrait of his native South since the late 1960s. After discovering photography in the early 1960s, he abandoned a traditional education and instead learned from photographically illustrated books by Walker Evans, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Robert Frank. Although he began his career making black-and-white images, he soon abandoned them to experiment with color technology to record experiences in more sensual and accurate terms at a time when color photography was largely confined to commercial advertising. In 1976 with the support of John Szarkowski, the influential photography historian, critic, and curator, Eggleston mounted “Color Photographs” a now famous exhibition of his work at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.