

THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME:

DANNY LYON PHOTOGRAPHS

On View at the Menil March 30 – July 29, 2012

FILM SCREENING: *Los Niños Abandonados*

March 26, 6:30 p.m. Brown Auditorium, MFAH, 1001 Bissonnet

"I started out trying to become a documentary photographer, but then something else happened." - Danny Lyon, 2011



Houston, March 8, 2012 – ***This World Is Not My Home: Danny Lyon Photographs***, an exhibition of fifty-four photographs and photographic montages from 1962 to the present, traces the fascinating and wide-ranging evolution of the career of this dynamic artist, based in New York and New Mexico. A leading and explosively creative figure in the American street

photography movement of the 1960s, Lyon distinguished himself from peers like Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, and Lee Friedlander through his direct engagement with his subjects and his concern for those on the margins of society. His goal at the outset of his career, he says, was “to destroy *Life* magazine” by presenting powerful, real alternatives to the hollow pictures and stories permeating American mass media in that era of conformity. In the process he created thousands of images of striking psychological, political, and aesthetic power.

Drawn from the artist’s studio and the Menil’s collection of 246 photographs by Lyon, the exhibition features images from important bodies of work. The 1960s were an extraordinarily productive decade for Lyon in which he documented the destruction of housing and traditional architecture in lower Manhattan, studied the members and mores of different Midwestern motorcycle gangs, became the first official photographer for the civil rights movement, and made intimate portraits of death row inmates in Texas prisons. To make these affecting images,

Lyon was both a participant and an observer. He got to know his subjects and often captured their stories in highly descriptive, opinionated texts, which he has since published in numerous books alongside his photographs. Lyon rode with bikers, marched against segregation with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and spent hours inside the notorious death row “Walls Unit” of the Texas State Prison at Huntsville.

Since the 1960s, Lyon has tackled a broad range of subjects, photographing life with his family in his mixed Native American and Latino neighborhood of Llanito in Bernalillo, New Mexico; abandoned street children in Colombia; the political turmoil in Haiti; the lives of surf fishermen, a dying breed, on Long Island, New York; the chaos of life in China’s booming, polluted industrial outposts; and, most recently the Occupy New York and Los Angeles movements. Throughout this period, he also made numerous film and video works inspired by these and other subjects.

During his long and prolific career, Lyon combined an eye for beautiful compositions with a passionate interest in political struggle and change. ***This World Is Not My Home*** includes photographs from all periods of the artist’s career, as well as a number of rarely seen montage works in which the artist has arranged old and new photographs, often in both color and black and white, to create poetic collaged reflections on memory, family, and the comings and goings of friends.

Danny Lyon was born in 1942 in Brooklyn, New York. The son of a Russian-Jewish mother and German-Jewish father, Lyon was raised in upper-middle class comfort in Kew Gardens, Queens. His father Ernst, a physician, made pictures as a teenager in Germany and kept a small darkroom in a closet in the family apartment. In 1963 Danny Lyon graduated from the University of Chicago, where he majored in philosophy and ancient history. That same year, he published his first photographs working for the SNCC.

Danny Lyon’s photographs are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; as well as other museums throughout the world. He regularly shows at the Edwynn Houk Gallery in New York City. He received the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship for photography in 1969, and filmmaking in 1979.

This World Is Not My Home celebrates the artist's seventieth birthday and the extraordinary gift of seventy-five important Lyon photographs from the 1960s, donated to the museum by Edmund Carpenter and Adelaide de Menil in 2010. Organized by Toby Kamps, the Menil's curator of modern and contemporary art, the exhibition also recognizes Lyon's deep and sustained relationship with Texas, Houston, and the Menil Collection. While briefly living in Houston, Lyon met museum co-founder Dominique de Menil, who provided crucial moral support for his work as well as funding for a film about homeless orphans in Colombia entitled *Los niños abandonados (The Abandoned Children)*, 1975. This film, recently restored, will be presented in a special screening at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston during the exhibition.

This exhibition is generously supported by Michael Zilkha, Mark Wawro and Melanie Gray, H-E-B, the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, and the City of Houston.

PUBLIC PROGRAM

FILM SCREENING – *Los Niños Abandonados* (1975) A film by Danny Lyon (63 min)

Monday, March 26, 6:30 p.m.

Brown Auditorium, MFAH, 1001 Bissonnet

Lyon's film about homeless orphans in Colombia will be screened, followed by a discussion with Lyon; Toby Kamps, curator of Menil's Lyon exhibition; and MFAH Photography curator, Anne W. Tucker.

Photo: Danny Lyon, *Crossing the Ohio, Louisville 1966*. The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of Kenneth G. Futter, Magnum Photos, and the Edwynn Houk Gallery © Danny Lyon. Courtesy Dektol.wordpress.com

For more information write to press@menil.org or call 713-535-3170