Dave Woody

Looking and Looking Away

final friday reception
Friday, August 30
5:30–7:30 pm
Parking for the reception is available in the Culbreth Road Parking Garage.

ruffin gallery
MWF 9–5, TuTh 9–4:30
Ruffin Hall
179 Culbreth Road
Charlottesville va

* virginia.edu/art
Looking and Looking Away is an exhibition of works by Dave Woody, an artist whose deep involvement with portraiture has spanned more than two decades. The works presented here are richly detailed views of iconic figures encountered in situ, steeped in qualities of the view camera image—focus that touches, skips, and stings, tones that fade out into gradients. These prints take time to see. We look at them as much as through them. We become absorbed.

Woody has a keen sense for rich outskirts, whether in Texas, Virginia, or his native Colorado. The people in these pictures carry an uneasy familiarity; they are anchored to a world we can name, though they are presented subtly, exceptionally, apart from it. Their gazes mark a moment more than a place. A doubling occurs throughout the exhibition: aspects of vulnerability, isolation, and beauty—counterbalanced by strangers—charges each scene.

Taken together, as a constellation of pictures, Looking and Looking Away gives shape to a place of the mind, running parallel to the one we see. As viewers of these works we are seized by stillness, before a world that is quietly, thoroughly, insisted upon.

The implication here is as simple as it is profound: through this artist’s pictures, time is deepened, errancy and wholeness exist together, self-consciousness slips into absorption, then back again. Looking is a process on both sides of the camera. These are pictures you have to look at, and keep looking at, in order to know.

Why is this so exceptional? These pictures reveal how identifying with another can transform the world. Think of the pre-photographic world of painting visited by Proust in the Louvre. He was well-known for noticing in the canvases of centuries past the faces of his contemporaries. In Woody’s portraits, this potential is less a matter of actual resemblance than one of attention and generosity of mind.

The world of myth is apparently ongoing; it is encroaching on these figures, their gestures, the landscape and its weather. It is encroaching on the viewer as well. Like the pictures of Judith Joy Ross—an artist Woody admires—these works are more condensation than intent, collaborations made indelible by an artist at home in the lingering, abundant world.

— Adam Schreiber  
Assistant Professor of Art, DePaul University