

**Pursuing the Unanny:  
Ralph Eugene Meatyard**

Schneider Hall Galleries  
University of Louisville, Belknap Campus

May 11<sup>th</sup> -August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Opening Reception May 11<sup>th</sup>, 5-7pm

The Hite Art Institute is pleased to announce the opening of *Pursuing the Uncanny: Ralph Eugene Meatyard*, an exhibition curated by Critical and Curatorial Studies master's candidate, Hunter Kissel. *Pursuing the Uncanny* features figurative photographs by Ralph Eugene Meatyard that incorporate masks, blurring techniques, and prolonged exposures to present moments when the unconscious becomes most visible.

*Pursuing the Uncanny* identifies parallels among Meatyard photographs that collectively allude to Sigmund Freud's 1919 essay entitled "The Uncanny." Freud's text contends that a specific type of fright is prompted in adults upon an encounter with repressed material from childhood, especially as it pertains to supernatural forces, the mergence of reality and fantasy, and childhood complexes. Meatyard's photographs illustrate the components of the uncanny in multiple ways. Blurring allows Meatyard's figures to enter ghostly realms, as bodies that are neither completely in our world nor gone from it. Their presence indicates the possibility for the self to be divided—Freud suggests that children project aspects of themselves onto shadows and inanimate objects. In Meatyard's images these figments become manifest. Through the use of masks, identity becomes even more elusive; Meatyard believed that a masked figure is at once no one and everyone. In works that are devoid of figures, Meatyard uses surrogates, such as dolls, to imply the possibility for fragments of the mind to transcend the body and inhabit lifeless objects. *The Uncanny* thus serves to inform viewers the ways in which masks, children, and the spaces they occupy carry meaning across the breadth of Meatyard's work.

Ralph Eugene Meatyard (1925-1972) was a photographer working in Lexington, KY during the mid-twentieth century. He identified no less than twelve bodies of work he made during his lifetime. This exhibition features photographs from what has been posthumously referred to as *Romances* in prominent scholarship. Since his death, Meatyard has been the subject of major solo exhibitions at venues such as the International Center for Photography and the Art Institute of Chicago.