

NEWS RELEASE

Exhibition: George Dureau, *The French Quarter, 1970s – 1980s*

Dates: The Armory Show, March 5 – March 8, 2015
Higher Pictures, March 9 – April 11, 2015

Higher Pictures is pleased to present *The French Quarter, 1970s – 1980s* by George Dureau (1930 – 2014), opening at The Armory Show. The exhibition features a selection of Dureau's iconic studio portraits of male nudes, as well as rarely seen group portraits taken in the streets of his native New Orleans. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

Dureau trained as a painter and only came to photography in the early 1970s, after a shift in his work from the abstract to the figurative found him regularly taking photographs of his models. Dureau's preoccupation with black male nudes and the physicality of the male body, and his tightly composed and meticulously directed portrait style, were key influences on a young Robert Mapplethorpe, who was an admirer and collector of Dureau's work.

Formally, Dureau's portraits are virtuosic. His figures generously fill the frame and are posed with a singular sensibility to weight, balance, line, and movement. Dureau also eschewed cropping for precise, though often idiosyncratic compositions, always showing the edges of his negative to describe the exact space he had created for the camera. Some of the men, positioned carefully, isolated against a stark white background, and even perched atop plinths, approach sculpture or living still life. And yet, far from being too perfect, unapproachable studies, Dureau's portraits are undeniably immediate, carnal, and affecting. We are witness to an intimate partnership between Dureau and his sitters, who were friends and French Quarter neighbors with whom he formed lasting relationships. Even his interest in depicting the imperfect bodies of amputees and the disfigured feels utterly compassionate rather than exploitative. The generosity and empathy with which Dureau and his models regard each other is palpable and captivating.

George Dureau was born in New Orleans in 1930. He earned a BFA from Louisiana State University in 1952 and briefly studied architecture at Tulane University. Dureau passed away last year at the age of 83.

For more information please contact Patrick Lloyd at 212-249-6100.