



# William Christenberry's Black Belt

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**William Christenberry's Black Belt** William Christenberry  
**Showcases the lifelong focus on rural Alabama by an eminent American artist.**

With major exhibitions running simultaneously at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., the Aperture Gallery in New York City, and the Birmingham Museum of Art, William Christenberry is enjoying wide exposure of his artistic body of work. Since the early 1960s, he has plumbed the regional identity of the American South, primarily centering on his early home in the Black Belt counties of Alabama, the same area documented during the Depression years by Walker Evans and James Agee in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

Christenberry's poetic elucidation of Southern vernacular landscape and architecture using the media of photography, drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, and miniaturization reveals how history, the very story of place, is at the heart of his lifelong project. By exploring universal themes relating to family, culture, nature, spirituality, memory, and aging, Christenberry underscores the continuous thread of revelation of which Eudora Welty speaks. I think, he says, that oftentimes art can make an outsider look back on something he has never been part of and make him feel like he has always been part of it.

This volume celebrates particularly the semester-long residency in 2005 when Christenberry returned to Alabama as a Weil Fellow in the Arts and Humanities at Auburn University Montgomery. It includes images of actual structures that no longer exist (but which Christenberry documented for decades), Brownie and large-format photographs, K-houses from his body of work about the Ku Klux Klan, dream buildings, pen and ink drawings, and studies for wall sculptures. It is a testimonial to the enduring influence of Alabama's Black Belt landscape on Christenberry's singular vision.

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