

DAVE

## ANDERSON



**T**alk about luck. Little Rock, Arkansas, photographer Dave Anderson seems to have it in spades. While still a student at Oberlin College, near Cleveland, Ohio, he landed a job in the Clinton White House, then left that job to become a producer for MTV—he was hired to manage the nation-touring *Choose or Lose* bus, a big, crazy-looking bus that traveled the country and registered young people to vote. After that, he went on to work for Madstone, an upstart independent film company located in New York City.

It was during this time in New York that a chance sighting of a course catalog from the ICP (International Center of Photography) that turned Anderson's life upside down. As a result, he took an introductory course in black and white photography in 2003, and was completely hooked. This led to a Michael Kenna workshop that summer, in the fall, studies with Keith Carter in Beaumont, Texas.

One short year later, he took his new work to Fotofest in Houston, the semi-annual photography fair sponsoring a conference where

photographers can show their work to eminent curators and gallery directors. On the first afternoon, Anne Tucker, curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, paused to look at Anderson's prints. Within a day, the museum had acquired a number of his images, and things have kept moving steadily forward from there.

"One of my driving forces," Anderson says, "has to do with the fact that I was raised a Quaker. We're pacifists, and we believe that there's a piece of God in everyone. I think this worldview has filtered through to color my belief that there has to be something good in everyone and everything.

"The other side of my personality stems from the fact that I'm a contrarian. If you tell me that something is awful and horrible, I'm going to go and search for something nice about it. If you tell me there's some out-of-the-way place with nothing to recommend it, then I'm going to find something about it that I like. I have this deep-seated interest in proving that there are great things in places that don't get credit for being anything special."

These two qualities led to one of Anderson's major photographic projects he calls *Rough Beauty*. This refers to the small, poor, isolated town of Vidor, Texas, which he has adopted for his photographic focus. Vidor is a dusty, weathered, backwater town best known for its Klan activities. But behind this stereotype lies a town filled with real people living their lives the best they can. Anderson's images show a hidden beauty that lies dormant even in the roughest of places.

Anderson's easygoing personality and deep empathy for the people he meets makes it easy for him to enter into this otherwise closed community to photograph. His portraits have a directness and warmth that feels real and unposed. He is hoping to create a body of work that shows the common underlying humanity that exists no matter where people live.

The death of Anderson's mother in December 2002, had a profound affect on his life and his photography. He found himself turning to his camera to cope with the loss, which led to another project he calls *Roadside Ghosts*. These pictures explore the twin themes of hope and loss, using familiar and unusual objects found on his travels along the roadways of America.

"When people die," Anderson explains, "some say they are in Heaven, looking down on us. I've never felt the certainty that my Mom is watching over me. So this series explores my feelings about wondering where she is. Some photographs are a little bit humorous, like one of a huge cowboy figure, maybe 30 feet tall, used as a promotional tool, whose head

had blown off and is sitting in the yard. Other pictures, like *Dark Road*, which opens my portfolio shown here, is more somber in its mood, with the threatening sky communicating a feeling of foreboding.

"I don't want this ongoing series to sound too melancholy. There's also something about it that shows the way I experience and enjoy the world. I get a lot of pleasure finding these oddball things that aren't where they ought to be. I think *Roadside Ghosts* shows exactly how I like to experience the world. I like things that are fun, offkilter, and humorous. But there's also a bit of darkness. That's what I'm about."—David Best

#### ■ PRINT INFORMATION

Prints are selenium-toned gelatin silver, printed by the artist in sizes 10x10 and 15x15 inches.

#### ■ CONTACT INFORMATION

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DARK ROAD-AD 2003



RACE READY-AD 2004



HOPPER-AD 2003



PINS-AD 2003



BBQ QUEEN-AD 2003



CARTS—2004