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Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia presents “John Baeder”

Athens, Ga. – The Georgia Museum of Art (GMOA) at the University of Georgia will present more than 60 photographs of American culture by the artist John Baeder from April 28 to July 22, 2012. The exhibition consists of three sections of Baeder’s work: “American Roadside,” “Signs as Folk Art” and a selection of black-and-white photographs of Atlanta from the early 1960s.

Organized by Paul Manoguerra, chief curator and curator of American art at GMOA, the three sections begin with Baeder’s black-and-white photographs of Atlanta, which serve as an extension of the artist’s compulsive photography with a Brownie camera in his teenage years. He recorded objects and places that interested him in his native Atlanta, including vintage vehicles. As a young adult, Baeder investigated the depths of Atlanta, where he captured and recorded a community in transition.

“Signs as Folk Art” features 20 photographs of handmade street signs from across the country that Baeder took over the course of more than 30 years. The artist began his collection of pictures as an onlooker, interested only in capturing and documenting the written words and their artfulness as a reflection of his historical perspective. These signs initiated Baeder’s passion for and study of letterforms, composition and brushwork.

“American Roadside,” a traveling show organized by Thomas Paul Fine Art in Los Angeles, will include 27 photographs of roadside ephemera, including diners, signs and vintage vehicles. Having begun his documentation of the American diner and other off-interstate structures from a young age, Baeder went on to create detailed paintings of midcentury American diners, which these photographs illuminate. “American Roadside” is the artist’s first solo exhibition of photographic works and was displayed at the Galerie Rive Gauche in Paris in fall 2011.

Born in 1938 in South Bend, Ind., Baeder is best known for his photorealist paintings and prints of mid-century diners. Originally considered mere source material for his paintings, Baeder’s photographs have now emerged as stand-alone works of art. He attended Auburn University as an undergraduate and made frequent trips between Atlanta and Alabama, often committing to memory what he saw on the road. Baeder’s early photographs originated as a side project for the artist while he worked as an art director at a large advertising agency in Atlanta.

Artists such as Ben Shahn, Walker Evans, Berenice Abbott and other photographers working for the Farm Security Administration of the 1930s influenced Baeder’s working methods and aesthetic. Many of the images in “John Baeder” are of the American South, including the entire section of photographs featuring Atlanta in the early 1960s.

"In his photographs, he takes a close look at everyday objects, structures and landscapes," said Manoguerra. "He attempts to get the viewer to have a greater appreciation of our shared visual culture."

The museum will present several events in association with the exhibition, including a Family Day with a road trip theme June 9 and a film series on Thursdays June 7 through June 28. For more information on events or high-resolution images downloadable by the press, visit the museum's website at www.georgiamuseum.org.

Museum Information

Partial support for the exhibitions and programs at the Georgia Museum of Art is provided by the Georgia Council for the Arts through appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly. The council is a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. Individuals, foundations and corporations provide additional museum support through their gifts to the University of Georgia Foundation. The Georgia Museum of Art is located in the Performing and Visual Arts Complex on the East Campus of the University of Georgia. The address is 90 Carlton Street, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. 30602-6719. For more information, including hours, see <http://www.georgiamuseum.org> or call 706.542.GMOA (4662).

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