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Artist’s Lecture Sept. 28 to Look at Eyes of Legislators


*A sense of his soul* will open with a public lecture titled *Perspective: a look at work through a lens* at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 28, in the museum’s Mary Eddy and Fred Jones Auditorium. During his complimentary talk, international photographer Dennis Hodges will emphasize three key aspects of photography: the need for a clear vision, using available tools effectively and delivering something meaningful. Using dozens of Hodges’ original images to illustrate these lessons, the presentation will conclude with an examination of the exhibition at the museum.

Hodges looked to U.S. politics as inspiration for his new exhibition in Norman. *A sense of his soul* features 15 pairs of enlarged, photographed eyes arranged inside the windowed passageway between the Lester and Stuart wings at the University of Oklahoma art museum. The photographs reveal a startlingly intimate look at the eyes of regional and national governors.

“U.S. President George W. Bush, after his first meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, remarked that he ‘looked the man in the eye… [and] was able to get a sense of his soul,’” Hodges said.
“The focus only on eyes in A sense of his soul strips away any additional identifiers… the mouth, hair, facial structure, anything that would clearly identify who the person is, thereby making all subjects in this work equal in the eyes of the viewer,” he said. “We can learn about them only from what their eyes tell us.”

For the exhibition, Hodges reached out to the offices of multiple governors in the hopes of acquiring official, formal portraits used for publicity purposes. Hodges then cropped the images to wide rectangles exclusively showing their eyes.

Mark White, the Wylodean and Bill Saxon Director of the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, said the exhibition is timely.

“During this particularly heated election season, Dennis Hodges’ artwork seemed an appropriate opportunity to instigate dialogue among our visitors,” White said. “Rather than create an exhibition designed to inform viewers of a particular political stance, A sense of his soul encourages visitors to make their own observations based on what they see looking back at them.”

Hodges said the identities of the legislators are intentionally left anonymous in the gallery in order to put additional focus on the eyes themselves instead of their associated personas.

“In this version of A sense of his soul, I have appropriated gubernatorial portraits from various states and am attempting to give us a glimpse into the mind of the politicians that run our states by focusing only on their eyes in their official portraits,” Hodges said. “Look, then, into the eyes of these politicians and gain a sense of their souls.”

The exhibition remains on display through Dec. 30.

More information about A sense of his soul is available on the museum’s website at www.ou.edu/fjjma.

The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is located in the OU Arts District on the corner of Elm Avenue and Boyd Street, at 555 Elm Ave., on the OU Norman campus. Admission to the museum is complimentary to all visitors, thanks to the generosity of the OU Office of the President and the OU Athletics Department. The museum is closed on Mondays. Information and accommodations on the basis of disability are available by calling (405) 325-4938 or visiting www.ou.edu/fjjma.

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International photographer Dennis Hodges examines the proverbial “mirrors of the soul” in a new exhibition at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. *A sense of his soul* features 15 enlarged portraits of governors’ eyes, such as Governor 28, in the passageway between the OU art museum’s Lester and Stuart wings. The exhibition opens with a complimentary public lecture by Hodges at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 28, in the museum’s auditorium.

Dennis Russell Hodges (U.S., b. 1958)
*Governor 28, 2016*
Giclee print, 24 x 8 in.