



so the ingredients are fully integrated, adding some dilution from the melting ice. Pile more crushed ice on top into a small dome. Garnish with a large handful of mint sprigs.

To make the spiced red mulberry syrup, muddle 1 cup of red mulberries into 2 cups of sugar and 2 cracked nutmeg seeds. Let sit for 30 minutes, allowing the sugar to absorb the fruit juices. Add 4 cups of hot water and stir until sugar is fully dissolved. Let sit again for 15 minutes. Strain off all solids. Store in a sealed container and keep refrigerated, up to one week.

Jeremy's Cobbler by Claire Sprouse

INGREDIENTS

6 ounces fig-leaf soda mix (recipe follows)
Sparkling water to top
Fresh fig for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Building in a highball glass, pour batched fig leaf soda mix over ice, top with sparkling water, and garnish with a slice of fig.

To make the fig-leaf soda mix, combine about ½ cup fresh or dried fig leaves and 4 cups of hot water. Let steep for 15 minutes. Strain off leaves and add 2 cups of granulated sugar to the hot fig leaf tea. Add 1 tablespoon citric acid (or to taste). Store in a sealed container and keep refrigerated, up to two weeks.

INGREDIENTS

For one drink:
1½ ounces Bristow gin or
Cathead vodka
1½ ounces dry vermouth
1 ounce water
1 barspoon of spicy pickling liquid from Haitian pikliz*
Haitian pikliz for garnish

For six drinks:
9 ounces Bristow gin or
Cathead vodka
9 ounces dry vermouth
6 ounces water
1 ounce spicy pickling liquid from Haitian pikliz
Haitian pikliz, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine liquid ingredients in a small plastic bottle. There is no need for typical steps like stirring or shaking here. Seal your bottle tightly and store in the freezer for up to two months. Within just a few hours, your martini should be ice cold and can be poured directly into

a coupe or martini glass, without the need for any extra preparation. Garnish with pikliz.

*Haitian pikliz are a combination of shredded and pickled carrots, cabbage, and peppers. They are a staple condiment in Haitian cuisine. A few small producers sell pikliz online, such as haitianpikliz.com. The Madame Gougousse brand is also available on Amazon.

Colette's Julep by Claire Sprouse

INGREDIENTS

2 ounces Maker's Mark bourbon
1 ounce spiced red mulberry syrup (recipe follows)
Mint sprigs for garnish

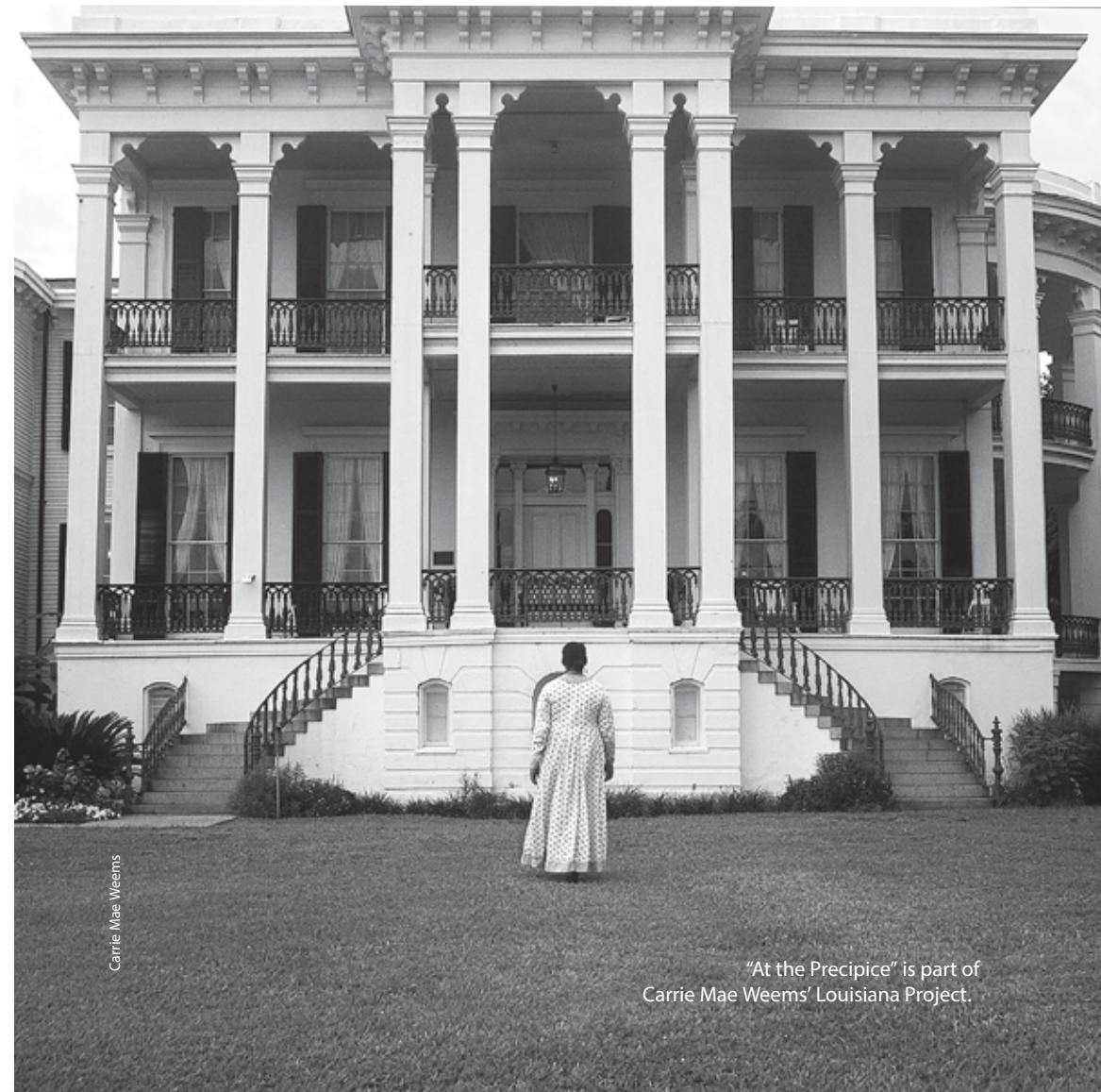
DIRECTIONS

1. In a large rocks glass, combine bourbon and mulberry syrup and top with crushed ice. Use a spoon to swizzle the drink

SEE THE TRUTH

Reading Southern photography

BY W. RALPH EUBANKS



Brittany Herbert

Carrie Mae Weems

"At the Precipice" is part of
Carrie Mae Weems' Louisiana Project.

ANYONE WHO KNOWS THE SOUTH UNDERSTANDS THAT THE REGION exists beyond stock images of rusted red pickup trucks in cotton fields or white-columned antebellum mansions surrounded by moss-laden live oak trees. Yet these traditional and sometimes romanticized tableaux are difficult to escape. The very idea of regionalism in America may be in flux, yet in the South we cling to outdated ideas even while we seek to transcend them. The prevalence of folk traditions drives a Southern desire to maintain the way we see our image as well as the very idea of ourselves. And those same myths are at odds with the idea of a changing and evolving South many of us embrace.



In her photographs that depict Black subjects, Sally Mann confronts mythologies that she, a white woman from the South, has long wrestled with in her work.

"Men, Janssen", 2006–2015 by Sally Mann. © Sally Mann. Courtesy Gagolian.



John Edwin Mason documents drag racing culture in the modern South.

Myths are tools that help us deal with contradictory elements of our culture and can help confront difficult things until they obscure what is real, what we can see every day. Telling stories makes us human. In the South, we are beginning to lift the veil of our cultural lore to see ourselves clearly. One way we can confront the stories we tell ourselves in order to survive is by engaging with images that challenge those narratives.

What contemporary photographers have realized is that there is great danger in maintaining a single story about the South, both visually and narratively. And

in the prevailing idea of the South, visual and cultural narratives are tightly wound together. Rather than focus on sharp decisive moments that capture a single dimension of the region, all should seek images that embody ideas of this place that we cannot easily explain. By seeking a visual idea of the South that is complex and can't be reductively narrowed down, we can rethink the stories we tell and document.

The South is perhaps the most documented American region. The draw is its perceived authenticity as a place geographically and culturally distinct from

John Edwin Mason

LEFT: Andrea Morales photographed Memphis police officers at the ribbon cutting for I Am a Man Plaza, 2018. RIGHT: L. Kasimu Harris documented Black-owned bars in New Orleans, including Benny's Sandpiper Lounge, shown here.



Changing the way we see the region, and changing our vision of the South, means building a new community.

the rest of the country. As historian Scott Matthews notes, images of the region seem to be caught between “enchanting primitivism and endemic pathology,” with the two often blurred together. While some places, customs, and traditions in the region remain frozen in time, many have changed and evolved. The idea of Southern place and custom also changes depending on who is behind the camera. Take that pastime of drag racing, an activity that evokes moonshine running as much as it does whiteness, with lots of good old boys in fast cars. But as documented by African American photographer and photographic historian John Edwin Mason, the racetrack in the modern South is as diverse as the region itself.

We live in a moment that calls us to rethink the very idea of the South. Now that physical manifestations of the Lost Cause are being toppled to the ground, thrown into rivers, and placed in museums, there is an urgency to imagine anew the way we conceive the image of the South. The Mason-Dixon line has long existed as an artificial dividing line. That is especially true now that Southern symbols like Confederate flags are weaponized beyond the South—such as in protests against pandemic lockdown orders in Michigan and Ohio.

Somehow, all of us must reckon with how the South took a false idea of our history, enshrined the untruths in monuments and symbols—and some-

Andrea Morales

times in visual images—and allowed these erroneous representations to speak for the region and spaces beyond it. Americans must come to terms with how we ignored that these were symbols created by the powerful to retain dominance, as well as how we allowed a tangled mass of discontinuities and untruths about the past to force many Southerners into silence and submission.

While the South once found transcendence in a romanticized self-image, looking ahead we must take care to explore the realities of Southern place. The South must be captured in all of its complexity, and not just in the smell of magnolias and the soothing, deceptive songs of mockingbirds.

L. Kasimu Harris

How do we achieve such a lofty goal? Moving toward a cultural narrative rooted in truth requires us to rethink how we frame the region. In America, social change has often originated in photography, whether it was Jacob Riis’ depiction of New York tenement life, Lewis Hine’s realistic view of the lives of child laborers, or the faces Dorothea Lange captured during the Great Depression. In images of decrepit tenements, child millworkers, and migrant mothers, these photographers brought about change. A photograph documents a past reality, and that reality lives on well after the moment a shutter closes.

Altering the image of the region is something photographers who document

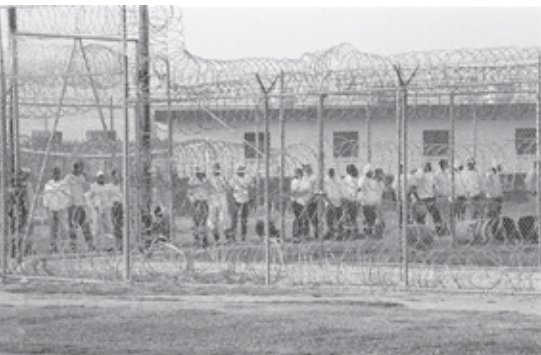
Telling stories makes us human.
In the South, we are beginning to lift the veil
of our cultural lore to see ourselves clearly.

Dialia Wooten walks home from church in the Baptist Town neighborhood of Greenwood, MS, in this 2010 photo from Matt Eich's long-term project "Sin and Salvation in Baptist Town."

the South think about each time they pick up their cameras. It is a heavy burden; photographic evidence has real power. A photograph can show a great truth yet contain within it an enormous lie. Photography can serve as a way to imagine our future and look at the past with clearer eyes. We can begin to see the truth when we understand the ways we have been deceiving ourselves.

The desire to represent reality, beauty, and truth at the same time remains one of the great tensions in the art of photography. The looming question the South has to face is, how do we look toward the future in a way that embraces what is real as well as what is aesthetically pleasing?

A few photographers are now helping us reimagine Southern place and space.



To imagine a future, they acknowledge the past without allowing it to overshadow the present.

Carrie Mae Weems explored the tension between romance and reality in her 2003 Louisiana Project, a series of photographs commissioned by Tulane University to commemorate the bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase. Weems pushes against mythology and gets us to think about the Southern landscape in a new way.

Weems is both photographer and subject, placing her body in front of

antebellum houses and spaces. She reminds the viewer that enslaved people once occupied these spaces. And she does this in the same cultural space that rendered slavery invisible and created social hierarchies built on power imbalances. These are photos of property that foreground a woman who would have once been property. Weems envisions a future for the region by making us rethink nostalgic-laden images of the mythological Southern past.

The job of every artist is to push against orthodoxy. In the South, that means pushing against tradition and exceptionalism. Sally Mann confronts the mythologies she, as a white woman from the South, has long wrestled with in her work. Never one to shy from controversy, Mann has started to develop a body of photographic work with Black subjects, particularly Black male subjects. Taking a photograph is an invasive act. Her use of the Black male body as a subject invites the viewer to explore their own vulnerabilities alongside the photographer. Mann has referred to these images as opening a doorway from “an immutable past to a future” she could not imagine in her youth in the segregated South.

In three photographs from her book *A Thousand Crossings*, Mann juxtaposes the images of her photographic subjects with those of the landscape of the Blackwater region of Virginia, a swampy area in the southeastern part of the state, a place tied to the Underground railroad and the idea of Black freedom. What I see in the pairing is how Blackness has survived and thrived in the South, in spite of threats and dehumanization. Conjoining the human body and landscape, Mann reckons with the past while asking the viewer to confront their own relationship with the South’s history. This works because, as the critic Hilton Als has written, “Mann doesn’t

Previous spread: Matt Eich; This page: Chandra McCormick



THIS PAGE: Marion Post Wolcott documented Latino farmworkers on Knowlton Plantation in Perthshire, MS, as part of her work for the Farm Security Administration in 1939. OPPOSITE: Chandra McCormick photographed prisoners at Angola, LA, on their way to work in the fields in 2004.

assume that she is speaking about the Black experience, but a Black experience.”

Photographic evidence and aesthetics must also confront preconceived ideas about the region. While regional identity in the United States is often characterized along a North-South binary, Southern identity is often framed by a racial binary. Yet the South has never existed solely within a Black-white framework. In 1939 Marion Post Wolcott documented Latino farmworkers on the Knowlton Plantation in Perthshire, Mississippi. Rory Doyle’s photographs of Latino farmworkers today connect the past and the present, acknowledging the presence of Latinos in the South as workers and as people.

Like Doyle, Matt Eich pushes against a singular view of the Mississippi Delta in his series “Sin and Salvation in Baptist Town,” which documents the Baptist

Town neighborhood of Greenwood, a place that was once the home of bluesmen Robert Johnson and Honeyboy Edwards, a space imbued with mythology. During the filming of *The Help* in 2011, the Baptist Town neighborhood was used as a stand-in for Jim Crow-era Jackson, Mississippi.

Eich pushes against the mythologizing and the attempts to pathologize the people and the neighborhood. He removes the idea that the people captured in these photographs exist as an impoverished, ghettoized Other. Eich allows the viewer to see what exists in any community in this country: caring, intimacy, and a desire to support neighbors so that everyone survives and thrives.

In their documentation of the South, photographers confront the need to capture tradition. But whose traditions are deemed worthy of documentation? It’s an issue L. Kasimu Harris explores

Marion Post Wolcott/Library of Congress

Changing the way we see the region, and changing our vision of the South, means building a new community.

in his series of photographs of vanishing Black bars and taverns in his native New Orleans. In these spaces, Harris writes, “tradition is paramount—and I fear what will become of my city if these traditions are lost.” Harris captures the joy of the people who inhabit these bars, which originated as safe havens during segregation. He includes details such as photos of patrons that line the walls and posters commemorating distant celebrations as a way of acknowledging the people from the past alongside those who inhabit the space today.

Capturing tradition means connecting the past and the present and creating a new story. It is what Andrea Morales does documenting Memphis in the post-civil rights era. The aesthetic Morales embraces is contemporary. The linkage to the civil rights past exists in the frame of the image, whether it is policemen gathered for what appears to be a staged photo opportunity beside an “I Am A Man” sculpture, or a neighborhood parade with the destructive signs of gentrification as a backdrop. Morales rejects the detached point of view that characterizes much early documentary work in the South. “When we connect with other people and their circumstances, when we listen to the stories of each other’s lives, we build community. I know I need that. I think we all do,” she says.

Changing the way we see the region, and changing our vision of the South,



Seasonal workers prepare to plant sweet potato slips in Vardaman, MS, in this 2017 photograph by Rory Doyle.

means building a new community. Engaging with the image of the South, we see a connection with those captured in the frame rather than view them as separate and distinct from ourselves. That includes the South hidden from our view. Carrie Mae Weems reveals that world when she emotionally mines the African diaspora in the American South in her work. Similarly, Chandra McCormick recognizes the incarcerated people who are also part of this land.

McCormick’s long-term work at Angola State Prison in Louisiana reminds

Rory Doyle

us of what lies beyond the gates and razor wire that surround our prisons, places we often speed past in our cars without looking. McCormick’s work reminds us that, as we begin the process of altering our gaze, we also confront the menace in our landscape alongside the beauty.

The past and the present exist within the frame of a photograph as well as in

the photographer’s vision. As we move away from focusing on sharp decisive moments toward images that we cannot easily explain, we can begin to focus on complexities that were once obscured. What we see can transform the idea of Southern place and imagine a new future for the South. That is the only way we can begin to see the truth. 🍷

W. Ralph Eubanks is the author of three books, including *A Place Like Mississippi: A Journey Through a Real and Imagined Literary Landscape*, forthcoming from Workman in 2021. He is a visiting professor of English and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi.