

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARONDELET PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL MEADS

June 17 – August 21, 2004

*Opening reception:
Thursday, June 17th, 2004
6:00 to 8:00 p.m.*

ClampArt is pleased to announce "Carondelet: Photographs by Michael Meads."

Carondelet Street (pronounced kahr-ahn-duh-*let* with a harsh "t") runs past Michael Meads' home and studio in New Orleans. Situated just one block off the Mardi Gras parade route, Meads' house is a center for year-round activity, an oasis for misfits and malcontents.

Contrary to common perceptions, New Orleans is not just Bourbon Street, Mardi Gras beads, and parades. For Meads, New Orleans is a city for persons hoping to escape the confines, restrictions, and restraints of a frustratingly homogenized world. Further, the ever-present danger of a hurricane finally destroying the city leads him and many of his fellow residents to approach life with the intention of living for the here and now. Meads revels in the ways of New Orleans and constantly works to highlight that spirit in his photographs, paintings, and drawings. In fact, it was precisely this air of freedom and celebration that led him to the city six years past.

Trained as a painter, Michael Meads did not originally consider exhibiting his photographs. While sometimes serving as studies for his drawings and paintings, the artist creates the photographs for his own record—a private diary documenting his world and those passing through it. Only in recent years have Meads' earliest images from Eastaboga, Alabama (his home town) been shown. His photographs are now exhibited in galleries around the world, and are being acquired by several museums.

Much in keeping with the art of many of today's young artists, Meads' New Orleans images are decisively utopian in spirit (a contrast to the darker world captured in his earlier Eastaboga photographs). As with his former studio in Alabama, the house on Carondelet posts few strict rules. By and large, anything goes. Neighbors drop by at all hours of the day and night to carouse, unwind, and ultimately, just be themselves. No judgments are made, and the guests are free to explore whatever it is they like. At turns, depending on the company that day, the environment can be raucous, rowdy, or relaxed. Most often the house on Carondelet serves as a place simply to kick back, talk, and enjoy the companionship of close friends. At times an informal and refreshingly unconventional salon, discussions of art, music, and literature are the norm.

This generation is one that largely eschews the limiting labels, categories, and ultimate fragmentation that was central to the identity politics of the past two decades. These people are not overtly concerned with "gay," "straight," "jock," "freak." Michael Meads' photographs are more than just mere observation or documentation—one can sense the intimacy and affection between him and his subjects. On Carondelet Meads is an active participant, not just a detached observer.

For more information please contact Brian Paul Clamp, Director. Summer hours are Tuesday through Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The gallery will be closed August 24 – September 3, 2004.

