

THESE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE SO NORMAL, THEY MIGHT JUST MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE

Photographer Roe Ethridge deserves a first—and second—look.

By **RJ Smith** - November 3, 2016

All photographs by Roe Ethridge

Roe Ethridge balances stuff. Look at just an image or two and the work can seem slick and glossy, but add a few more glances and the quirks start popping out at you—the glitches and “mistakes,” you realize, are what often make the work what it is. *Nearest Neighbor*, on view through March 12 at the Contemporary Arts Center, is Ethridge’s first solo museum show in America, a major survey of his photography career. He plays with aspects of documentary and fashion photography, as well as catalog art, in subtle ways that can make the work seem hyper normal—until you realize normality has taken a holiday.



Thanksgiving 1984 (table), 2009, C-print 34 x 45 inches



Durango in the Canal, Belle Glade, FL, 2011, C-print 51 x 76 inches



Me and Auggie, 2015, Dye sublimation print on aluminum 45 x 30 inches





Nancy with Polaroid, 2003-2006, C-print 40 x 32 inches

Ethridge is an exception in a photographic world that still puts barriers between commercial and artistic practice. "There are lots of people who think, *Well, it's not art if it's commerce, or, You're not a serious commercial photographer if you're a*

carpetbagging artist." He shrugs. "It's kind of a dual universe Game of Thrones where each one has its ruthless customs, and while they know each other, they don't really blend." Not that Ethridge is a blender, himself. More like a beguiling hybrid artist existing outside of whatever category you try to put him in.