

Traveling exhibitions specializing in photography and works on paper



WRIGHT MORRIS: PHOTOGRAPHS & WORDS

"There's little to see, but things leave an impression. It's a matter of time and repetition. As something old wears thin or out, something new wears in. The handle on the pump, the crank on the churn, the dipper floating in the bucket, the latch on the screen, the door on the privy, the fender on the stove, the knees of the pants and the seat of the chair, the handle of the brush and the lid to the pot exist in time but outside taste; they wear in more than they wear out. It can't be helped. It's neither good nor bad. It's the nature of life." – Wright Morris, 1968

Throughout his long and distinguished career, the novelist and photographer Wright Morris (1910-1992) gave a profound voice to the American heartland. A two-time recipient of both the American Book Award and the Guggenheim Fellowship, Morris viewed his pictures, not as literal illustrations of his writing, but as co-equal expressions of meaning, relishing "the unexpected resonance and play" between words and photographs. The first of his pathbreaking photo-illustrated books, *The Inhabitants* (1946), is an architectural chronicle of the Great Depression as recorded in a winding coast-to-coast drive: "I saw the American landscape crowded with ruins I wanted to salvage. The Depression created a world of objects toward which I felt affectionate and possessive. I ran a high fever of enthusiasm and believed myself chosen to record this history before it was gone."

While at first glance this work might lead one to classify Morris as a documentarian in the style of the FSA photographers such as Arthur Rothstein and Dorothea Lange, ultimately Morris's is a more cerebral, detached approach. He himself recognized this, recalling his meeting with the FSA's Roy Stryker as follows: "He was profoundly bemused by the absence of people. People, he said, were what it was all about.... I tried to explain that the presence of people in the houses and barns was enhanced by their absence in the photographs. He had heard many things, but nothing so far-fetched as that.... I left his office empty-handed." Rather, in his frontal portraits of silos, barber poles and barns, Morris's quest to capture "the representative structure that would speak for the numberless variations" anticipates by thirty years Hilla and Bernd Becher's "typologies" and the *New Topographics* of Lewis Baltz et al. Morris's follow-up illustrated book to *The Inhabitants*, titled *The Home Place* (1948), focused on his family's farm in Chapman, Nebraska, capturing the theme of homecoming which was to underpin his writings for the remainder of his career.

We are proud to present the first Wright Morris exhibition in memory in which most of the works are rare vintage prints. A selection of his literary first editions is included (to be displayed in a glass cabinet).

EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Number of photographs: 30

Frame sizes: 16 x 20 and 14 x 18 inches

Linear feet: 100, plus a selection of first-edition books to be exhibited in a glass case.

Rental fee: \$3800 for 8 weeks

Additional weeks may be booked for an extra 10% per week.