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Who are the Cowboys and Cowgirls of the Mississippi Delta? The Arts Council of Lake Oswego’s multi-faceted Gallery Without Walls and ARTspace exhibitions highlight these modern-day individuals with deep historic roots.

Lake Oswego, Oregon - The Arts Council of Lake Oswego (ACLO) is proud to present Delta Hill Riders by artist Rory Doyle on view October 3 through November 13 at the ARTspace Gallery located at 41 B Avenue in Lake Oswego. In addition, the community and visitors can view the Gallery Without Walls installation at Westlake Fire Station – an innovative install depicting large-scale photo murals from this same collection. The Arts Council would like to thank Sara Lea for her generous support of the ARTspace Gallery exhibition and John and Diane Economaki of their sponsorship of the Gallery Without Walls piece at Westlake.

Delta Hill Riders is an ongoing documentary photography project that aims to tell a more realistic and diverse story about black cowboys today by focusing on African-American cowboys and cowgirls in the Mississippi Delta.

Photographer Rory Doyle says his photographs “resist both historical and contemporary stereotypes and ultimately, the project aims to press against my own old archetypes of who could and could not be a cowboy, and what it means to be black in Mississippi while uplifting the voices of my subjects.” Many of these photos were taken on weekend trail rides organized by deeply-rooted riding clubs to bring family and friends together for riding, socializing, food, music, and sharing of both fun and knowledge.
Doyle’s inspiration for the project began by chance in December of 2016 when he attended the annual holiday parade in Cleveland, Mississippi working as a staff photographer at the university. He stumbled upon a group of riders in the parade and asked if he could come and photograph where they keep their horses. “To begin with,” Doyle says, “I had very minimal knowledge of the deep history of black cowboys. The story told of what the American cowboy is has been so white [and] theirs [Black cowboys] is a part of history that has been overlooked.” Doyle continues, “I make an effort to connect with people who feel disconnected from the mainstream. Photography provides a platform for people to share their voices. By doing this, we help expand horizons and educate a wider audience.” Through Doyle’s photojournalism, stories can be shared with a larger audience and photography provides a unique way to document moments that matter.

“I’m excited that Rory Doyle will be sharing his larger Delta Hill Riders project with us as an exhibition in October. The opportunity to display his two photo banners at Westlake Fire Station has expanded our definition of Gallery Without Walls to include a new medium for us and a new location for display. Clackamas County has a huge equestrian community and the cowboy identity is alive and well here in the West. I think it’s really neat to get a peek into an equestrian community in another part of the country and expand our idea of who is a cowboy through the lens of Rory Doyle’s camera. These are beautiful photographs that artistically portray a tight-knit community and documents their traditions and lifeways” remarks Stephanie Johnson, Public Art and Program Manager.

ARTspace Gallery will have a virtual opening on October 9, at 5 p.m. To sign up and get the zoom link, please see the Arts Council website at www.artscouncillo.org.

Rory Doyle is a working photographer based in the rural Mississippi Delta in the town of Cleveland. He won the 16th Annual Smithsonian Photo Contest with the Delta Hill Riders project. Building on his work with Delta cowboys, Doyle has traveled to Cuba, Colombia, Jamaica, Mexico, and Canada as an ongoing project to explore cowboy culture across the globe. His photographs have been featured widely, including The Guardian, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and BBC, and garnered awards in both the arts and photojournalism.

The ARTspace Gallery is open Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Also, this exhibition will be offered online through the Arts Council website. Online viewing will begin on October 3 at 5 p.m. A short video of the Delta Hill Riders highlighting the Smith family, featured in the exhibition, will be available.

The Arts Council of Lake Oswego administers the public art program partnering with the City of Lake Oswego along with the community to select, site, and maintain the nationally recognized Gallery Without Walls public art program. ACLO also oversees the City's permanent art collection of over 250 works, and provides accessible programming for the community.

About the Arts Council of Lake Oswego: The Arts Council of Lake Oswego works to ensure that the arts are an integral part of life in our community, now and into the future. The Arts Council is located at 41 B Avenue, Lake Oswego, OR 97034. For more information visit http://www.artscouncillo.org or call 503-675-3738.

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Young Riders, 2018
Framed digital photograph
24-1/4” x 31-3/4”