

GALLERY 1 : Harrison Haynes—*Going Home Is Such a Lonely Ride*

GALLERY 2: Jeff Whetstone—*Pioneer Species*

ON VIEW: March 9–April 28, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Branch Gallery is pleased to present two exhibitions of new work: Harrison Haynes: *Going Home is Such a Lonely Ride* and Jeff Whetstone: *Pioneer Species*.

Harrison Haynes's new work explores the notions of time, space, and memory, concerning itself with the banal comfort of the familiar. Adapted from the lyrics to Dory Previn's, 'Lady with the Braid' (1971), the show's title speaks to the ambiguous and contradictory emotions that occur when one is reacquainted with the familiar specter of home.

Employing formal conventions that convey strong emotional states-of-being—such as use of opaque paint colors and the isolation of figures within the landscape—Haynes's paintings bring to mind the uneasy balance that family relationships dictate. In many of the works, figures, cars, and objects seem to float alone in a sea of color, caught between sky and earth in an uncertain disharmony. Trees and buildings are covered in kudzu, which seems to take over space with an insidious insistence. Here, landscape becomes active, literally bearing down on the paintings' inhabitants in a metaphor for the pressures associated with homecoming.

The works touch on autobiographical themes, drawing from Haynes's own experience returning to his native North Carolina from New York, exploring the anxiety that familiar landscapes can elicit when they move from memory to reality.

Jeff Whetstone will present a new series of large-scale silver gelatin prints in *Pioneer Species*. The exhibition takes its title from a biological term that describes species that take advantage of recently blighted ecosystems by colonizing and dominating it. Typically, the term refers to plant species such as *Pueraria lobata* (or kudzu)—species that are hearty, deep rooted, fast growing, and can thrive in poor soil.

Working with a view camera in black and white, Whetstone references the history of American survey photographers such as Ansel Adams, Timothy O'Sullivan, and others who helped America identify the land as providentially and romantically wild. Yet, in Whetstone's photographs, mankind takes on a predatory role, acting as a pioneer species that dominates a decimated landscape. These works continue the artist's investigation of the world through the lens of evolution and human endeavor, exploring the ongoing battle between culture and nature. As the artist states: "Spirituality, sexuality, and dominance intertwine in my work, as our survival as a species has relied upon these motifs. I find these themes most prevalent in masculine rituals that pertain to the Wild. Hunters, fishermen, and backwoods explorers instinctively enact the rites that connect them to the history of human struggle with nature. Our cultural mythologies are rooted in primordial mortality, where the Wild is both a metaphysical nemesis, as well as a benevolent provider. Remnants of these mythologies and our natural survival instincts simmer beneath our apparent modernity. I depict these instincts seeping out and making themselves evident."

Gallery Hours: Wed–Sat 12–6, or by appt.

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