



THE  
**SHELDON**  
Arts Without Borders

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## **JAMES SOUTHARD'S WORK DOCUMENTS DISAPPEARING WAY OF LIFE IN RURAL NEW ENGLAND**

ST. LOUIS – The Sheldon Art Galleries presents **James R. Southard: *Why Buy the Cow***, March 5 – May 15, 2021 in the Gallery of Photography. A free public opening will be held **Friday, March 5 from 12 - 9 p.m.** Visitor capacity for the opening will be limited to 10 visitors per 15-minute time slot. Advanced registration is required at [TheSheldon.org/events/springopening/](https://TheSheldon.org/events/springopening/). *Registration ends at 10 a.m. on March 5.* Registration for an exclusive, 45-minute time slot for a party of up to 10 people, is required during normal gallery hours. Sales end at opening time each day (noon on weekdays and 10 a.m. on Saturdays). Gallery hours are Tuesdays – Fridays, noon – 5 p.m. and Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Admission is free. All staff and visitors age 9 and older will be required to wear masks. For more information on exhibitions, reservations and safety procedures, visit [TheSheldon.org](https://TheSheldon.org). *This exhibit is sponsored by Barbara McDonnell.*



James Southard's work has addressed a broad range of subjects including cultural identity, human reactions to cinematography used in film noir and science fiction films, and habitual surveying. *Why Buy the Cow* tackles socio-economic issues in rural Vermont, utilizing documentary and conceptual art practices. Documenting a small-operation dairy farmer's way of life, Southard's work focuses on The Rankin Farm near Johnson, VT, and expands to include disappearing peripheral jobs, such as those at creameries, dairy truck drivers, veterinarians, feed suppliers and more.

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For decades, dairy farming has been one of New England's most crucial agricultural jobs. In Vermont, it has historically been its primary farming staple. With the growth of large-scale farming elsewhere in the country and the falling prices of dairy products, Vermont farms have long been shuttering, with an 85% drop in farms since 1947. If this way of life disappears, the labor practices in the dairy industry will dramatically shift towards automation and change not only Vermont's historical way of life, but the rest of rural New England's as well.

Southard, at the farmers' request, documents, in minute detail, this disappearing way of life in rural New England shedding light on the many side-effects of this loss – including the increased rate of suicide among the farmers.

James Robert Southard received his B.F.A. from the University of Louisville in 2005 and his M.F.A. in Fine Arts at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh in 2011. He has exhibited nationally and internationally, including at the Moscow Biennale for Young Art, *Hel'Pitts'Sinki'Burgh* in Finland and Camaguey Cuba's 5th International Video Art Fest, and he has participated in the Internet Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy. Southard currently teaches photography at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

The not-for-profit Sheldon Art Galleries exhibits works by local, national and international artists in all media. Over 6,000 square feet of the galleries' spaces on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor are permanently devoted to rotating exhibits of photography, architecture, music art and history, and children's art. A sculpture garden, seen from both the atrium lobby and the connecting glass bridge, features periodic rotations and installations, and the Nancy Spirtas Kranzberg Gallery on the lower level features art of all media. The Sheldon actively supports the work of St. Louis artists in all mediums and features a dedicated gallery with museum-quality exhibits by St. Louis artists, past and present.

Financial Assistance to the Galleries are provided by the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency and by the Regional Arts Commission and the Arts and Education Council.

For more information about the Galleries call The Sheldon at 314-533-9900 or visit [TheSheldon.org](http://TheSheldon.org).

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Image caption: James R. Southard, *Illa with Calf*, from the *Why Buy the Cow* series, 2018 – present, pigment print, 25 ½ x 25 ½ inches, courtesy of the artist.