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Exhibition Title: Alan Govenar: *The Eyes and Ears of the People*

Exhibition Dates: June 13 – July 25

Opening reception (artist will be in attendance): Saturday, June 13, 5 – 7 pm



Alan Govenar, *Couple Dancing*, Longhorn Ballroom, Dallas, Texas, 1987, archival pigment print, 39 1/2" x 69 1/2" x 1 1/2"

Cris Worley Fine Arts is honored to present *The Eyes and Ears of the People*, by award-winning photographer, writer, poet, playwright and filmmaker, Alan Govenar, opening Saturday, June 13th, with a reception from 5–7 PM. The exhibition, which continues through July 25th, features a powerful series of photographs portraying individuals from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and traditions.

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The exhibition reflects decades of Govenar’s documentary work exploring cultural identity, representation, and heritage. Central to the exhibition are life-sized and smaller-scale portrait photographs that examine how scale, presence, and visual representation shape the viewer’s relationship to the subject.

Govenar is an interdisciplinary artist, whose subjects inform his medium of expression, whether in photography, poetry, novels, films, musical theatre, and studies that bring new perspectives to historical issues and diverse cultures. Poetry is a constant for Govenar. He has been writing poems for years, creating and revising works that often come to fruition decades later. For this exhibition, Govenar wrote the following poem, personal, but as always, in pursuit of the universal, hopeful, finding common ground in a very divided world.

Standing face to face  
with someone I don’t know.  
Realizing something new about myself  
by looking at someone else.  
Even if whoever couldn’t be more different  
than who I am.  
Imagining connections between realities  
that often live in limbo.  
Without borders or limitations.  
Trusting the words that find their way  
out of my mouth  
and the images that take shape  
through the lens of my camera.

Govenar’s exploration of human-sized portraiture began with a 1987 photograph of a couple dancing at the Longhorn Ballroom, created from a 4x5 color negative made from a Kodachrome slide. That image inspired an extensive body of work focused on recipients of the National Heritage Fellowship, the nation’s highest honor in folk and traditional arts awarded annually by the National Endowment for the Arts. Many of these individuals were also subjects of Govenar’s films, books, radio programs, exhibitions, and catalogues



produced through Documentary Arts, the nonprofit organization he founded in 1985 to advance new perspectives on history and diverse cultures.

Throughout the process of creating this series, Govenar encouraged subjects to present themselves as they wished to be seen. Working within a documentary framework, often with the assistance of a photographic assistant and carefully constructed studio lighting environments, his approach remained intentionally open, collaborative, and responsive to the individuality of each subject.

Over the years, Govenar has expanded this work internationally through major exhibitions and commissions. In 2008, he was commissioned by the Musée franco-américain du château de Blérancourt to direct and produce a series of sixteen human-sized videos. In 2010, he created forty-four life-sized photographs for the exhibition *Recognizing Our Cultural Heritage: An American and Flemish Dialogue* presented at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. Organized in collaboration with FARO in Brussels, the exhibition later toured five cities throughout Belgium. Concurrent projects included *Dual Lives: Chinese Opera in New York City* for the Wright Museum and the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, as well as a series of human-sized videos for *Jasper, Texas: The Community Photographs of Alonzo Jordan* at the International Center of Photography.

*The Eyes and Ears of the People* continues and expands upon these longstanding investigations into cultural memory, identity, and representation. Interweaving the visual language of documentary film and photography with influences drawn from Govenar's novels, poetry, and plays, the exhibition invites viewers to consider how individuals actively participate in shaping the ways they are seen.

Works by Alan Govenar are held in numerous prominent museum, library, and institutional collections in the United States and internationally, including The Museum of Modern Art, Victoria and Albert Museum, Centre Georges Pompidou Bibliothèque Kandinsky in Paris, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Library of Congress, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the New York Public Library, the Boston Public Library, the Getty Center, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago John M. Flaxman Memorial Library, the Tyler Museum of Art, Texas Tech University, and the Meermanno Museum in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Cris Worley Fine Arts is a Dallas, Texas based contemporary art gallery located in the Dallas Design District. With over 20 years of experience, Cris Worley is dedicated to promoting innovative work by contemporary artists at various stages of their careers.

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