

TAKE 5

HELLO, GEORGE DUREAU: San Francisco Calling

Telephone Conversation

with Jack Fritscher
Six Weeks After a Week Together in New Orleans
Audiotape
May 28, 1991

“Give me the five pictures
that you absolutely want to be seen forever.”

Jack Fritscher: Hello, is this Mr. Dureau? This is Jack Fritscher calling. How are you?

George Dureau: Jack Fritscher! This *is* “the Jack Fritscher” who went to New Orleans, isn’t it?

Jack Fritscher: Yes, who had a wonderful time with you in New Orleans.

George Dureau: Listen, dear heart, how are yez? How are you?

Jack Fritscher: I meant to call you all weekend, but I figured that you’d be out running around town.

George Dureau: I’m watching [gossip columnist] Kitty Kelly. She’s doing rather well, actually, making everybody else look like a liar. She’s blushing, saying, “Oh, I’m not a Washington insider.” I think she’s right about that. She’s telling now where the Frank Sinatra thing started. She really knows her stuff. Oh my God, wait a minute!

I just kicked my wine over. When your bed is higher than your table, there's no telling what will happen to your beverage.

Jack Fritscher: I can picture where you are.

George Dureau: You *know* where I'm at.

Jack Fritscher: Yep.

George Dureau: I was sitting with my bare feet up on the post, right? And I flopped one foot down. It went onto the little round table in front, the ice cream table with all the pots on it, and kicked my ugly glass of white wine. Your model Glen Thompson just left.

Jack Fritscher: Your wonderful model.

George Dureau: He came by to visit. He seemed to enjoy the video shoot when you were here. He's fine. I'm always worried about him. When you were here, I was worried about his partying too much in this party town and not showing up. He always has to ask for money. It makes me crazy because I know he makes enough money to cover everything. It makes me worried.... He gets about \$30 a day and he pays \$55 a week for rent with utilities included, and every single day, because we're all friends, he calls somebody wanting money. When he doesn't get it, he calls somebody else.

"Could you give me \$15 on tomorrow's money?"

The other night he came over because I had withheld \$10 from him last Thursday and when he would call over the weekend, I would say, "Oh no. I don't have it. I'm still broke." I thought I would play broke on him for a change.

To tell the truth, it was a reflection of the way I had actually been stretched for cash for days before when I suddenly had to pay up to the IRS and come up with \$4,000 and some dollars to cover my debt. That left me with ten round dollars in the bank.

Jonathan [Webb, his assistant] said, "Well, what did you expect with all these guys wanting money?"

I told Jonathan, "Listen, sweetheart, I've been here before. This here sixty-year-old gentleman went through the 60s and the 70s,

not to mention the 30s and the late 50s. I know how to manage by eating everything edible in the house.”

Jonathan couldn't believe that. He always thinks I'm supposed to be so luxurious. Actually, he and I didn't do any serious starving. I'd say, "Now let's see. I want you to go buy a \$2.50 chicken and from the leftovers of that chicken I'm going to make a chicken broth which will be made into a chicken soup." He was amazed. It was so funny that Jonathan, who comes from a much less pretentious background than I, doesn't understand this kind of self denial, a kind of postponed gratification.

I'm very good at tightening my belt and saying, "Direct your strong winds at me—for here I am."

I can really do a tight belt and stiff upper lip.

Jack Fritscher: As God is my witness, you are so Scarlett O'Hara.

George Dureau: Ha. So, we went through about a week of extreme frugality. A couple of checks arrived and Jonathan just went, "Whew! That was close."

I don't intend to change my ways too much. I say, "Jonathan, you have to remember that I'm the guy who pays some \$1,500 or \$1,800 of rent and expenses every month." God, it costs me about \$3,500 a month just to open the door on my gorgeous rental. With the goddamn credit cards.

Jack Fritscher: People don't realize the overhead to keep a home going.

George Dureau: Enough of my money talk. You may remember that anecdote I told you about the *New York Times*. That peculiar incident when Gene Thornton wrote a major piece on me and it was pulled. At the time I didn't get particularly hysterical. I thought, "Oh, isn't that a shame."

But now that I look back and look at the hegemony of Wagstaff and Mapplethorpe, now I understand that there may have been something else than the *Times* saying, "Oh, we don't want to do a piece on photographs on men. And Dureau wouldn't be the person

that we would do it on if we were going to do it.” That was just the opposite of what Gene Thornton had told me.

He said, “I’ve never wanted to do a piece about men photographing men before.”

Jack Fritscher: Homophobia is sexism.

George Dureau: Well, he tried to overcome it. He said, “Yours is the first time I’ve seen a noble kind of photography and so I felt I had to write this piece.”

He raved on and raved on and the next day he called me and took me to lunch and explained to me that “I never show anybody what I’ve written about them before it’s published, but I have to show you because I was so thrilled with your photos. I’ve never done that before and the paper has never pulled anything of mine before.”

Jack Fritscher: Someone’s thumb was on the scale.

George Dureau: Well, it *was* very strange because in the catalog that was coming out, there is a very large, beautiful, respectful photograph of Earl [*Earl Leavell*, 1977] with his crooked arms [possibly from Thalidomide] shot from the side. A very noble looking photograph. Everybody in the catalog is black. I don’t know how aware you are of the fascism of most of the people in photography, but Mapplethorpe-Wagstaff and most of the other people who like homo kind of stuff are rather fascist. There’s not many liberals around anymore. I have the feeling many gallery owners and a lot of others just let this high-handed attitude go by because they have to stay on the good side of the clients. Do you know what I mean?

Jack Fritscher: Gatekeepers laying down the law about art?

George Dureau: Not that they necessarily are fascists themselves, but they tell me, “It’s okay, darling. We’ll do the right thing because we want all these rich people to like us.” By the way, I’m having a show this summer at the Fahey/Klein Gallery in Los Angeles.

Jack Fritscher: I remember you said so and I wanted to check with you on the dates [June 28-August 3, 1991 in tandem with Joel-Peter Witkin] .

George Dureau: Nice as all the people are at that gallery, I find that they don't really know who I am. They treat me like this person who one time did some photographs. That's so funny because I don't think that's who I am. I'm not just photographs. I mean, one guy at that gallery didn't know that I made paintings. He didn't know that I drew. Yet he insisted he was going to do a book on me.

I said, "You know, I think it would be wonderful if you learned more about me before we do a book."

He said, "Oh? Anyway, I can't do it right now. I hope you understand."

I said, "Well, I can't do it with you right now either. You don't have any idea who I am or what I'm about. I think you have to learn more about me."

[In this little petulant scene from a Dureau movie, George using third-person pronouns rather than a name expresses his emotional point of view about David Fahey who, in full disclosure, I found to be a most cordial expert whom I interviewed August 31, 1990, for my work on Robert Mapplethorpe. David Fahey is founding co-owner of the Fahey/Klein Gallery in Los Angeles. He has represented over 500 photographers, collaborated on nearly fifty fine art photography books, and was the West Coast editor of Warhol's *Interview* magazine. He is the co-vice president of the Herb Ritts Foundation and serves on the Photography Advisory Council for the J. Paul Getty Museum.]

I think he expects to come from LA to New Orleans at some point, but he insists on having a show first. So it turns out that the show is to be with [Joel-Peter] Witkin, and since Witkin and I started together, and Witkin has already become famous, I'm not going to play second fiddle by being there.

Plus I told him that I wanted a cohesive display, not a smattering of photos with a little o' this and a little o' that. I said, "If the

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purpose of this exhibit is to introduce me because you say I'm not known to many people, well, then, I think you should introduce the very, very best of me."

I convinced him to dig into all my vintage stuff and offer for sale some new prints, gorgeous new prints of all that earlier stuff plus prints of newer images that fit into the introductory theme. What I mean by that is this. I asked him, and he agreed, to introduce me with the warmest of my very humanist pictures. I didn't want to create the wrong impression of my work by starting out with the armless, headless torso pictures. I want the warmth of my personal relationships to come forth in the exhibit. So I want to do all the heads that show face. I wouldn't mind if some of his selections can be from my vintage work before I even met Mapplethorpe. Some of the prints are even that old. I'd like him to hang my amputee and black photos next to Witkin and Mapplethorpe so people can see what they lifted from me. Wouldn't you do that?

Jack Fritscher: Yes.

George Dureau: The thing is, Witkin is going to have a good turn out, but I don't want to be there and have people ask, "Now who are you, dear?" I'm not going to take that. I'm giving him an absolutely exquisite show, these gorgeous images.

He said about my idea of juxtaposing my work with Witkin and Mapplethorpe: "I wouldn't worry about that. I think your images speak for themselves."

The thing is I *was* letting them speak for themselves.

And then he said: "Oh, would you like me to do a book of your paintings, your drawings, and your photographs?"

What do you think? Would you do that?

Jack Fritscher: Well, he *is* David Fahey. He *is* a great arts writer. So yes. Work with him. He will get you the book you want.

George Dureau: I'd like it to be like a big two-part book: *Paintings. Photographs*. Apparently he is being very successful with books.

Jack Fritscher: Yes. David told me he's got eight in progress right now.

George Dureau: I know. He's working three of them, seriously, right now.

Jack Fritscher: What would you think if I duped a copy of our taped interview and sent it to him?

George Dureau: I told him that already. I told him that you had done a video that might enable him to know me more. I'm sending him the slides and transparencies that you saw, and lots of printed material, all kinds of stuff. After he studies that, then he can come and meet me down here in my environment and actually see, the way you did, what it is that I'm doing. I mean, I don't want him to be doing a book if he doesn't know anything about me. I don't want to be represented as yet another photographer who happened to have done certain images before Mapplethorpe. That doesn't say anything about me.

Jack Fritscher: So you want him to encounter you and your personality and your art world in New Orleans to get a take on you.

George Dureau: I told him I would ask you to send him the tape.

Jack Fritscher: Sure, I'd be glad to.

George Dureau: I think that would be good for him.

Jack Fritscher: Yes, I think so. Get him up to speed with a good introduction because you are really "you" on the tape.

George Dureau: Yes. Otherwise, he would never be able to say who I am. He wouldn't know how to say that I am somebody who has known and lived with and loved black people. He wouldn't know how to say it.

Jack Fritscher: Well, he's a smart man. I like him very much. I think he gives artists a fair shake.

George Dureau: I may not be the artist he himself prefers, but if he's going to do a book about me, he needs to do his homework.

Jack Fritscher: He definitely will. I 'll make a copy and send it off to him.

George Dureau: Is it edited enough so that one can sit through it?

Jack Fritscher: I haven't edited the tape because it's two hours long and I haven't thought how to cut it. I don't want to cut a single word. It's too rich to reduce to an arbitrary sixty-minute documentary. I love the rush of the raw footage with you talking a mile a minute. I think it's a wonderful long authentic take. You were so ready for your close up. He should immerse himself in the footage. I'll just send him the whole shoot. In fact, if you'd like a copy for your own files, I can send one to you.

George Dureau: Yes, I'd love to. I don't know anything about editing. I mean I might look at the tape and say, "Oh, I don't think we should mention such and such. I think we should leave out this and I think this could be shorter."

Jack Fritscher: Of course. You can just look at it and have the footage as shot for your own personal use. Then what gets made out of it gets made.

George Dureau: I could make notes on what I think is embarrassing. I would not be doing aesthetic editing. I'd just do self-preservation editing.

Jack Fritscher: Fine by me.

George Dureau: You know the thing that hurts me the most? I'm looking at some photo books right now. The thing that hurts me most of all is when I'm published in one of these photo anthologies, like the *History of Male Photography*, and almost inevitably, there's a Mapplethorpe on the cover, right? And inevitably it is one of the ones he lifted from me. It drives me nuts. It wouldn't matter to me

that there is some Mapplethorpe on the cover, but that it should be one of the images that he got from me!

It just says something to me because that “Mapplethorpe filter” is used to create status in male photography.

And those photos? They’re not him doing his “number.” It’s him doing my “number.” What a pissar!

There is this guy from Austria, Peter somebody, who was wonderful. [Possibly Peter Weibel (1944-2023)] He did a photo-collection book that has five photos by each of us contributors. He did a show at the same time and all the images from the book are in the show.

He told me, “Just give me the five pictures that you absolutely want to be seen forever.”

But what’s on the cover? A Mapplethorpe which is absolutely reminiscent of something Robert saw in my house. It’s a photo of a boy shot from the back. He’s leaning forward with his two arms turned up in such a way that his arms sort of disappear. I could have killed him for that one.

Jack Fritscher: That’s a bit much.

George Dureau: I’m tired of telling all these stories.

Jack Fritscher: So what’s happening with you?

George Dureau: Oh, my painting show that I just did here is beautiful. Did you see the ones that were going to be drawings with varnish on them?

Jack Fritscher: The partial torsos? Mark is so in love with the javelin-thrower torso.

George Dureau: Those are the ones. I also did some male and female figures jammed together. I’ve done six of them now. Those are the hetero ones that sell all the time. Those javelins haven’t sold. I can’t believe it. Jonathan thought those would be the immediate sale.

Jack Fritscher: Because they’re gay.

George Dureau: There's an Ajax, the *Dead Ajax* drawing you saw. I did a big one of that, a really big long one that flows down the wall. Then I did another one for the show *Drawing Monuments II*, a tall drawing of a statuesque guy—with the head of a dwarf snuggled up under him with the dwarf's hand wrapped around the perfect leg and the dwarf's arm pointing up directing this big beautiful Indian-looking creature.

It's this dwarf directing this big gorgeous monster to look at the stars. I've always been drawn to people who are handicapped, particularly to people who are triumphant though handicapped. I've always loved tough dwarfs. [*Roosevelt Singleton*, 1974] I've always been attracted to little people who act strong and big—like the triumphs of superheroes.”

Jack Fritscher: With the Olympics coming up, your athletic figure paintings [like *Gymnast Crouching*, 1987-1988] should be a great tie-in.

George Dureau: Yes, maybe with tourists, because the tryouts are going to be in New Orleans in a stadium we're remodeling. I'm going to try to do a poster or something for it. [The 1992 U.S. Olympic trials for track and field were held at Tad Gormley Stadium in New Orleans.]

Jack Fritscher: Speaking of really big paintings flowing down the wall, how did the *War* show go?

George Dureau: It went well. The painting was just gorgeous. Everybody loved it. Unfortunately it had to be jammed in between all those other exhibit things. It's back at the house now and I just had publishing people photographing me with it. There's a book coming out by a photographer from Atlanta. It's called *Classic New Orleans Homes*. Believe it or not, I'm one of them.

I staged the shoot by hanging that *War* painting on the long wall in the studio the way you saw it so it falls down the wall and spreads out on the floor where I just scattered everything around it, easels, brushes, palettes, paints. My set decoration made it really

easy for the photographer to create something. He shot it in my front room where you arrive at the top of the stairs.

We have not had sun since you've been here. It's rained for thirty days or more. The most rain you have ever seen forever. New Orleans has the highest rainfall in the states. We have had more rain than we have in a whole year.

Jack Fritscher: To a Californian living in drought that's a deluge.

George Dureau: We had a higher rainfall in January than you had in ten years. It got so wet here that the brick walls on the inner side of the house just have not dried. The water just runs down them. I've never seen it like this before. I'm glad I'm not the landlord.

Jack Fritscher: It's not damaged anything, has it?

George Dureau: No. It's funny because there are a lot of drips from the ceiling, every day another spot drips, but it always drips about a foot and a half out from the walls. Anyway, enough of the water.

Get this. I was talking to this woman [Rosemary James] who has this beautiful little house, something called "Faulkner House Books" here in the Quarter, and she had also been photographed for this *Homes* book.

She said, "Did he photograph your bed properly?"

"It's a great angle," I said. "The bed's only about three quarters of the way into the picture."

She said, "Oh, the bed from the front."

"Yes" I said. "It looks like a Federalist bed that I draped sort of like Manet's *Olympia*." It had this Federalist appearance about the bed. It really describes my nature, I guess. Like *Olympia* with her come-hither stare, I'm forthright, upright, but you *could* get to me if you tried.

She said, "Did he catch that?"

I said, "I'm afraid it didn't come out as well as I thought he could have done." But he must have liked it because he asked if they could shoot a few photos for *Southern Accents* [a home, antiques, and luxury magazine].

He said, "Do you mind if we do you in *Southern Accents*?"

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I said, “OK! *Southern Accents*, here we come!”

All the magazines get a notion to do me, but some of them drop out because they decide there’s just not enough “precious stuff” in the house.

Jack Fritscher: Speaking of your precious stuff, I’ve sent the publisher of my book on Robert a photocopy of your portrait of him which I think captures his winsomeness.

George Dureau: Oh, the cute one that I took up at his house in New York in 1979?

Jack Fritscher: You printed him inside a circle.

George Dureau: Yes. I shot that one at his place in 1979 when I first met him.

Jack Fritscher: It’s a great nominee for a cover. As far as I have anything to say about my book. [In 1994, that Dureau portrait of Robert was the cover of my *Mapplethorpe* book, and George said, “Turnabout is fair play.”]

George Dureau: Really? It is a very good picture. What I like about it is it’s very much the style that comes from my drawing that I’ve been doing since the 60s, the way it’s posed and put into the circle. It wasn’t until that time that Robert started doing this, what I would call *amplitude*. Amply filling the space. He learned how important it is to shape the negative spaces around people, but he had never done that before.

When he saw how I did my drawings and transposed my drawing technique into my photography, he realized that you could be classical and ample in the way the figure sits in the picture. You can give a sort of Greek nobility to the figures. A sort of classic look. So that one particular photograph of him really does show how he learned *amplitude* from me.

Jack Fritscher: Your portrait represents him perfectly during the period I knew him best.

George Dureau: Right then [1977-1980] he was achieving fame and feeling cool strutting down the street pretending he hated the people recognizing him, you know?

Jack Fritscher: Peter Berlin told me when he and Robert walked out together, Robert was jealous because Peter had a famous face from his movies and people said hello to him, but not to Robert.

George Dureau: Robert was bossy.

Jack Fritscher: He could be petulant. I remember he hated meeting people at exhibits where he'd sparkle even while he was shining them on.

George Dureau: Wait a minute! I've got to turn off the chicken stock! I'm getting the most out of my chicken. I'm a really thrifty food person. Even if I'm spending a little money or a lot, I cook up a bunch of different things and get my money's worth. I was a boy during the Depression in the 1930s.

Jack Fritscher: I was born during the Depression. I don't think I'll ever forget arriving for supper at your house and finding you in the kitchen with all your grocery bags filled with, what were they, crawfish?

George Dureau: I think we've finished those off by now. I said to the man when I was buying them, "There will be five adult men eating."

So he said, "You'll need this many."

He was that very fat black man I told you about.

I gave him a piece of my mouth. I said, "Do I look as large as you?"

He said, "Oh, honey, if it was for me, I would eat..."

I said, "Don't tell me what you would eat!"

Jack Fritscher: That afternoon of our shoot, Jonathan was so helpful. How is he? Nice guy. Great photographer. We bonded.

George Dureau: I'm getting him out of town as fast as possible, as soon as I can get some money to send him on vacation. I love him, but I'm tired of looking at his face and he's tired of looking at mine.

Jack Fritscher: Where does he go?

George Dureau: He goes to Costa Rica every year. People like him. Every place I go people ask, "Has Jonathan left yet? When is he leaving?" Then I look like an ogre because I haven't sent the boy on vacation. I went through a lot of years and never managed to have three months of vacation. Did you?

Jack Fritscher: I did when I taught university, but I spent the luxury of that time working writing books and articles.

George Dureau: The only people who get three-months vacation are students and teachers.

Jack Fritscher: I'm sure people think my trip to New Orleans was a vacation. That was no vacation. It was a lot of fun, but it was no vacation. It was work.

George Dureau: Jonathan doesn't realize that if I send him down to Costa Rica with money while I keep his house here for him, that it's the best of all possible worlds. I'll just get the money and help him get out of here for a while.

I just love being alone. I love being an artist.

Jonathan is finally becoming an artist instead of just being someone who does arty things.

When I'm alone, I do this wonderful thing where I just go and ride and ride around the city until I can't ride anymore and then I come home and I just lie on the floor and beat my meat or let the air blow over me and just lie there until a thought comes in my head.

I think, "God, I'm alone." No house mate is going to come down the stairs saying, "I'm an artist. I'm an artist. I'm hungry and I'm an artist. I'll have a glass of wine."

Jack Fritscher: So you'll be staying home alone? You won't be coming to California?

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George Dureau: Here's what I'm going to try to do. Since Arthur Roger is opening his gallery in New York in October, and I have a show tentatively scheduled for around April, it would be great if your book was out because he could coordinate my New York show with your *Mapplethorpe* book.

Jack Fritscher: My book won't be out for a year or more.

George Dureau: Oh. Books really help gallery sales, I'm told. I think I may also be in a group show in Los Angeles next year.

Jack Fritscher: We told you we'd drive down from San Francisco to hang out if you come to LA.

George Dureau: But I don't think I want a show in LA next year. I don't want another disappointment. I do not want to go out there, and have to put up with movie stars and celebrities like Madonna who will probably show up.

When I was talking with Russell Albright [art collector Dr. H. Russell Albright (1934-2017), who introduced Dureau to Mapplethorpe, bequeathed his photography collection to the New Orleans Museum of Art], he said, "You must do the LA show."

And I said, "Madonna can come back next year to see me because this year she's going to be coming to see Witkin."

They can discover me if they want to, but I don't like being patronized. It's true. I don't like playing a beggar's game. I don't like explaining to people supposedly in the know that my name is such and such, and I do such and such. Oh, I'm too old for that.

Jack Fritscher: I've reached a point of independence myself especially with all the competing books about Robert that have been announced and have yet to be written. I'm an independent West Coast writer which rather upsets New York writers who raise an eyebrow about a San Franciscan writing about a New York artist. One of Robert's Manhattan models threatened to kill me because he heard I'm writing a book and he fears I'm telling his story. I never met him. I never heard of him. Robert never mentioned him. When

he sent threats to my publishers, they reported him to the NYPD where he's now on file. Art is a savage game.

George Dureau: There's angles on everything, yours, his, mine, especially around the politics of male photography.

Jack Fritscher: Kurosawa was right. Everything is *Rashomon*.

George Dureau: The photos I shot in a kind of liberal way, Robert re-shot in a dominant way which changes the politics from free to fascist. He was all over the map trying to conquer the world. He had to do one picture of everything in the world. It was really funny because he wanted the appearance of being the man of all the world.

Jack Fritscher: He *was* a man of the world.

George Dureau: He dominated his models. He could make people, and his models, and magazines do scandalous things.

Jack Fritscher: When I called Roger Koch [*Roger Koch in Fishnet Stockings*, 1983], he said posing for Robert was not a pleasant experience.

[Bodybuilder Roger Koch whom I first photographed in 1981 soon became famous as Colt model "Frank Vickers." His muscularity and see-through vascularity landed him on-going work as a nude anatomical model at medical school classes where the professor would touch his splendid body parts with a long pointer stick. He was just days away from succumbing to AIDS.]

On his deathbed, he said, "I have nothing good to say about Robert Mapplethorpe."

George Dureau: I hope you have success in discussing those unwholesome practices in your book.

Jack Fritscher: Yes, Robert as dominant male. I do wonder about public receptivity to words like *fistfucking* and *shit*. I try to write *handballing* and *scatology* to soften reality a bit.

George Dureau: Handballing!

Jack Fritscher: Yes, it sounds more like a sport than a sex act. I've kept you so long. I must let you get back to your chicken soup.

George Dureau: Oh my God, you are running up some phone bill.

Jack Fritscher: I wanted to talk to you all weekend.

George Dureau: By the way, do you remember my friend Byron Robinson? Do you remember his face that looks at you so ferociously in my head-and-shoulders picture? [*Byron Robinson*, 1985]

Jack Fritscher: Yes, he looks like a lean pro-football player.

George Dureau: Byron's a kickboxer and has really intense eyes, tight mouthed. He wanted to be photographed again. After eight years. So I said I would, but I decided I'd already done such a good first picture of him that I was always going to be haunted by it being better than anything I've done since.

So I said, "Jonathan, we're going to set the picture up exactly like we did before. We're going to shoot that picture again."

I wanted to make it different. I set up artificial lights because the first was shot by natural light. I greased him up, got him all gorgeous, black skin gleaming.

I said to him, "We have to make this as good as the one we did eight years ago."

He looked beautiful.

I told him, "We'll start with that set up, and then we'll already be at that level to build on the first version with the new light and the quality and the sexiness."

He loved the idea. Then when we got in there, the first thing he said was, "Don't you want me to take my pants off?"

He's never done nude shots before, and he has this large dick that goes out two inches, turns, and goes south for nine more or something. So I photographed him nude that way and I photographed him in a sort of John L. Sullivan antique-lighting sort of thing, a fighting pose. [John L. Sullivan 1858-1918, first heavy-weight gloved boxing champion.]

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He said, "I like the old-fashioned poses like this."

He hit the famous bare-knuckle "fisticuffs pose." And he did it beautifully. The prints are coming back tomorrow from the developer and I've got eight rolls of him. So that's going to be inserted into my next show and I'll send you something from that.

Jack Fritscher: That sounds wonderful.

George Dureau: They're going to be beautiful. I've always wished before that I could have shot him nekkid because he's never posed nekkid. They're just gorgeous.

It's very easy for me to absorb turn-of-the-century things and earlier, because, being a painter and a drawer, I'm used to that sort of static look. That frozen-in-time moment in antique pictures when people had to hold still, very stiff, because the shot had to be a time-exposure before cameras could shoot fast photographs.

If you look at my photographs, you can tell from the stillness that as a painter I'm used to someone having to sit for two hours, not just three seconds. If the model has the patience to pose, I have the patience to shoot that look.

Jack Fritscher: Many of the pictures of athletes in magazines you saw as a child were of that vintage era.

George Dureau: Yes. And when I direct people, I direct them at a slower turn-of-the-last-century pace because I'm a painter.

When I woo people I woo them to stay wooed. I don't woo them into something they're going to regret.

I'm not a fascist photographer. I do the long paragraph on them, with them, when I direct them.

Ohh, goodbye, darling. I have to go to work. And so do you.

Jack Fritscher: Take care, George.

George Dureau: Thank you for calling.



The large painting, *George and His Closest Friends*, 1997, pictured with Dureau's friend photographer Michael Alago, Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans, 2023. Photo by © Jarret Lofstead. George's Mardi Gras parade figure—second goat-footed Satyr from the left—is a self-portrait.

