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The Contemporary Dayton Presents
Stacy Kranitz: Ain't No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down
September 25, 2026 - January 23, 2027

DAYTON (September 14, 2026) – The Contemporary Dayton is proud to present *Stacy Kranitz: Ain't No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down*, a landmark multi-year project by Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Stacy Kranitz that challenges long-held stereotypes and assumptions about Appalachia.

Opening Friday, September 25, as part of the 2026 FotoFocus Biennial: *The Long View*, the exhibition brings together more than 40 photographs alongside historical archival materials, texts, installation, and a world-premiere film, produced by FilmDayton. Together, these works examine how Appalachia has been represented—and misrepresented—across generations, asking who has had the power to shape the story of the region and what is revealed when those narratives are reconsidered.

Kranitz's project explores Appalachia as a place shaped by myth, exploitation, resilience, and resistance. Her photographs move between intimate observations of contemporary life and the historical imagery and narratives that have informed perceptions of the region. By bringing these materials into conversation, *Ain't No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down* creates a complex portrait of Appalachia that resists the reductive images that have long defined it in popular culture and media.

The exhibition's title references the gospel song "Ain't No Grave," made famous by Johnny Cash, evoking themes of survival, persistence, and resistance that run throughout Kranitz's work. The project was also the recipient of the prestigious Images Vevey Book Award, and a companion monograph will be available for purchase in The Contemporary Dayton's CoSHOP.

Born in Kentucky and based in the Appalachian Mountains of eastern Tennessee, Kranitz has spent much of her career examining the social, cultural, and environmental forces shaping Appalachia. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and is held in numerous public collections. She is the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize and Guggenheim Fellowship, among numerous other honors.

"Stacy Kranitz asks us to look beyond the familiar images of Appalachia and consider how those images were constructed in the first place," said Heather Jones, Interim Director and Chief Curator of The Contemporary Dayton. "This exhibition is not simply a documentation of a place. It is an examination of representation itself, of who gets to tell a region's story, what gets left out, and how photography can complicate the narratives we think we already know."

All exhibitions and public programs at The Contemporary Dayton are free and open to the public.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS & EVENTS / ALL PROGRAMS TAKE PLACE AT THE CONTEMPORARY DAYTON / FREE & OPEN TO ALL

Opening Reception

Friday, September 25, 2026, 6–8 pm

Welcome remarks: 6:30 pm

Artist Talk: *Stacy Kranitz in Conversation with Andrew Milward*

Saturday, October 17, 2026, 2:00 pm

Kranitz will discuss her work and the ideas behind *Ain't No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down* in conversation with author and professor Andrew Milward, Professor of English at the University of Kentucky.

Guided Tours:

Thursday, October 8, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, November 14, 2 p.m.

Thursday, December 10, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 9, 2 p.m.

Community Photography Critique Night

Thursday, January 14, 6:30 p.m.

A community critique offering photographers an opportunity to share work, exchange ideas, and engage in conversation around photography.

ABOUT FOTOFOCUS

Stacy Kranitz: Ain't No Grave Gonna Hold My Body Down is part of the 2026 FotoFocus Biennial: *The Long View*. Now in its eighth iteration, the Biennial activates more than 70 exhibitions, public art projects, and programs at museums, galleries, universities, and public spaces throughout Greater Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus, and Northern Kentucky.



SPONSORS:

Support for this 2026 FotoFocus Biennial exhibition was provided in part by FotoFocus

Education & Public Programs: Dr. Robert L. Brandt, Jr.

Community Partners: Cross Street Partners, FilmDayton, Hilton Garden Inn Dayton Downtown

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2026-2027 OPERATING SUPPORT DONORS

The Charles D. Berry Foundation, Culture Works, The Dayton Foundation, The Montgomery County Arts & Cultural District, The Ohio Arts Council, The Virginia W. Kettering Foundation, and our Members.

GALLERY & CoSHOP HOURS

Wednesday–Saturday 11 am–6 pm

Closed Sunday–Tuesday

ALWAYS FREE & OPEN TO ALL

ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY DAYTON

Advancing art for the community and a community for artists since 1991.

The Contemporary Dayton is the region's contemporary art center. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, The Contemporary Dayton produces and presents ART EXHIBITIONS, ARTIST TALKS, and PUBLIC ART by local, national, and global creatives and makers, and is ALWAYS FREE & OPEN TO ALL. As a non-collecting art center, The Contemporary Dayton is one of 45 non-collecting art centers and museums across North America that specialize in presenting modern and contemporary art.

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