

# POSTMASTERS

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## CHRIS VERENE

### *Home Movies*



The new exhibition of Chris Verene, his second at Postmasters, will consist of a group of photographs and a series of projected short videos, all depicting his family and other families in the small city of Galesburg, Illinois, whose lives were drastically altered in the 2008 economic downturn.

Over the past five years, Verene has been videotaping the key subjects from his thirty years of photographic work. Until recently, Verene never watched any of the videos, feeling it was enough just to have them recorded. Yet, as the stories became more urgent, he proceeded to make video records and interviews with his cousins Candi and Steve, and his friend Amber. Verene worked his way from cellphone to an amateur DSLR camera, and eventually used sound equipment. In recent months he finally began to watch the videos and edit them into "Home Movies," short documentary video-novellas.



Chris Verene:

*"My cousin Libby's farm foreclosed, and she has moved in with family in order to survive. Nothing has replaced the missing links in the city's economy. In 2011, my cousin Candi, who has appeared in my work since the 1980s, lost her house, as did many of her former co-workers. Candi and her four children ended up living at a campsite outside of town. Candi attributes the loss of her job and her husband's job to the collapse of their marriage, and indeed, divorce is a subject we have agreed to make public."*

*"My friend for over sixteen years, Amber, is the head of a family in daily crisis. In 2003, Amber discussed her ambitions to have a child and a get a job, despite our town's declining economy, in a full-page interview in The New York Times Sunday Magazine. Eleven years later, Amber is recovering*

*from methamphetamine addiction, is raising three young children, and has at times been homeless. She has not used in several years, yet she and her children are surrounded by the meth culture."*

Difficult to watch yet impossible to stop watching, the new videos and photographs are often heartbreaking, and yet they are filled with humanity, love, pride, and hope. We follow as Candi talks about her loss of work in 2008 and how the banks and the collapse of Wall Street impacted her wedding. We follow Amber blowing her welfare check on lottery tickets. We follow her in a tender moment as she gets a bouquet of flowers her boyfriend found discarded in garbage. And we follow Amber's mother on a trip to a foodbank to feed ten people living with her under one roof.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Verene walks right into the lives of his folks, showing you how they are, without any embarrassment on either side. Their togetherness is taken for granted so openly that the viewer feels at each moment like one of them, a member of the clan. Verene's color [is] tender, warm and sensual, though stops well short of being glamorous . . . flooding them all with a strange, sweet romance. These pictures convey his bittersweet fondness for a smaller world in which he grew up but no longer shares, but which has lessons to teach him about the inroads of ageing, disability and other difficulties. Many viewers are familiar with visits back home in this mood, which Verene renders luminous and fatal.*

-Max Kozloff, The Theater of the Face: Portrait Photography Since 1900

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Postmasters Gallery  
located at 54 Franklin Street in Tribeca  
Tuesday through Saturday 11 – 6  
with Thursday hours extended to 8pm  
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