

## TAKE 4

### *DUREAU IN STUDIO*

**A Rainy Afternoon in the French Quarter  
George Shoots His First Video  
Wednesday, April 10, 1991**

The documentary video *Dureau in Studio* opens with George Dureau shooting the black whole-bodied Glen Thompson in his *atelier* where the video picks up the moody soundtrack of early spring rain on the roof of his home on Dauphine Street. Dureau's careful lighting of his longtime model and friend Thompson illuminates the video dramatically in the theater of his studio. The effect is stunning. Thompson's muscular body glows incandescent in this solo shoot that reminds me of George's lovely dual shot, *Glen Thompson and Troy Brown*, which turns the eight limbs of the nude black-and-white pair leaning into each like dancers into an ascending array of at least nine perfect triangles.

Glen is an experienced figure model working as hard as Dureau to collaborate symbiotically on the shoot George is staging for our eyewitness camera. With voice and touch, George directs Glen. Speaking quietly to him, he arranges him, nude, greased, sweating, and shining under the heat of the key lights that present him standing on a low platform in a down-spout of light in the dark studio. Mark Hemry helps George set the lights because the overcast afternoon means George cannot shoot with the natural light he prefers. Unfazed by the four cameras in the room, Glen responds patiently to George's gentle direction by holding the physically strenuous poses until his muscles quiver.

From another room, the scent of fresh cut flowers mixes with the damp smell of our jackets worn in from the rain after lunch.

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**HOW TO LEGALLY QUOTE FROM THIS WORK**

“Glen, drop your head and move your arms to your right....Can you please bend your left leg...That’s it...Hold it...”

Dureau shoots carefully. He never clicks his shutter until model and light and framing turn the fleeting moment into a perfect moment. I watch the spark of that co-creation happen through my viewfinder as George backs away from Glen frozen stock still and steps behind his camera to take his shot. Again and again, he arranges Glen to shoot more frames.

Outside, distant thunder rumbles under the long breathy silences of the shoot as Thompson holds steady while Dureau continues to ponder the human sculpture.

When George is satisfied with directing Glen, as well as his own nonchalant performance for our camera, he puts down his still camera, walks to look at our color monitor, and announces he’s never held a video camera in his hands.

“Here’s one of our cameras,” Mark says. He knows this is a significant moment. “Try it.”

When George picks up our camera and asks Glen if he is okay with more shots, I begin to shoot George on video shooting Glen on video. That layered moment caught on camera documents George directing his first-ever video segment. The painter who became a photographer touches videography.

No one need wonder at the choreography of a Dureau shoot.

Just before George picks up the video camera, a miracle happens. The rain stops and he quickly turns the studio lights down because an amazing blue light from a skylight shafts down on the set lighting Glen.

Our video camera, condensing real time with a time-lapse strobe effect, catches Dureau on screen carefully positioning Thompson the way an artist moves a co-conspirator in the high crime of art.

I lament that video cameras were not available in the 1970s when I watched Robert Mapplethorpe shoot his photographs.

When George was satisfied with directing his own on-screen video performance from the inside out, he asked if I would like to shoot Glen with my still camera. As a longtime photographer for gay magazines, I appreciated his thoughtful generosity in sharing

his model and his space with me—as he had with Robert who, sweet as he was, would never countenance another photographer’s camera in his studio. When Glen agreed, I experienced the luxury of shooting a powerful man who was being directed and posed by the powerful George Dureau himself.

### **Dureau Documentaries**

*Dureau in Studio*, a Jack Fritscher and Mark Hemry Documentary, 1991. Includes thirty Dureau photographs, drawings, and paintings. 33 minutes. Contains nudity. Not suitable for Youtube.

*Dureau Speaks*, a Jack Fritscher and Mark Hemry Documentary, 1991. 110 minutes. Available on Youtube.

*George Dureau on His Bicycle* (Age 75, Outside Faubourg Marigny Arts and Bookstore), a David Zalkind Documentary, 2015, 9 minutes. Available on Youtube.

*New Orleans Artists John Burton Harter and George Dureau*, Film Tribute, Jarret Lofstead, editor/producer, The Bend Media + Production for Saints+Sinners LBGTQ Literary Festival, 2021.

*George Dureau: New Orleans Artist*, a Sergio Andres Lovbo-Navia and Jarret Lofstead Documentary, 2024. 65 minutes.



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George Dureau and Jack Fritscher strolling the Grande Allée, the Tuileries, Paris, May 3, 1996. Video photos by © Mark Hemry from his unpublished footage of Dureau in Paris

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George Dureau and Mark Hemry strolling the Grande Allée, the Tuileries, Paris, May 3, 1996. Video photos by © Jack Fritscher from his unpublished footage of Dureau in Paris

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