VISIBLE SPIRITS: Recent Photographs by David Spear
August 27 – October 15, 1999

A series of more than twenty black and white photographs are on display at Guilford College Art Gallery in the exhibition, Visible Spirits: Recent Photographs by David Spear. The exhibition will be on view from Friday, August 27 through Friday, October 15, 1999. A reception will be held from 4:30-6:30 p.m. in the Art Gallery, located in Hege Library on the college campus. The artist will speak about his work during the reception, beginning at 5:30 p.m. This event is free, and the public is cordially invited. Guilford College Art Gallery is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday afternoons from 2 to 5 p.m.

In 1995 Spear exhibited his photodocumentary project, “The Neugents: Close to Home,” at Guilford College. This series, and an eponymous book first published in 1993 by the Jargon Society, chronicled the lives of his tobacco-farming neighbors in Madison, North Carolina. Spear’s most recent series of large-format photographs depicts people the artist encountered while traveling and living in Mexico, where he went seeking inspiration during an artistic slump in 1997. Overwhelmed with what he saw, he decided to travel throughout the entire country, and last year made the decision to move there.

In this new series, the artist continues to be fascinated by people closely connected to the land. “Today Mexico is changing rapidly,” says Spear. “Technology, corporate production facilities, and money are moving there at an unprecedented pace. As this dynamic change unfolds, much of Mexico clings to a cultural past closely aligned to land, living with those still ancient mysteries of their Indian ancestors and living with a true connectedness to the natural world.”

“Many of these people loom in my mind as spirits,” he continues. “They stay with me sometimes and haunt me. I think of them as visible spirits. For in some of these images it is possible to see beyond what is visible--on past to something very spiritual.”

After graduating in 1961 from Guilford College, Spear returned to his hometown of Madison, NC to work for The Messenger, the town’s weekly newspaper. After a twenty-year career there, culminating in his becoming the editor and publisher, Spear sold the paper to pursue other interests, primarily photography. A 1992 recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Spear’s photographs are in the permanent
collections of museums across the nation, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the New Orleans Museum of Art, and the Museum of Fine Art in Houston.

Twenty of the photographs featured in the current exhibition were donated recently to the permanent collection of Guilford College Art Gallery by Dalton L. McMichael of Madison, North Carolina.