

For Immediate Release

October 12, 2011

**SFMOMA PRESENTS *PHOTOGRAPHY IN MEXICO:*
SELECTED WORKS FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF SFMOMA AND
*DANIEL GREENBERG AND SUSAN STEINHAUSER***

**Exhibition Showcases Work by Major Mexican and International
Photographers from the 1920s to Today**

From March 10 through July 8, 2012, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present the exhibition *Photography in Mexico: Selected Works from the Collections of SFMOMA and Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser*. Exploring the distinctively rich and diverse tradition of photography in Mexico from the 1920s to the present, the exhibition showcases works by important Mexican photographers as well as major American and European artists who found Mexico to be a place of great artistic inspiration.

Organized by SFMOMA Assistant Curator of Photography Jessica S. McDonald, the selection of more than 150 works draws from SFMOMA's world-class photography holdings and highlights recent major gifts and loans from collectors Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser. The presentation reflects the collections' particular strengths, featuring photographs made in Mexico by Tina Modotti, Paul Strand, and Edward Weston, along with works by key Mexican photographers including Lola Alvarez Bravo, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Manuel Carrillo, Héctor García, Lourdes Grobet, Graciela Iturbide, Enrique Metinides, Pedro Meyer, Pablo Ortiz Monasterio, and Mariana Yampolsky.

The exhibition begins with the first artistic flowering of photography in Mexico after the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) and goes on to look at the explosion of the illustrated press at midcentury; the documentary investigations of cultural traditions and urban politics that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s; and more recent considerations of urban life, globalization, and issues particular to the U.S.-Mexico border region.

Rather than attempting to define a national style, the exhibition considers the range of approaches and concerns that photographers in Mexico have pursued over time. As McDonald notes, "There is no one 'Mexican photography,' but one strand that runs throughout is a synthesis of aesthetics and politics. We see that with Manuel Alvarez Bravo, and we still see it in work made decades later."

As arts and culture flourished in Mexico after the Revolution, many European and American artists were drawn to the country. Among them were Edward Weston and Tina Modotti, who arrived in Mexico in 1923. Inspired by what they saw there, Weston and Modotti in turn motivated Mexican photographers to pursue the



Lourdes Grobet, *Ponzoña, Arena Coliseo, 1983*

medium's artistic possibilities; their influence helped "give Mexican photographers confidence that art photography was a viable path," says McDonald. Hence, the exhibition opens with a selection of works made in Mexico by Modotti, Weston, his son Brett Weston, and Paul Strand during the 1920s and 1930s.

One of the Mexican photographers encouraged by Modotti and Weston was Manuel Alvarez Bravo, who went on to become one of the most influential photographers and teachers in the country's history as well as a key figure in the broader international history of the medium. The exhibition features a substantial number of major works by the photographer, many of them donated or loaned to SFMOMA by Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser. In considering Alvarez Bravo's career, the exhibition illuminates the birth and development of a tradition of art photography in Mexico. The presentation also includes a selection of works by Alvarez Bravo's first wife, Lola Alvarez Bravo, an important photographer in her own right who established a successful commercial and artistic practice.

In mid-20th-century Mexico, as in the United States and Europe, earning an adequate income as an art photographer was an unlikely proposition. Instead, many photographers made a living through photojournalism, contributing to the numerous illustrated publications in circulation during this period. In the decades following the Revolution, there was great interest in traditional ways of life and in defining what it meant to be Mexican. Some photographers, such as Manuel Carrillo, created images documenting the nation's traditions and celebrating its common people. Others, like Hector Garcia and Rodrigo Moya, rejected this sentimental approach, focusing instead on contemporary concerns and the political and social turbulence that continued to influence post-revolutionary Mexican life.

The late 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of critical theory and a new interest in investigating the nature of photography as a medium; in Mexico as elsewhere, there were more opportunities to study photography and to pursue noncommercial projects. A number of Mexican photographers, such as Lourdes Grobet, Graciela Iturbide, Pedro Meyer, and Pablo Ortiz Monasterio, created extended documentary series. Iturbide lived among indigenous people and recorded the details of their daily lives; Grobet focused on wrestling and the cultural concept of the mask; Ortiz Monasterio captured gritty, dystopian views of Mexico City. The exhibition draws extensively on gifts from Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser to represent directions in Mexican photography of the 1970s and 1980s.

Since the 1990s, the attention of many Mexican photographers has turned away from cultural traditions and rural landscapes and toward the cities and suburbs where many Mexicans now live. Works by Katya Brailovsky, Alejandro Cartagena, Pablo Lopez Luz, Daniela Rossell, and Yvonne Venegas reflect this interest in the changing social landscape, looking at issues of wealth and class, urbanization and land use, and the effects of the globalized economy.

The exhibition closes with contemporary international photographers' perspectives on U.S.-Mexico border issues. Images by Mark Klett, Victoria Sambunaris, and Alec Soth consider the border as landscape, while works by Elsa Medina, Susan Meiselas, and Paolo Pellegrin document the experiences of migrant workers and people trying, successfully or unsuccessfully, to cross into the United States.

List of Photographers Included

Katya Brailovsky, Lola Alvarez Bravo, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Manuel Carrillo, Alejandro Cartagena, Eduardo del Valle and Mirta Gomez, Pia Elizondo, Dave Gatley, Oscar Fernando Gomez, Héctor Garcia, Lourdes Grobet, Graciela Iturbide, Geoffrey James, Mark Klett, Pablo Lopez Luz, Elsa Medina, Susan Meiselas, Enrique Metinides, Pedro Meyer, Tina Modotti, Rodrigo Moya, Pablo Ortiz Monasterio, Paolo Pellegrin, Antonio Reynoso, Daniela Rossell, Mark Ruwedel, Victoria Sambunaris, Alec Soth, Paul Strand, Yvonne Venegas, Brett Weston, Edward Weston, and Mariana Yampolsky.

About Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Based in Los Angeles, Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser have a deep and longstanding interest in Mexican photography, which they have been collecting since 1995. The photography department at SFMOMA has benefited greatly from their generosity: they have donated more than 175 works to the museum over the last six years. Their recent major gift of Mexican work, including over 50 photographs by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Graciela Iturbide, and others, has created an ideal opportunity for SFMOMA to present this exhibition exploring photography in Mexico.

Related Public Programs

ARTISTS PANEL DISCUSSION

Photography in Mexico

Alejandro Cartagena, artist

Pablo Lopez Luz, artist

Daniela Rossell, artist

Dominic Willsdon, Leanne and George Roberts Curator of Education and Public Programs, SFMOMA

Thursday, March 08, 2012, 7 p.m.

Phyllis Wattis Theater

In this panel, three members of the younger generation of artists in the exhibition — Cartagena, Lopez Luz, and Rossell — each explore, in different ways, contemporary issues related to the environment, urbanism, social class, and more. Join us as they discuss their work and consider whether it is still important to locate their photographic practice in relation to the tradition of photography in Mexico. \$7 general; \$5 SFMOMA members, students, and seniors.

SPECIAL EVENT

Un Ojo A La Fotografía: A Latino Night At SFMOMA

Thursday, March 22, 2012, 6-8 p.m.

The Schwab Room

Plan to rendezvous after work at SFMOMA for a special networking mixer in conjunction with *Photography in Mexico*, an exhibition exploring Mexico's distinctively rich and diverse tradition of photography from the 1920s through the present. Mingle with friends at a special tequila tasting, complete with hors d'oeuvres, musical entertainment, and an opportunity to tour this exhibition of more than 150 photographs offering a mix of art and politics. Make sure to bring a mask for the Mexican wrestling photo booth! In partnership with LAM Social Club, an exclusive membership-based community reaching over 4000 educated Latino professionals. \$25 general; \$15 SFMOMA members.

FILM SCREENING

Un Banquete en Tetlapayac (A Banquet at Tetlapayac)

Introduced by Dominic Willsdon, Leanne and George Roberts Curator of Education and Public Programs, SFMOMA

Thursday, March 29, 2012, 7 p.m.

Phyllis Wattis Theater

Olivier Debroise, 2000, 110 min., video

Un Banquete en Tetlapayac is Debroise's contemporary reenactment of the events surrounding the filming of director Sergei Eisenstein's *Que Viva Mexico* (1931). Eisenstein's production was halted for some time when the lead actor went to jail for accidentally shooting his sister. During the hiatus, the crew spent time at the Hacienda Tetlapayac, watching movies, eating, drinking, debating, and dancing. Sixty-seven years later, Debroise invited a group of artists, filmmakers, and intellectuals to reconstruct what happened at the hacienda. *Un Banquete* is both an homage to Eisenstein's directorial legacy and an investigation of representation, nature, and history itself. \$5 general; free for SFMOMA members or with museum admission (requires a free ticket, which can be picked up in the Haas Atrium).

CURATOR TALK

Jessica S. McDonald on Enrique Metinides's Rescate de un ahogado en Xochimilco con público reflejado en el agua

Jessica S. McDonald, assistant curator of photography, SFMOMA

Thursday, April 12, 2012, 6:30 p.m.

Each Thursday evening, one of SFMOMA's curators or specialists shares a perspective on a single artist or artwork on view. Talks last 20 minutes. Free with museum admission; meet in the Haas Atrium before moving to galleries.

CRITICS PANEL DISCUSSION

Mexican Fugue, Part 1

Maria Ines Canal, professor of contemporary theory and social science, Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, Xochimilco

Tarek Elhaik, assistant professor of cinema studies, San Francisco State University

Jesse Lerner, professor of media studies, Pitzer College

Rogelio Villarreal, editor-in-chief, Replicante Magazine

Thursday, April 12, 2012, 7 p.m.

Phyllis Wattis Theater

Taking its title from the late Olivier Debroise's book *Fuga Mexicana*, this event is a conversation among four colleagues who are passionate about Mexican modernity and visual culture. The panelists reference *Photography in Mexico* while examining some of the images and clichés that constitute the canon of Mexican visual culture: Maguey plants, volcanoes, urban poverty, pre-Columbian pyramids, the Day of the Dead, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and more. They evaluate and bid a respectful farewell to this magnetic and decaying legacy in the context of what Mexican anthropologist Roger Bartra called the "splendors and miseries of the post-Mexican condition." \$7 general; \$5 SFMOMA members, students, and seniors.

ROOFTOP TV

Mexican Fugue, Part 2

Maria Ines Canal, professor of contemporary theory and social science, Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, Xochimilco

Tarek Elhaik, assistant professor of cinema studies, San Francisco State University

Jesse Lerner, professor of media studies, Pitzer College

Rogelio Villarreal, editor-in-chief, Replicante Magazine

Friday, April 13, 2012, 11 a.m.

Following the April 12 "Mexican Fugue" panel, Canal, Elhaik, Lerner, and Villarreal are joined online by artists in the *Photography in Mexico* exhibition for a conversation about Mexican identity in modern art. The live stream includes live chat: submit questions or comments in advance or during the program by emailing SFMOMAsays@sfmoma.org or tweeting @SFMOMA.

Check [here](#) for a link to view the event online.

Photography in Mexico: Selected Works from the Collections of SFMOMA and Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Generous support is provided by Concepción and Irwin Federman. Additional support is provided by the George Frederick Jewett Foundation and the Consulate General of Mexico in San Francisco. Media support is provided by Telemundo 48, UNIVISION, and El Mensajero.

About SFMOMA

SFMOMA welcomes more than 650,000 visitors annually, and more than 46,000 students visit each year. Since opening its South of Market building in 1995, SFMOMA has added more than 13,000 works to its collections, 95 percent of which were donated, doubling its holdings to 28,000 works. At the same time, SFMOMA's family programs have increased fivefold, teacher-training programs have increased sixfold, and gallery tours have expanded to 1,800. SFMOMA has mounted a series of exhibitions that have drawn both record attendance and critical praise, including recent exhibitions by Diane Arbus, Richard Avedon, Olafur Eliasson, Eva Hesse, Frida Kahlo, William Kentridge, Richard Tuttle, Luc Tuymans, and Jeff Wall.

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Museum hours: open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Koret Visitor Education Center: open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: visit sfmoma.org/tickets for pricing information.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our website at sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

SFMOMA is supported by a broad array of contributors committed to helping advance its mission. Major annual support is provided by Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. First Tuesdays are always free, thanks to AT&T. Thursday Nights at SFMOMA are sponsored by Banana Republic. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc.

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