

On the Edge of Time

PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Mariana Yampolsky*



An exhibition organized by Southwestern Writers Collection, The Wittliff Gallery of Southwestern and Mexican Photography, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos ♦ **Toured by ExhibitsUSA**

Esperando el Padre / Waiting for Mass

1987, gelatin silver print, 14 x 18-1/2 inches



Courtesy Southwestern Writers Collection, The Wittliff Gallery of Southwestern and Mexican Photography,
Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos.

MARIANA YAMPOLSKY'S great heart beats for the gente—the common people of Mexico. Look at her photographs—look at the four old women chatting as they wait for the priest, look at the mother gently caressing her child—these people have wiggled their toes in the earth since time immemorial, suffered a fiery, tortuous history of abuse, poverty, neglect for a thousand years, and yet endured to create a vibrant culture filled with art, music, ritual and mystery. . . . Mariana pays them the greatest of tributes: to see them as they are—not as exotic objects for the lens, but as fellow and equal travelers on this spinning globe. And they in turn pay her the greatest of tributes as well: to go on about the business of their daily lives as she photographs. There's no arranging here, no posing, no invasion, but rather a shared moment in time between kindred spirits—a *simpatía*.

As Mariana has said, she was never interested in photography as a means to express herself. What she's been after for almost half a century now—and gloriously evident in these images—is simply to share with us the dignity and humanity of a people we otherwise might never have even noticed. BILL WITTLIFF, AUGUST 27, 1996

ON THE EDGE OF TIME:

Photographs by Mariana Yampolsky features the work of one of Mexico's most widely-respected photographers. Yampolsky was born in Chicago in 1925, and has lived in Mexico since 1944. In addition to a successful career as a photographer, she is also an accomplished curator, writer, engraver and editor.

Yampolsky's fascination with Mexico began in 1944 when she heard two lithographers from the *Taller de Gráfica Popular* (The Workshop for Popular Graphic Art) in Mexico City speak about the Mexican muralist movement. Yampolsky moved to Mexico later that year, finding a job at the workshop engraving illustrations for posters, pamphlets, and leaflets for labor unions and farmers' organizations. While working as an engraver, Yampolsky also had the opportunity to take a photography class with Lola Alvarez Bravo, noted Mexican photographer and wife of photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Yampolsky's career quickly blossomed. Not long after leaving the workshop in 1959, she was hired as the photographer for a two-volume book titled *Lo Efímero y Eterno del Arte Popular Mexicano* (The Ephemeral and the Eternal

of Mexican Popular Art). At this point she gave up engraving in order to photograph full-time.

Since that time, Yampolsky's photographs have been published in numerous books. *La Casa en la Tierra* (The House of the Earth, 1981) and *La Casa que Canta* (The House that Sings, 1982) focus on the architecture of rural Mexico, while *Estancias del Olvido* (Forgotten Estates, 1987) and *Haciendas Poblanas* (Haciendas from Puebla, 1992) both document the faded majesty of Mexico's colonial plantations. Yampolsky's photographs of poverty-stricken peasants working on Mexico's remaining haciendas, on the other hand, suggest that the realities of pre-Revolution Mexico still persist in some parts of the country. And the photographs included in *Mazahua*, published in 1993, form a compassionate and moving portrait of Mazahua wives and mothers whose husbands have left them to find work in the cities.

Despite their range of subjects, all of her photographs share at least one thing in common: a quality of timelessness. The buildings, people, and festivals that she captures on film suggest the tenacity with which history and traditions hold on contemporary Mexican life.

Esperando el Padre / Waiting for Mass 1987
14 x 18-1/2

Falda Huichola / Huichol Skirt 1993
13-3/4 x 17-1/2

Hacienda, Yucatan 1989
14 x 18-1/2

La Bestia / The Beast 1988
14 x 18-1/2

La Ciega / The Blind One n.d.
14-1/8 x 14

La Escoba / The Broom 1987
13-1/2 x 18-1/2

La Espada / The Sword 1990
14 x 18-1/2

La Noria / Water Tower 1989
13-3/4 x 18-3/8

La Récamera del Patron / The Master's Bedroom n.d.
14 x 18-1/2

La Vista / The View 1989
13-3/4 x 18-1/4

Laurel 1991
12-3/4 x 18-1/2

Limosnera / Beggar Woman n.d.
14-1/4 x 14-1/4

Madre de Campeche / Mother from Campeche n.d.
14-1/2 x 14 x-1/2

Maguey Capado / Castrated Maguey 1984
13-3/4 x 18-3/8

Maguey Mazahua 1989
13-3/4 x 18-3/8

Mandil / Apron 1988
13-3/4 x 18-3/8

Martel 1988
13-3/4 x 18-3/8

Mother and Child, Maya 1991
14-1/4 x 14-3/8

Mujer de Tlacotalpan / Woman from Tlacotalpan n.d.
14 x 14

Mujeres Mazahua / Mazahua Women 1989
14 x 18-1/2

"Negro" Danzante / "Black" Dancer 1984
14 x 18-1/2

Niño Pulquero / Pulque Kegs n.d.
14 x 14

Patio de la Carcel / Jail Patio 1987
13-1/2 x 18-1/2

Pies de Angel / Angel's Feet 1990
14-1/4 x 14-3/8

Plegaria / Before the Altar 1989
13-1/2 x 18-5/8

Primera Comunion / First Communion 1992
14 x 18-1/2

Puesto de Naranjas, Orange n.d.
14-1/8 x 14

Que Tal! / Oh Dear! 1993
14 x 18-3/8

Techo de Maguey / Maguey Roof 1993
14 x 18-1/2

Tres Campanas / Three Bells 1995
13-3/4 x 18-1/2

Tres Generaciones / Three Generations n.d.
14-5/8 x 13

Tumbas / Tombs 1991
14 x 18-1/2

Hacienda, Yucatan

1989, gelatin silver print, 14 x 18-1/2 inches



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Checklist

All photographs are gelatin silver prints and dimensions are given in inches; height precedes width. All photographs are courtesy of Southwestern Writers Collection, The Wittliff Gallery of Southwestern and Mexican Photography, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos.

Agave y Sombra / Agave and Shadow 1990
13-7/8 x 18-5/8

Al Filo del Tiempo / On the Edge of Time 1992
13-1/2 x 18-1/2

Angelita de Oaxaca / Oaxacan Angel 1991
14 x 18-1/2

Aparador / Show Window n.d.
14 x 18-1/2

Asario / Pauper's Grave n.d.
14 x 14-1/8

"Asi la constui" / "This is how I built it" n.d.
14-1/4 x 14-1/8

Bajo la Falda / Under the Saint's Skirt 1991
14 x 18-3/4

Bat Man 1994
13-3/4 x 13-7/8

Beso de la Muerte / Kiss of Death 1989
14 x 18-1/2

Caballeriza / Stables n.d.
14 x 18-1/2

Caricia / Caress 1989
14 x 18-1/2

Carnaval 1994
13-3/4 x 18-3/8

Casa de Maguey / Maguey House n.d.
13-3/4 x 18-3/8

Casas en el Panteon / Houses in the Cemetery n.d.
14 x 18-1/2

Cristo Encarcelado / Christ Prisoner n.d.
14 x 18-1/2

Crucificacion, Oaxaca / The Crucification, Oaxaca 1991
14 x 18-1/2

Cruz de la Milpa / Cross in the Cornfield 1989
14 x 18-1/2

Danzante con Bicicleta / Dancer with Bicycle n.d.
14 x 18-1/2

Dos Mascaras / Two Masks 1990
13-3/4 x 18-3/8

Dos Paraguas / Two Umbrellas 1991
14-1/2 x 14-1/2

El Almuerzo / Breakfast n.d.
14 x 18-1/2

El Angel Exterminador / The Exterminating Angel 1991
14 x 18-1/2

El Mostrador / The Counter n.d.
14 x 18-1/2

El Pan / Bread n.d.
14 x 14

El Toro y la Doncella / Bull and Girl 1992
14 x 18-1/2

Encaje / Lace n.d.
14-1/8 x 14

Entrada al Panteon / Cemetery Entrance 1990
14 x 18-1/2

Escuela Mazahua / Mazahua School n.d.
14 x 14

FRONT COVER:

Caricia / Caress, 1989, gelatin silver print, 14 x 18-1/2 inches.

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Dos Paraguas / Two Umbrellas, 1991, gelatin silver print, 14-1/2 x 14-1/2 inches.

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