



Nacho Lopez, Mexican Photographer (Visible Evidence)

John Mraz

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Photographer Nacho López was Mexico's Eugene Smith, fusing social commitment with searing imagery to dramatize the plight of the helpless, the poor, and the marginalized in the pages of glossy illustrated magazines. Even today, López's photographs forcefully belie the picturesque exoticism that is invariably presented as the essence of Mexico.

In Nacho López, Mexican Photographer, John Mraz offers the first full-length study in English of this influential photojournalist and provides a close visual analysis of more than fifty of López's most important photographs. Mraz first sets López's work in the historical and cultural context of the authoritarian presidentialism that characterized Mexican politics in the 1950s, the cult of wealth and celebrity promoted by Mexico's professional photographers, and the government's attempts to modernize and industrialize Mexico at almost any cost. Mraz skillfully explores the implications of López's imagery in this setting: the extent to which his photographs might constitute further victimization of his downtrodden subjects, the relationship between them and the middle-class readers of the magazines for which López worked, and the success with which his photographs challenged Mexico's economic and political structures.

Mraz contrasts the photos López took with those that were selected by his editors for publication. He also compares López's images with his theories about documentary photography, and considers López's photographs alongside the work of Robert Capa, Dorothea Lange, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Sebastião Salgado. López's imagery is further analyzed in relation to the Mexican Golden Age cinema inspired by Sergei Eisenstein, the pioneering digital imagery of Pedro Meyer, and the work of Manuel Álvarez Bravo, who Mraz provocatively argues was the first Mexican photographer to take an anti-picturesque stance.

The definitive English-language assessment of Nacho López's career, this volume also explores such broader topics as the nature of the photographic essay and the role of the media in effecting social change.

John Mraz is research professor at the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades at the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla in Mexico.

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