



SUPERMASSIVEBLACKHOLE

ISSUE 17 / 2014 / ISSN 2009-2288



Juliana Henao Alcaraz // *Días*
Daniel Lagartofernández // *[13]25: Al principio fue la palabra. Colombia*
Juan Orrantia // *The Afterlife of Coca and its Dreams*
Jeffrey Bright // *La Santa Muerte*
Louie Palu // *Mira Mexico: Portraits From the Frontline of the Drug War*
William Aparicio // *Extraños en las esquinas*
Mariela Sancari // *Moisés*
Raquel Rocha // *Portraits of Oaxaca*

TALK

Katharina Günther // *The Lure of Francis Bacon – John Deakin
at The Photographers' Gallery, London*

FOCUS

Paccarik Orue // *El Muqui*



SMBHMAG | SUPERMASSIVEBLACKHOLE ONLINE PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE

Established in 2009, SuperMassiveBlackHole is dedicated to contemporary photography and the photographic imagery resulting from the time-based processes found in many interdisciplinary art practices today. It is available to download for free as a PDF three times a year.

Time, Space, Light & Gravity are what drive SuperMassiveBlackHole

Edited and published by Barry W Hughes // this issue is co-edited by Tom Griggs

GRAVITATE

Cover image: Raquel Rocha

The Face of Latin America // La cara de América Latina

Photography is frequently of the exception, the difference, the noteworthy. It's the broken picket on a fence or sun dogs. It's the drop of blood on a kitchen floor.

When applied to portraiture, this tendency to seek the exception can lead to distortions, especially in projects based in a specific community or culture. It can produce the singling out of the marginalized and photo-friendly subcultures. It can lead to projects that rely on the exoticism of a narrative. These distortions - repeated often by any number of photographers drawn to the same societal slices - come at the cost of a multi-dimensional, expansive portrait of communities and cultures.

In this issue of SuperMassiveBlackHole, we've looked for two types of project: projects that have moved beyond the tired thematic habits of portraiture created in the disparate cultures that make up Latin America and also projects that portray familiar themes but that reinvigorate the optics of those themes through formal innovation.

The projects selected convincingly do this. Of the total submissions, Barry made a preliminary cut to get us to roughly 35 submissions. Of those 35, Barry and I each made a list - separately - of our top ten. When we compared the two lists, we found they overlapped on 9 of 10 choices. While unfortunately there's not space to publish all of the strong work submitted, we agreed almost unanimously on the work submitted that best fit our goals for this particular issue's theme.

I've lived and worked in Colombia for four years now, enough to understand that one challenge photographers here face is getting access to distribution channels for their work beyond the region. I'd like to thank Barry for giving them this chance, and also thank him for giving me the chance to co-edit this issue with him ●

Tom Griggs, Medellín, 2014

JULIANA HENAO ALCARAZ



Días

These photographs are part of an autobiographical family project in which I try to interpret life stages endured through different feelings such as illness, loneliness, waiting, pain, hope, meeting, strength, struggle, recovery and acceptance.

The three photos presented here belong to the stage of hope:

The first picture is of my mother, a 53-year-old woman who after being fired from her job as a dental assistant returned to the countryside, adopted four dogs and devoted herself to planting trees. She is a widow who had a stormy 15-year marriage, who raised her three children with much effort, who faced an armed conflict and now after all this is in a moment of tranquility full of positive changes.

The second photo is of Sofia, a neighbor of the farm where my mom lives. She is the daughter of two teenagers with many economic problems and who, based on how she behaves, has become part of our family. Sofia and her family are also victims of the conflict in Granada, Antioquia. Since Sofia came into our lives she has had to struggle with her difficulties and go to school.

The last picture is of me. It is a self-portrait that tries to show the positive change I've had in recent months. After having had a violent childhood and an adolescence marked by acute pain from a disease that makes it hard to have normal functioning in the joints of my body, I was able to find a medical treatment that keeps me stable, allows me to work on what I like and move without pain.

The project is ongoing.





Mom; Sofia; Juliana

DANIEL LAGARTO FERNÁNDEZ



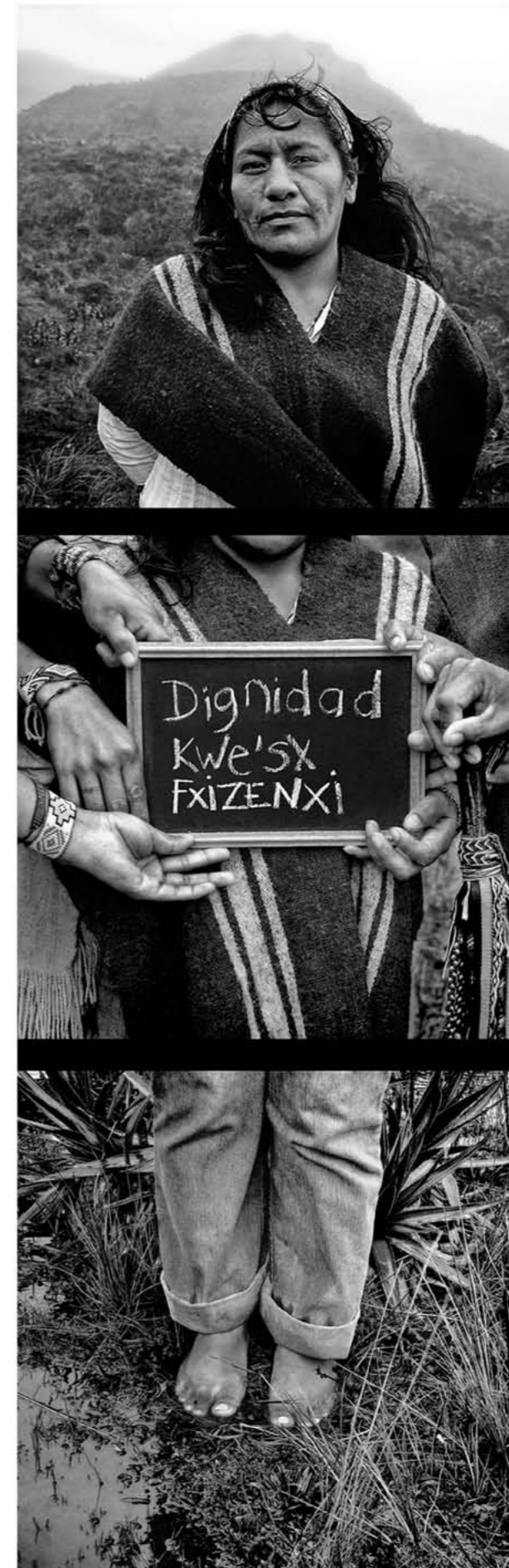
[13]25: In The Beginning Was The Word. Colombia

The testimonies of these women from different parts of Colombia strikingly reveal how the country's ongoing armed conflict has affected the bodies, spirits and lives of its women and girls. It is an effort to make the conditions these women cope with visible, reflecting their faces, their words and the places where they currently live, and showing the fear and pain that Colombia's ongoing armed conflict has made them endure.

Here are words echoing what it has meant for these women to become victims of a war that is not their war, which they so often cannot even begin to understand. Here are the trails traced by bare feet, mapping out the emotional paths that forced displacement impels those it ravages to follow.

Each woman chose the place in which she wanted to be photographed, as a symbol of her connection to her surroundings, in the midst of a landscape violated by the horror that legal and illegal actors alike generate. The very existence of our Project bears witness to the fact that the Colombian State has failed to protect women from the gender violence common in conflict areas. These women have had to regain and rebuild their vital space on their own.

lagartofernandez.info





*Aida - Dignidad; Aura - Temor; Delys - Autonomia
Isabel - Soberania; Maribel - Tierra*

JUAN ORRANTIA

The Afterlife of Coca and its Dreams

On one of the slopes of Colombia's northern mountains, there is a small farmers village with the name of a blade, Machete. A hamlet funded by settlers, it would come to be known as the center of coca growing and cocaine production in the region as well as the turf of a very well known paramilitary leader. This series engages the memories of this place at the verge of a new possible outcome when armed demobilization and eradication of illegal crops, lives formerly ruled by violence, cash, illegality and the complicated mix of patriarchal authority and military lifestyles are set forth to change. It presents those who have for many years been in the turmoil of conflicted regions; settlers, mothers and partners of former coca growers and young men that formed or collaborated with paramilitary groups in this region.

orrantiajuan.wordpress.com





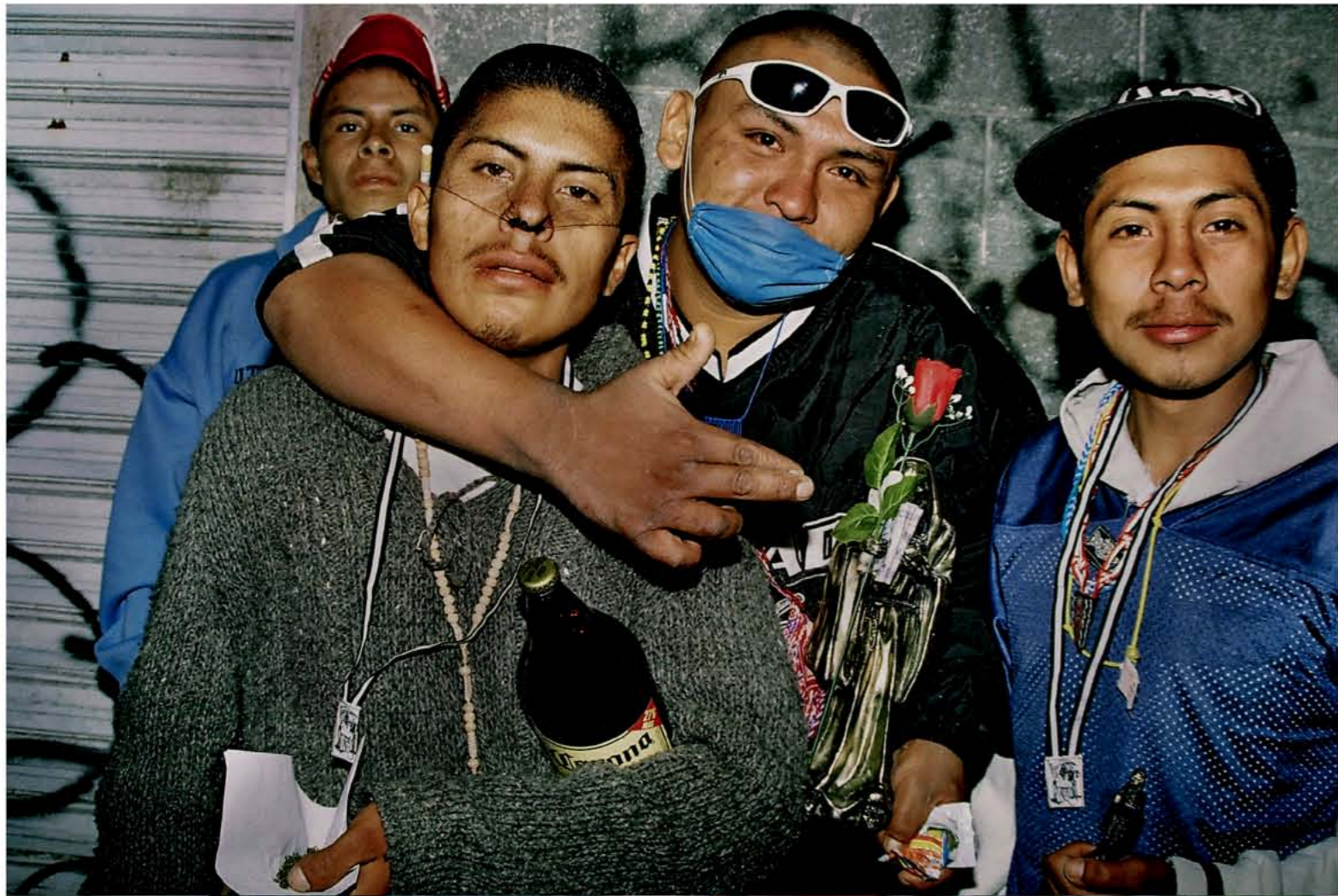
JEFFREY BRIGHT

La Santa Muerte



The following of La Santa Muerte began as a sect of the Roman Catholic Church within Mexico. Her altars and shrines join the millions throughout Mexico already dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe and St. Jude. As her popularity spread beyond Mexico's borders to US cities and as far south as Argentina, it was time to intervene. Pope John Paul II deemed her believers as devil worshipers and refused to recognise her as a saint, but this has had no effect in deterring her followers. The origins of La Santa Muerte are not completely clear but the most widely accepted story seems to date back to pre-Hispanic times. It is believed she derived from the Aztec goddess of death Mictecacihuatl, mistress to Mictlantecuhtli, Lord of the land of the dead. This goddess seems to have morphed since the Spanish inquisition into a grim reaper like figure worshiped by millions, living on the fringes of society. Followers include members of the notorious gang, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), members of the Mexican Drug Cartels to lowly vendors and street kids of Mexico City.

jeffreybright.com



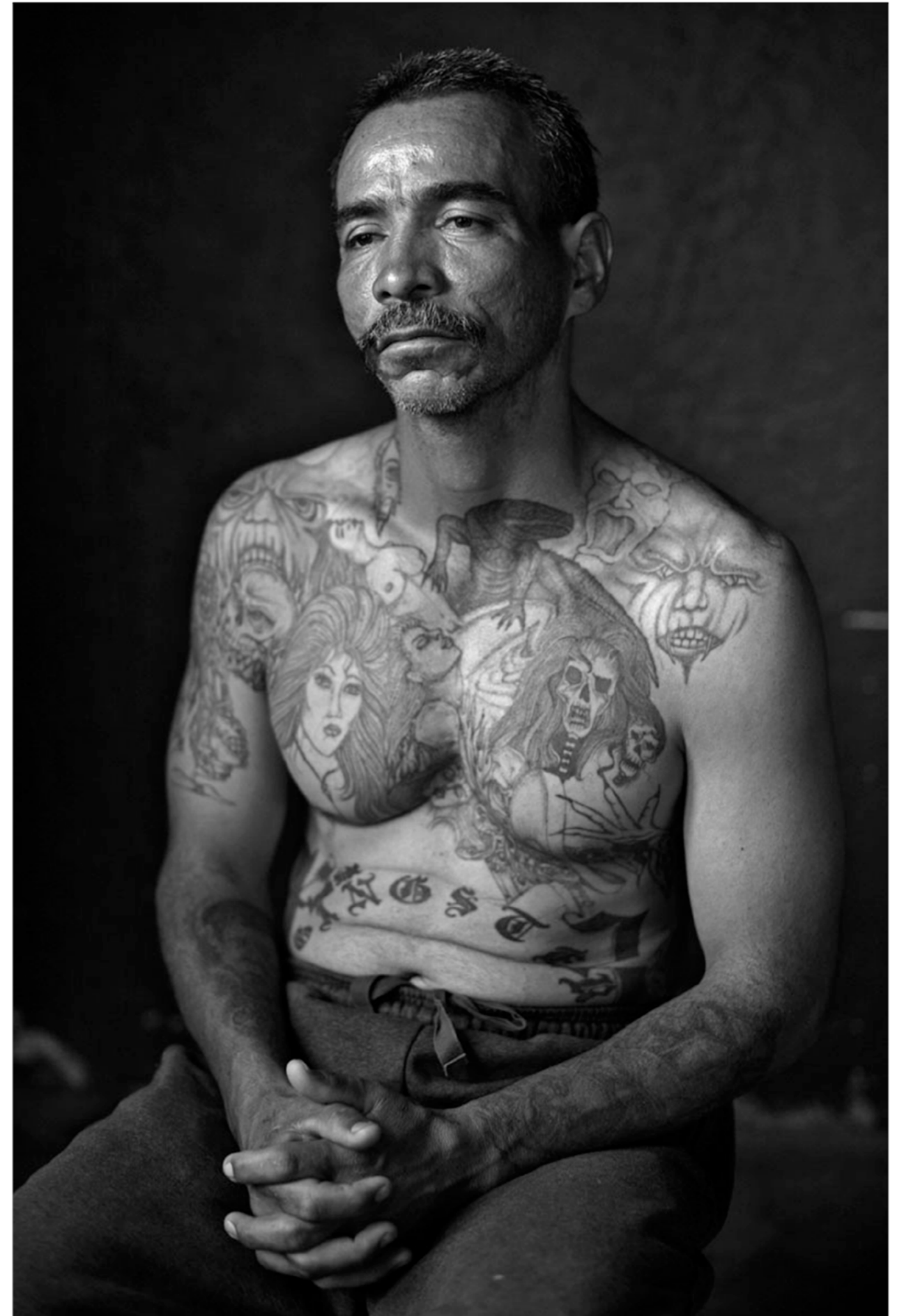
LOUIE PALU

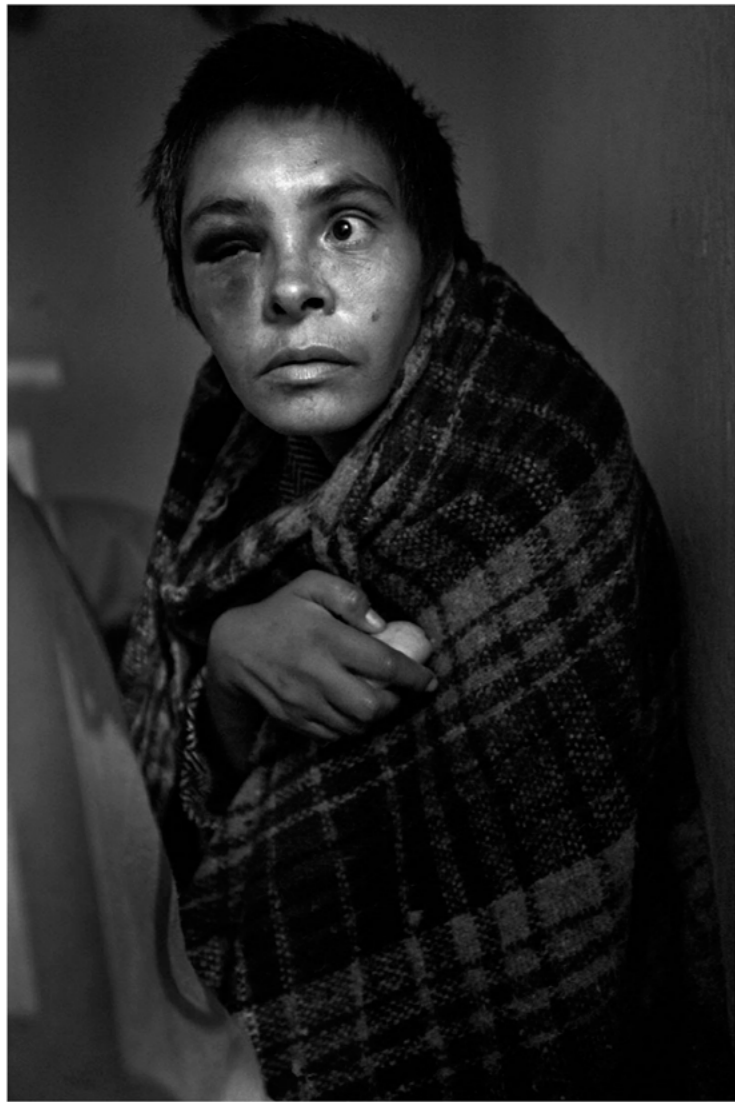
Mira Mexico: Portraits From the Frontline of the Drug War

The conflict over the control of the illegal narcotics trade in Latin America for the right to smuggle drugs into the United States has existed for decades. Over the last ten years the rise of ultra-violent cartels in Mexico has resulted in the killings of over 60,000 people in Mexico since 2006. This new drug war in Mexico has changed and shaped every facet of society and government in the country including Central America and the US border. Daily life in many parts of Mexico is dictated by insecurity and corruption due to the ongoing drug trade, which has roots in every aspect of Mexican life. On the frontline of this war smugglers, gang members, addicts, the poor and assassins are all a part of a war that has never been officially declared. There is no war to win, there are just casualties.

These portraits are from the frontline of the drug war. The mentally ill, the dead, the victims, the perpetrators and the displaced.

louiepalu.com





Previous page:

Ex-Gang Member

An ex-gang member who grew up and spent his whole life in Arizona after crossing the US border with his mother at the age of 2, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico.



Clockwise from top left:

Beating

A woman who was found beating herself in a shelter for the mentally ill operated by former gang members and drug addicts, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Deported

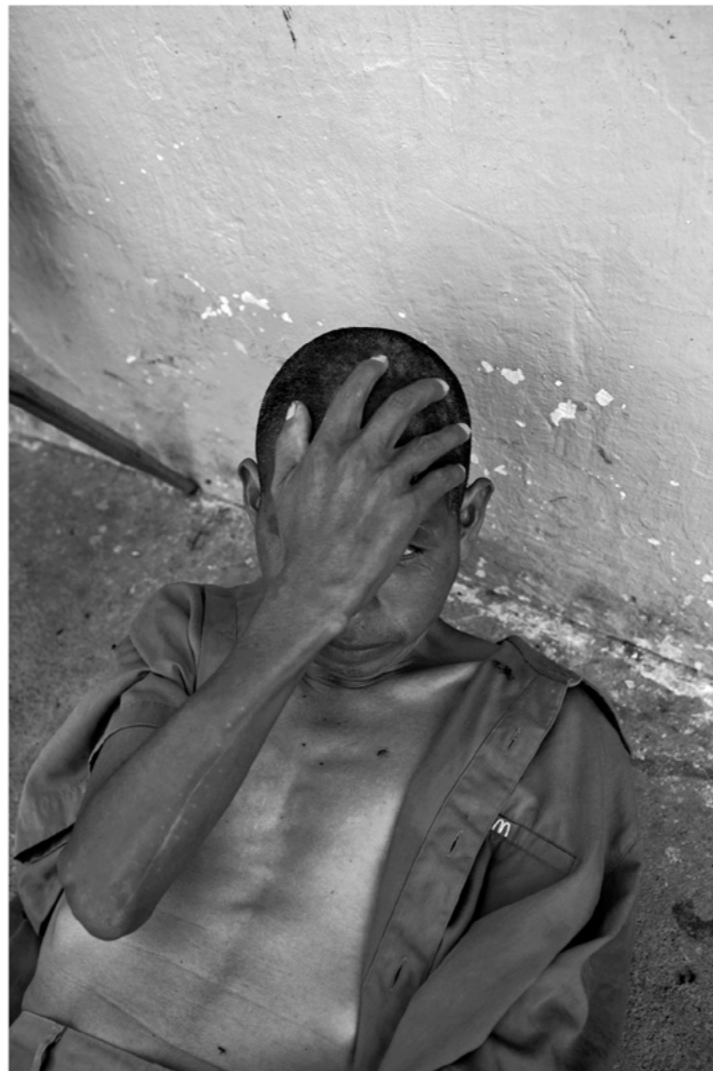
A 20-year-old woman from Chiapas, Mexico in a shelter for deportees and migrants the night after she was deported from the United States. All human smuggling and Mexican migrants who cross the border must pay organized criminal organizations a fee to cross the US border.

Bound Hands

A man with hands bound behind his back and killed execution style dumped on the banks of a river in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico the birthplace of many of the drug lords in Mexico where murder is daily part of business. 2012

Cocaine

A former teacher who lost his mind on cocaine at a privately run shelter for the mentally ill located in the desert west of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.



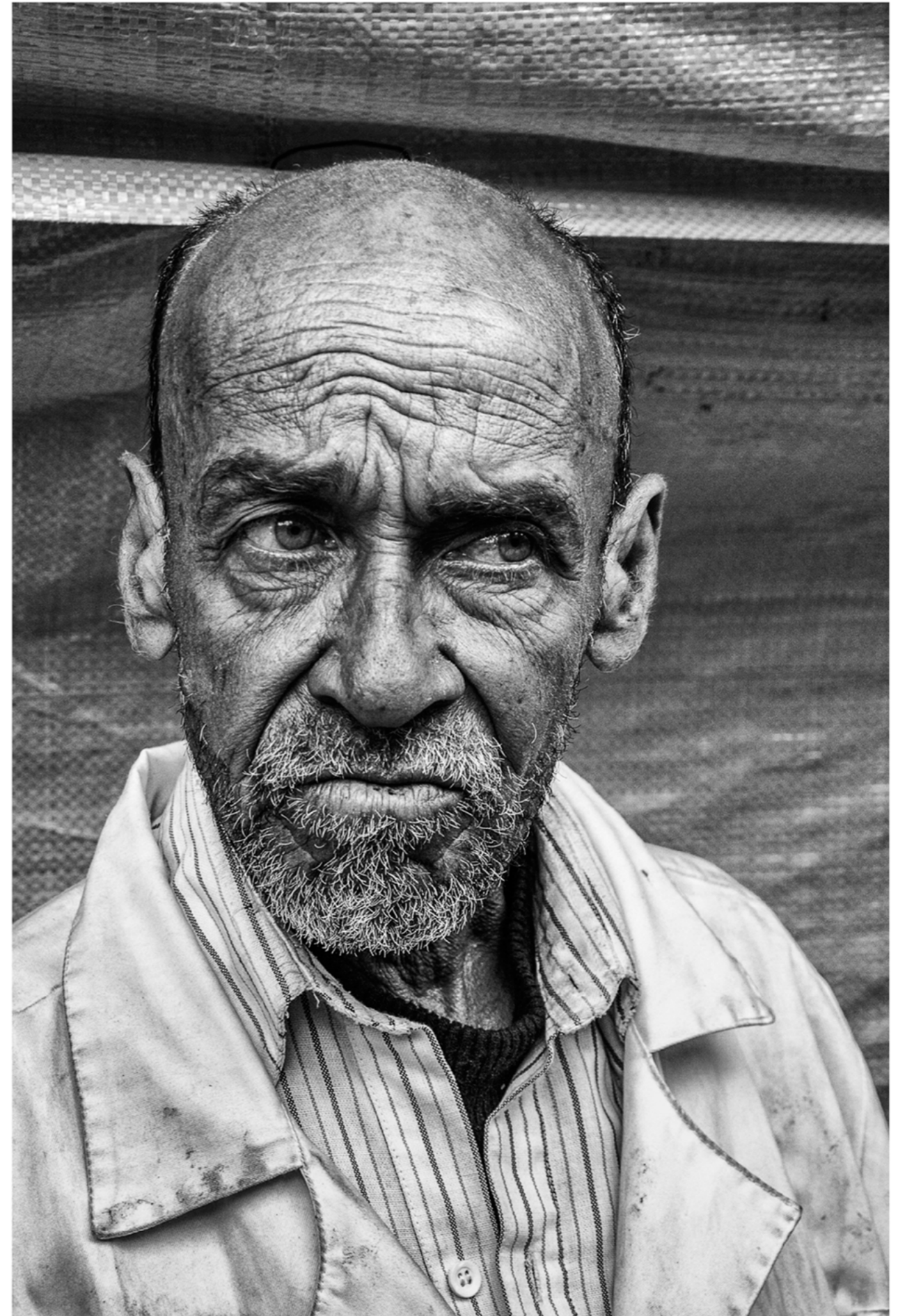
WILLIAM APARICIO



Extraños en las Esquinas

“The horror of being anonymous, of forgetting your own appearance, of having no face. The face is the magnificent picture of me.”
John M. Hull (Blind), 1990

In the streets of downtown Bogota I photograph people I meet in fleeting encounters. The depth of the texture in their gaze catches my curiosity about them, so different yet so close. The fascination with the face is that it is a crystalline mirror that contains deep secrets of our human activity.





MARIELA SANCARI



Moisés

“Photography is our exorcism.”
Jean Baudrillard

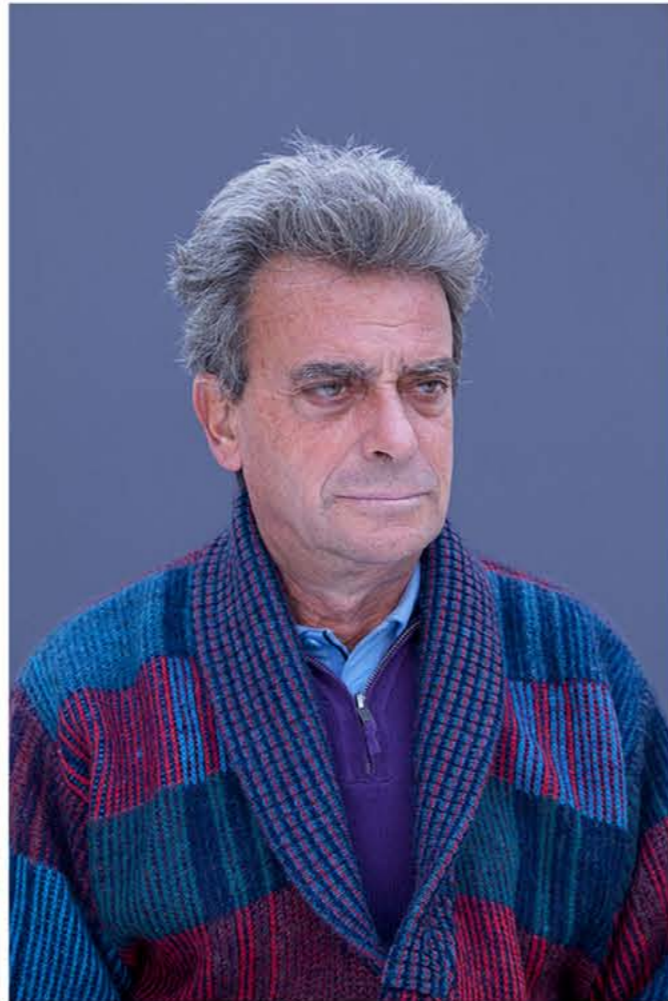
Thanatology asserts that not seeing the dead body of our beloved ones prevents us from accepting their death. Contemplating the body of the deceased helps us overcome one of the most complex stages of grief: denial.

My twin sister and I were not allowed to see the dead body of our father. I never knew if it was because he committed suicide or because of Jewish religious beliefs or both. Not seeing him has made us doubt his death in many ways. The feeling that everything was a nightmare and the fantasy we both have that we are going to find him walking in the street or sitting in a cafe has accompanied us all these years.

I once read that fiction’s primary task is to favor evolution, forcing us to acknowledge and become the otherness around us. I think fiction can help us depict the endless reservoir of the unconscious, allowing us to represent our desires and fantasies.

marielasancari.com





RAQUEL ROCHA



Portraits of Oaxaca

As Diana Arbus once said, "What it is of its more remarkable of what it is". For her the subject had to be more important than the picture and the important thing to know is that you never know.

The subjects in the project, *Portraits of Oaxaca* belong to different villages of Oaxaca, Mexico and were made during 2013 until present. These portraits are evidence of those who live there and allowed me to show part of their truth and some expression that came out from their own lives. This project is about a connection with them. They are Mexicans, cabrones y cabronas and so forward, latinos and latinas.

raquel-rocha.com





TALK

KATHARINA GÜNTHER

The Lure of Francis Bacon - John Deakin at The Photographers' Gallery, London

Katharina Günther is a professional fine art researcher and independent art historian, based in London, UK. Since graduating from the University of Cologne, she has been focussing on the work of Francis Bacon and has been researching and publishing for The Estate of Francis Bacon, most notably on the Francis Bacon Studio Archive at The Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin, Ireland. She is currently working on a PhD thesis on Francis Bacon which explores the artist's relationship to photography.



Under the Influence: John Deakin and the Lure of Soho gathers captivating material from the Condé Nast and the John Deakin Archive, rarely seen paintings and collages as well as private letters and documents. It celebrates Deakin's extraordinary talent as a portrait photographer with his pictures of 1950s and '60s Soho and its protagonists not having lost any of their intensity and appeal. After a long absence from the London galleries – the last major show was at the National Portrait Gallery in 1996 – Deakin returns to the most appropriate venue. With his legacy still very much alive in contemporary photography, The Photographers' Gallery is dedicated to the medium and located on the border of Soho, the centre of his private and professional activities.

It is easy to understand why the *Lure of Soho* has not failed to impress today's audience: the exhibition presents the photographer and his peers as an exciting group of creative outlaws and their playground in the heart of London as a liberal artistic haven largely unaffected by the restrictions of everyday life and society. Deakin's portraits epitomise that spirit. With photographs such as that of Jeffrey Bernard nonchalantly leaning on a wall at Cambridge Circus or J.P. Donleavy challenging the camera's gaze from behind his drink, Deakin created visual prototypes of artistic bohemia. Among all the romantic glorification, letters from hospital and correspondence with Vogue documenting a difficult working relationship hint at his reality of ill-health, alcoholism and poverty. Being a deeply torn man, he often preferred the bar to the darkroom. Yet, vintage prints from the Vogue archive show how successfully Deakin blended fashion, portrait and street photography when completing a commission. Showing little interest in his talents as a photographer, Deakin felt that his true vocation was to be a painter and the show offers an overview of his little-known efforts in that area. In their naïve style they form a stark contrast to the blunt camera work but their display creates a fascinatingly three-dimensional impression of the artist.



The omnipresence of another artist in the exhibition, however, causes confusion. Friends from the mid-1940s and part of the same Soho-circles, Francis Bacon was often Deakin's financial lifeline. In return, Deakin's photographs were of utmost importance for the painter. References to Bacon are therefore justified but he is present in and around the show to such an extent that one might wonder if we are in reality not dealing with a Bacon exhibition in disguise or more to the point, in drag. His likeness dominates the display: half-naked with carcasses of meat in the infamous 1952 Vogue photo shoot as original and print version, Bacon in a photograph

Not only does Bacon's ubiquity overshadow the presence of not uninteresting individuals such as W.S. Graham, it almost overshadows Deakin himself

of Deakin's mantlepiece, Bacon on Old Compton Street, Bacon and friends at Wheeler's fish restaurant and allegedly, Bacon in drag. Two Deakin paintings of Bacon face each other, with the larger one thankfully hung in the adjacent media-corner. Not only does Bacon's ubiquity overshadow the presence of not uninteresting individuals such as W.S. Graham, it almost overshadows Deakin himself.

Pictures of Bacon are accompanied by those of importance to him, such as those of his lover George Dyer and a series of Lucian Freud commissioned as working material. If a connection to Bacon's painting was to be made, a



closer look at contemporary scholarship on the artist might have been beneficial. For example, the Freud series consists of clean, undisturbed modern re-prints. The originals found in Bacon's Reece Mews studio, however, were subject to a combination of deliberate and accidental alterations. A drastically re-formulated image formed the starting point for his painting. The prints in the show are therefore of limited value to illustrate the significance for the painter. Furthermore, the display as a series and comments in the catalogue rate the pictures as generic influences, as 'mental stimuli'¹. In reality, Bacon's practice is determined by a direct one-on-one appropriation of photographic sources. Relating both oeuvres in such an unspecific way does not contribute to a deeper understanding of their creative exchange.

500m west on Bond Street, Sotheby's was more precise in linking the exact torn, folded and paint-splattered Deakin prints from the studio to Bacon's *Three Studies for Portrait of George Dyer (on Light Ground)*, 1964. The triptych was sold for nearly 27 million GBP this summer. And that brings us closer to the crux of the matter. Today, Bacon is exorbitantly expensive, famous and popular to the point of preventing an objective view on his work. Conversely, any Bacon-connection guarantees attention, an increase in interest and value, albeit at the risk of being overpowered by his presence. Even with the best intentions, careful dosage is key.

That produces strange effects. In June, the John Deakin Archive claimed to have identified an unknown sitter of a portrait in *Under the Influence* as Bacon in drag. Issues with that link range from the fact that the portrait has not been conclusively dated and only photographs of Bacon from altogether unrelated decades were used as a comparison, to the prominent cleavage of the sitter. Most importantly, in the YouTube videos produced by the Deakin Archive as proof for the resemblance, the facial features of the two individuals do simply not match up.²



Unknown Woman 1930s ©John Deakin

Despite those inconsistencies, the news was presented as a sensation, stating that by concealing the cross-dresser's name, Deakin heroically saved Bacon from public exposure.³ Whether Bacon, who in 1953 produced the large-scale painting *Two Figures* of him and his lover having sex, had been impressed by such a revelation after all, must remain speculation.

Sadly, PR-escapades like this take away from the quality of the show and the extraordinary material on display. Being busy discussing the identity of the dragqueen, who still notices the original contact sheet of the session with Frank Norman or the transparencies for *The Skin Game*? Overall, a bit more trust in Deakin's lure and a little less of Bacon's influence would have been most desirable ●

1 Robin Muir, *Under the Influence John Deakin, Photography and the Lure of Soho*, London: Art Books Publishing 2014, p.108.

2 For example: 'Francis Bacon 2' – YouTube. Seen 30 July, 2014 17.00.

3 See Gordon Comstock, 'CIA facial software uncovers the artist Francis Bacon – in drag', theguardian.com, 16 June 2014. Seen 30 July 2014, 17.20.



All images unless otherwise stated:
Installation Image of *under the Influence: John Deakin and The Lure of Soho* on display at The Photographers' Gallery at 16-18 Ramillies Street (11 April -20 July 2014)
©Kate Elliott. Courtesy of The Photographers' Gallery, London

FOCUS

PACCARIK ORUE

El Muqui



El Muqui is a series about the mining city of Cerro de Pasco, in the Peruvian Andes. Cerro de Pasco is a historical city of 80,000 people that sits on top of an enormous amount of mineral deposits, which is one of the biggest sources of income for the Peruvian government. Due to economic interests and the expansion of the mine, the city is doomed to disappear. The goal of *El Muqui* is to narrate a story of daily lives and environmental concerns combined with fictional elements such as the local folklore and cultural traditions.

El Muqui is a folkloric character in the Andean mines, highly respected - even feared - by miners, and has a strong moral code. These popular tales talk about how he is aware of the miners' desires and actions, but also playful with children. El Muqui is the center of many of the celebrations and traditions in Cerro de Pasco.

As an artist, this is an important project for me because after living in the US for half of my life, I felt that it was essential to find myself and reconnect with my Peruvian roots and heritage. *El Muqui* also gives me the opportunity to continue to make work of social relevance, and to give people, like the inhabitants of Cerro de Pasco, a voice that they do not have. As the mining activity is increasing and the Peruvian government is planning to relocate the city in the next few years, this project documents a city that will cease to exist as it is today.













BIOGRAPHY

Paccarik Orue was born and raised in Lima, Peru and currently resides in San Francisco, California where he earned a BFA from the Academy of Art University.

As an immigrant himself, Paccarik is very interested in themes of social relevance and the relationship between people and the environment. His work has been shown at SF Camerawork, Book & Job Gallery, Carte Blanche, Contemporary Art Center New Orleans and it has been featured in *Conscientious*, *Fototazo*, *Feature Shoot* and *Len scratch* among others. He is the recipient of En Foco's *NewWorks Photography Award Fellowship #17*.

Paccarik's first monograph, *There is Nothing Beautiful Around Here*, was published by Owl & Tiger Books in 2012.

paccarik.com



SMBHMAG | SUPERMASSIVEBLACKHOLE ONLINE PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 17 / 2014 / ISSN 2009-2288

Disclaimer: *SuperMassiveBlackHole* (SMBHmag) is free and makes no profit from the publication of any materials found therein. *SuperMassiveBlackHole* is a publication for the dissemination of artistic ideas and will not be liable for any offense taken by any individual(s) resulting from any material contained therein. All images in *SuperMassiveBlackHole* are the sole property of their creators unless otherwise stated. No image in the magazine or the magazine logo may be used in any way without permission of the copyright holder. The *SuperMassiveBlackHole* magazine title and logos are copyright ©2008 - 2014 Shallow publications.

All rights reserved.

Submissions: All works submitted to *SuperMassiveBlackHole* must be the sole, original property of the contributor(s), have the appropriate model releases, and cannot interfere with any other publication or company's publishing rights. *SuperMassiveBlackHole* is edited by Barry W. Hughes, London, UK.