



The Temptation

SURFACE TREATMENT

With COVID-19 rebounding and slowing gallery openings, we will keep your art experiences alive by looking back at some more memorable shows/reviews. Today we revisit photographs by Pedro Meyer, which were exhibited at IMAS, 2009.

Heresies: Photographs by Pedro Meyer

Magic Realist photographs coexist with traditional images in this exhibition by one of the most recognized figures of contemporary photography.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

"I think it's very important for people to realize that images are not a representation of reality," Pedro Meyer says. "The sooner that myth is destroyed and buried, the better for society all around." His contention that all photographs, digitally manipulated or not, are equally "true" and "untrue" has been labeled heretical in the orthodox documentary photography community. Meyer's "Heresies," an elegant exhibit of large digital photographs, is on display at IMAS.

Meyer is among the most accomplished Latin American photographers of the modern era, pioneering the digital treatment of documentary photographs and continually raising intriguing philosophical questions through his work. He is as renowned for his powerful and provocative photographs as he is for the pioneering work with digital imaging, and the photographs in this exhibit reflect

both approaches. He refers to them as truths and fictions. This concept began in 1993 and hailed a new direction in photography.

With the advent of digital photography in the early 1990s, Meyer evolved from a documentary photographer into a "digital documentarian" who often combines photographic elements from disparate times and places to arrive at what he perceives as a different or higher truth. The digital image, "The Case of the Missing Painting from the Alter", contrasts the Spanish religious heritage with that of the indigenous people, representing a conflict of belief. "The Temptation of the Angel", a color photograph taken at Magdalena Jaltepec Oaxaca of a young girl dressed as a Christian angel looking away, combines the image with the apparition of a curandera approaching across a chessboard. Does the girl really believe in this imported religion or is it superficial?

The black and white images shot in the United States are truths; the realism puts them there, yet they are also metaphorical. Several black and white portraits in traditional documentary style are mesmerizing. I do not use this term loosely. Images of Rufino Tamayo, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Alicia Alonzo held me to the photographs trying to visually identify their emotional power.

The majority of color photographs taken in Mexico are fiction, and in these he reveals human feeling and emotion under layers of images. With his combined imagery, Meyer is producing icons that are closer to human experience than documentary photography can capture. To accomplish this, his computer became an extension of his camera, a digital darkroom to manipulate his shots and to create a series of iconic images that are closer to memory than instantaneous experience. These images combine his interpretations, symbols, and archetypes; they explore inner life.

In an interview with Scott Rosenberg, Meyer said, "We don't trust words because they're words, but we trust pictures because they're pictures. That's crazy - it takes away our responsibility to investigate the truth for ourselves, to approach images with care and with caution." "Truth" as a philosophical or emotional concept will remain forever intangible, while the appearance of truth as a seamless visual construct is incredibly easy to convey. In these combined photographs, the past and the future merge - the real and the unreal can become undifferentiated; Meyer sees every moment as two moments. "Instead of remembering everything in detail, I have always made images, and in the process registered the present for future reference."

The photographic works from "Heresies," sponsored by the Mexican Consulate,

are part of the permanent collection of the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de la Tamaulipas (MACT). Meyer is the founder of the web-portal ZoneZero.

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