

Living the Image¹

Pedro Tezontémoc*



Photos by Pedro Tezontémoc

To paraphrase Tolstoy, “The secret of happiness is not to always photograph what you love, but to always love what you photograph.” That is because photography is not an end in and of itself; it is simply the medium that allows me to go from one experience to another, from one encounter with myself to another. That is why my photography is not motivated by social commitment or the sale of a product; it does not aspire to be objective or subjective, nor to contain absolute truth or express a visceral or indi-

vidualistic appreciation of the world. In short, I do not wish to transform the world with my photography. Rather, I hope that it will transform me.

The photographic act has been my great teacher. Photography is my sixth sense, and through it my reality becomes coherent, intelligible. The camera is only a tool that, like a prosthesis, sharpens my focus. The eye-vision-camera relation is like the act of contemplation, and the finger-touch-shutter button is like action: they form a point of equilibrium in my perception of the world. When I take pictures, the act itself takes control and, like a Satanic possession, I become an instrument.

I do not manipulate or construct my work, because I believe that reality offers us much more than the imagination can produce. The magical realism so sought after

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by the electronic, visual media is right around the corner. One has to be blind to go searching for it in a computer. However, I must admit this attitude may be the result of my inability to remove isolated elements of reality in order to re-invent them outside their context—the here and now. I believe that the photographic vocation consists of capturing “presents,” stopping ephemeral time that does not last; inventing a moment allows it to exist. Without photography the present would be a mere infinite succession of instants on their way from the past to the future: the present only exists in photographs.

Just as a line is an infinite succession of points, life is an infinite succession of impulses. The line of my life has been plotted by the rhythm of my impulses. I think that a human being is the sum of his or her experiences, and, on my constant search for experiences, I found the Sierra

Tarahumara which had become a pretext for another of my obsessions.

In 1936, Antonin Artaud² came to the Sierra Tarahumara on his own search. Aware that each experience modifies our lives, it seemed fascinating to me to study this experience in particular, which radically transformed this man’s life, and which is accompanied by a marvellous testimony as a reference: the work of Artaud.

Guided by Artaud, I made four trips to the Tarahumara mountains between 1988 and 1993. On the second (May-June 1992), I walked almost 150 kilometers on the nearly invisible route traced more than 50 years earlier.

² Antonin Artaud, the French theater director, was the father of the Theater of Cruelty and an important influence on writers of the stature of Jean Genet and Nobel Prize winner Albert Camus. [Editor’s Note.]



The magic of the Tarahumara made Tezontemoc's artistic photos possible.

Thus, the results of my experience were translated into visual images, as well as an image of a way of seeing, a way of becoming conscious of reality through the simple act of having gone there to experience it. This changed my way of perceiving the world and my relationship with photography, as have all my experiences in their own way.

My photography is not made to be hung on walls or published, nor even to be developed. These are only complementary processes that allow me to establish references in the development of my personal experiences. For this reason, my best photographs are those that I have consciously decided not to take in order to allow for direct experience without filters. Photography is not an art; the art is life itself.

I do not consider myself an artist, now that artists are more concerned with selling or appearing in the newspapers than with searching for themselves. Contemporary artists, with some honorable exceptions, craft works. I consider myself a mere receptor of experiences, I travel the world exposing myself to them, becoming intensely involved, establishing a passionate, amorous relationship with each in order to consume them, and at the moment of my death I will only regret what I left undone. Photography is a way to achieve this. ❧



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