

Mexico: Between Life & Death

photographs and text by Harvey Stein



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What is my fascination with Mexico? This is difficult for me to express in words. I usually let my photographs do the talking.

As an inquisitive teenager living in Pennsylvania, I imagined Mexico to be a distant, sun struck, backward country where people were poor but had large, happy families and a carefree, non-competitive way of living. A place of vague size, mixed races and heritages, of quasi-catholic/indigenous religions, and of ambiguous, almost magical rituals filled with much pain and joy. I ignorantly envisioned a country filled with a machismo that embraces death; a land of dancing skeletons, laughing ghosts and miracles. It was a vision of a country that I knew I would be comfortable in.

Finally, in 1993, I went to Mexico and have made 11 trips since. I have never been disappointed; it's a vibrant, friendly, emotionally available, sometimes raw place where a stranger is looked at with curiosity and warmth. I go as a wanderer, photographing in a country often strange to me. I hear words I cannot comprehend, see things I don't understand, view acts of kindness and violence, smell new odors and taste new foods. I walk down small cobblestone streets that are a mystery to me. I react and photograph intuitively. When in Mexico, I am dizzy with new experiences and free to go anywhere and to do anything. The feeling is of endless possibilities. I am restrained only by my own limitations.

I try to pierce the ever-present mysteries of this multifaceted land, to come to some understanding of life and death through Mexico's special alliance with these topics, and to reveal my enchantment with Mexico's culture, people and endless contradictions.

Online, Stein's work can be seen at: www.junebateman.com,
www.brucesilverstein.com, and www.e3gallery.com.

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