

GRACIELA ITURBIDE

Juchitán

Created from 1979 to 1988, *Juchitán of Women* is unquestionably the work that is most deeply ingrained in her career and which catapulted her to international fame. In this project, Iturbide recounts her experience with the people of Juchitán, Oaxaca, especially the women. She portrays them as strong, independent and politicised. Far from offering an idealised or trivial view of what it is to be indigenous, she avails of her sense of humour and the ambivalence of the photography medium to penetrate the complexity of a different socio-cultural order.

Those who live in the sand: The Seri Indians

With this project on the Seri Indians of the Sonoran desert, which she carried out in 1979 as a commission by Mexico's National Indigenist Institute (INI), Graciela Iturbide prompts a reflection based on the specific circumstances of this community: the division produced by living between two almost antagonistic cultural references. Here, as with her Juchitán project, Graciela Iturbide adopts a groundbreaking position as regards univocal ways of thinking and principles established when photographing a stigmatised culture.

Other Frontiers

Although her discovery of rural, indigenous Mexico was fundamental in her very early career as a photographer, Iturbide's exploration is also a quest for identity, which has not been restricted to her own country. The notion of a journey pervades her entire oeuvre.

Mexiko: Rituals of Celebration and Death

From its beginnings in the late 1960s to the late 1980s, Iturbide's work mirrored her interest in the theatricality of everyday life and the carnival atmospheres of popular Mexican celebrations, in which Catholic ritual and indigenous traditions come together. In these photographs she not only highlights the irony with which the Mexican imagination represents death, but also accentuates the surrealistic, grotesque nature of these social rituals.

In the Name of the Father

This project from 1992 reveals Iturbide's vision of the sacrifice of hundreds of goats, celebrated every year and since the times of the Spanish conquest, in the Mixteca Mountains in the Oaxaca region. Beginning with careful research into the event, Iturbide engages in a deeper exploration of the heavy historical burden that the tremendous violence of these slaughters entails, evoking its Biblical echoes like the title of this work.

The Botanical Garden

Iturbide has long photographed gardens and since 1998, Oaxaca's Botanical Garden on several occasions. In consonance with the reflections on the interrelation of nature and culture of her most recent works, the dimension that emerges in these photographs is one of a natural domesticated space that suffers from a profound vulnerability; a garden whose autochthonous species ironically cannot survive if not specially tended.

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Frida's Bathroom

In 2006 Iturbide was commissioned to photograph one of the bathrooms in the Frida Kahlo House-Museum in Coyoacán, which had remained closed since her death in 1954. Aware of the devotion that Kahlo sparked, Iturbide approached this icon of Mexican culture by opening a dialogue with the painter's work from her own poetic space and reinterpreting her objects and utensils.

Landscapes and Objects

Since the last 1990s, Graciela Iturbide's work has shown a clear predilection for randomly found landscapes and objects, permeated by enigmatic, mysterious atmospheres. The intimate, solitary experience with the setting and the surrealistic nature that certain objects acquire are a constant in her most recent photographs taken in Mexico and the southern United States.

In many of these, still perceptible human traces accentuate the feeling of absence. Her interest in calm places also predominates in the portraits taken in India. These are images of disquieting beauty that contemplate the ritual, seen from a mystical dimension that transcends cultures and traditions.

Self-portraits

The self-portrait reflects how its author wants to be seen by the world. Through self-representation, artists delve into their knowledge and subconscious to portray the deepest emotions or the superficial states of themselves. In this exhibition we see self-portraits by Graciela Iturbide made between 1979 and 2006, including her first – *Self-Portrait with the Seri Indians, Sonora Desert, Mexico, 1979* – in which the artist identifies with this community by portraying herself as one of its members. The dialogue initiated by Iturbide with the indigenous communities turned into a personal search, an inquiry into the self that is linked with the subsequent self-portraits, in which her obsessions appear revealing the subconscious.

Project partners:

