

La Muse

DOCENT DATES

October 6

10 am Susan Tai, Curator of Asian Art on current installations.

October 20

Julie Joyce, former Curator of Contemporary Art, on *In the Meanwhile, Part II*

November 3

Miya Ando, Artist

November 17

Geoff Dyer on How to Look at Photographs

December 1

Tony de los Reyes, Artist

December 13

Holiday Party 4-6

January 5, 2022

January 19

February 2

February 16

March 2

March 16

April 6

May 4

May 18



Manuel Álvarez Bravo (1902-2002) was the father of Mexican photography, producing works which spoke quietly and powerfully about indigenous Mexicans, their ancient cultural history and deep aboriginal identities. This silver gelatin print (one of six in our collection) was taken in 1935, *Portrait of Eternity, Woman Combing her Hair*, captures the woman as an archetypal goddess, or as Octavio Paz phrased it, “an enigma in black and white, silent yet eloquent . . . alluding to other realities, and without showing them, evoking other images.”

Submitted by Ricki Morse

Dear Docents,

What a great start to the service year! We were finally able to achieve two major accomplishments. First was the Service Recognition Ceremony for 2020/2021 held September 8th at the Ridley-Tree Education Center. Thanks go to Patsy and Rachel as well as our Membership Chair, Pattie Firestone, for arranging this long-awaited event.

The second accomplishment took place as our New Active docents expressed a great sense of achievement in finally presenting their tours to the Evaluation Team after a year-and-a-half of virtual practice. Shirley Waxman, Evaluation Chair, did an outstanding job of organizing 14 tours over two weeks. Many thanks to Shirley and all senior docents who gave their time and expertise as evaluators, clearing the way for our New Actives to officially take on the role of Fall Highlights Team. Team Leader Ralph Wilson had been attending their first tours to help everyone transition from virtual practice to live tours as we welcome back the public.

Finally, thank you to the docents who helped out at the Educators' Open house on September 22nd. It was great fun to hear accolades from teachers as they toured the newly renovated galleries. That enthusiasm has already translated into the return of students visiting the Museum.

All is all, I would say it was a very good start to the year! ■

Patty



Patty Santiago,
Docent Council
President

From our **Student Teams Co-chairs**
Teda Pilcher and Irene Stone



Teda Pilcher and Irene Stone, Rachel Heidenry, Patricia Santiago, and Shirley Waxman met with the Student Touring team leaders September 13th. Information packets containing student touring practices and policies were reviewed. Shirley reviewed the evaluation process and announced that due to the large number of New Actives requiring evaluations, senior docents on the Student Touring Teams would



not be evaluated this year. All senior docents will be evaluated on their Adult tours.

As of this writing, two student tours have been scheduled. On October 12th, fifty students from Vada, (SB High) and on October 26th, seven students from Knox will tour our new museum. ■

Teda and Irene

From our **Adult Teams Co-chairs**
Laura DePaoli and Denise Klassen



It's wonderful to have people in the galleries enjoying our new space and even more wonderful that they are interested in having us introduce it to them. Here's hoping for continuing good numbers throughout the fall as people find their way back to the museum.



Just a couple of updates for touring:

1. Please remember that sweeping all the new galleries requires a bit more time, so be sure to arrive at the museum in time to allow 15 minutes before your tour starts to do a thorough sweep.
2. We have paper masks at both desks, and are asking they be used instead of cloth ones for touring, as it is so much easier to hear your great tours through paper. These are surgical masks so completely safe to use. Thanks for your understanding.

3. Because of the current need for social distancing you might consider stepping slightly to the side after speaking about a piece to allow visitors to get a closer look at the art.

4. Please remember to fill out the Red Book located at the front visitor's services desk. It is especially important for us to have an accurate count of the group sizes we are touring this year. If you are a docent following a tour, particularly a large group, please consider doing a count to help the touring docent keep track. If you do forget to fill out the Red Book please drop either of us an email with the information.

5. If you haven't done so already, please take another look at the *Fire, Metal, Monument: Bronze* exhibit. Several exciting pieces were added last week, including the bronze *Head of Alexander*. ■

Thank and happy touring,
Laura and Denise

Head of Alexander
First half of the 3rd
century CE



From our **Membership Chair**
Pattie Firestone



We now have PUBLIC hours to report in addition to your ongoing research hours. Be sure to send them to me via phone call or email.

It was a perfect morning for our Service Recognition Ceremony. Thank you to Patsy and Rachel for the alternate outdoor setting. And thanks to Pma, we have photos! Enjoy reliving the moment later in this issue. ■



Pattie

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301-520-5775 (mobile)

From our **Evaluations Co-chairs**
Paul Guido and Shirley Waxman



Irene Stone

Evaluation Tips for Docents (Adult)

1. **Friendly docents**. Be warm and welcoming and encourage questions. This will help you and your audience to relax and experience the works of art more fully.



Teda Pileher

2. **Object-oriented talks**. A gallery talk rich in visual discovery is unforgettable. Keep your discussion and all eyes focused on the artwork itself. Point out details. Relate historical and other background information to visual elements.

3. **Introduction, transitions, and conclusion tied to a theme**. These formal elements bring structure and meaning to your gallery talk. Keep them simple and clear.

4. **Accurate information**. Double check your facts. Know your sources. If you are unsure about a fact or pronunciation, call the appropriate Team Leader for verification.

5. **Professional presentation**. Stand next to the object, facing the audience, so they can see the art clearly, and simultaneously look at you. Give your transition before walking. Dress professionally.

As you can see, these basic tour elements have not changed much since your provisional year. So relax, and remember that your evaluator is on your side. Chances are, he or she is being evaluated this year, too.

Please call us if you have any questions or concerns about evaluations.

Shirley Waxman

805-252-7909,

Evaluations Chair

2020 & 2021 Service Recognition Awards
Photos by Pma



**DOCENT
of the YEAR**

Mike Ramey
Photo by Rachel



Ricki Morse
30 Years of Service











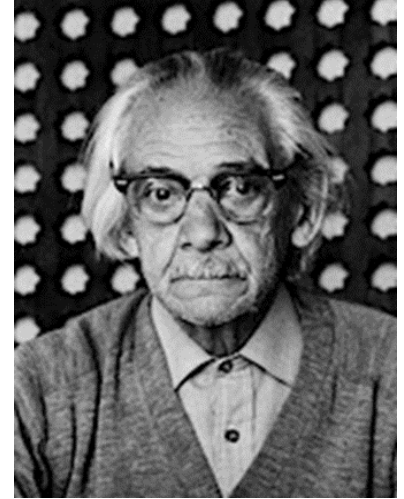
Latin American Photography

Manuel Álvarez Bravo

By Ricki Morse



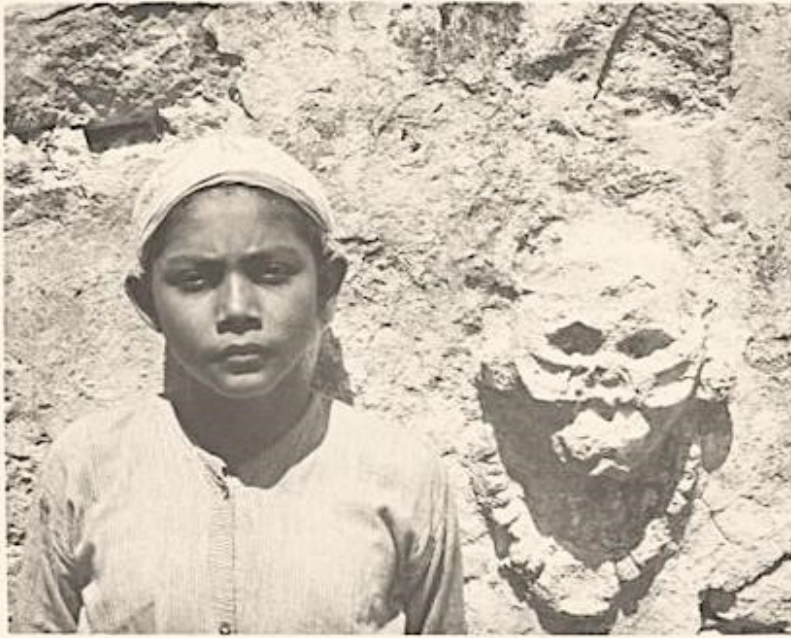
In 2001 the J. Paul Getty Museum mounted an exhibition of Manuel Álvarez Bravo's century of work in celebration of his 100th birthday. Considered one of Mexico's premier 20th century artists, Bravo led Mexican art into Modernism, reaching beyond the political murals of Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, into the soul of the Mexican people and their culture. Often deceptively simple, his images are intricately composed with the sensitivity of a dance. His inherent subject matter is that of indigenous culture—life, death, time—as they unfold in individual moments.



Manuel Álvarez Bravo (1902-2002)

One of our six Bravo photographs is included in the *Facing Forward* exhibition in the Photography Gallery,

and it surprises with its simplicity and depth. The boy squints into the glaring sun standing in the ruins of Tulum on the Caribbean. This ancient Mayan site, constructed in the 13th century CE by his ancestors, seems a natural setting for today's somber boy. Perhaps dreaming of the past or his own future, the surreal scene links the two figures, and we are aware of the influence of European Surrealism on Bravo's work as the image brings the past into the present. Like our cover image, *Portrait of the Eternal*, an archetype is evoked, adding a majesty and timelessness to the woman combing her hair—just as the simple boy brings his necklaced ancestor into the present.



Manuel Álvarez Bravo, *Niño Maya de Tulum (Mayan Boy from Tulum)*, 1942, platinum print, 1942. SBMA

Bravo was born in Mexico City. When he was eight, the Mexican revolution began, and it ended when he was eighteen with the expulsion of the dictator Porfirio Díaz and the founding of a constitutional state. Thus his world view was formed around the uprising of the indigenous Mexican peoples and the culture within his own family, his grandfather a portrait painter and his father a teacher and lover of music and art. Unlike most photographers who travel widely, Bravo made most of his photographs within a hundred miles of the family home in the heart of colonial Mexico City. Though his images are local, they

embody a broader understanding, capturing the spirit, striving and yearnings of his subjects.

Quetzalcótl, a silver gelatin print, broadens our grasp of his vision. He sees the Aztec god, a feathered serpent, in a twisted tree trunk, its leaves providing the creature's feathers, embedding indigenous mythology in the natural world. We see why Edward Weston was a great admirer, as were Henri Cartier-Bresson and Octavio Paz as well as his fellow artists in Mexico and Latin America. The Getty Museum titled their 2001 Bravo exhibition "Optical Parables." He expanded the surreal dream-landscape into a more human, universal vision which has opened the way for his students and contemporary photographers like Luis Gonzalez Palma to expand into new paths.



Manuel Álvarez Bravo, *Quetzalcótl*, 1968, silver gelatin print.

The first of Bravo's three wives was Lola Álvarez Bravo (1907-1993), now a widely collected photographer.



Lola Álvarez Bravo, *Self-Portrait*, 1956, silver gelatin print.

They were friends as children and were married in 1925. He became her teacher and she assisted in his studio as well as becoming the mother to his son, Manuel. In the early '30s she left to pursue her own career as a photographer, mounting her own first exhibition in 1944 at Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts. She also operated her own gallery from 1951 to 1958 and gave her friend Frida Kahlo the first and only solo exhibition in her lifetime.

Lola, like her husband, was drawn to surrealism and grounded in the indigenous people of Mexico; however we see in her vision a more contemporary world. Also she was known for often oblique viewpoints, placing the viewer at an unusual angle to the scene. In *Untitled*, 1954, the sweeping grandeur and texture of the arches contrasts with the tiny people entering and leaving the space. She is able to pull the viewer

into the space she has created. We almost need to catch our breath.

The Manuel and Lola Bravo provide some background for my favorite work in *Facing Forward*, our much loved Luis Gonzalez Palma, *Loteria #1*, 1988-1991. ■



Lola Álvarez Bravo, *Untitled*, 1954, silver gelatin print.

Latin American Photography

Looking In at Luis González Palma

By Ricki Morse



Note: This article is reprinted from the October 2015 La Muse. Luis Gonzalez Palma's Lotería #1 is on view in the Photography show, "Facing Forward."

Karen Sinsheimer drew her title for this, her last exhibition, from Luis González Palma's *La Lotería #1*, his 1989-1991 collage. And the exhibition reflects this emphasis by introducing the show with *La Lotería*. We will first view it from Ludington Court as we turn toward Preston Morton. It draws us toward its gaze through the whites of the eyes and the figures' placements on a level with our own eyes. We encounter the native Mayan people, dressed as King, Princess, Devil, Angel, Shaman, animal masked girl, the iconic women tied to the cycles of the moon, or mediat-

ing between life, death and birth, or silenced by the Church. We will look more closely at these figures, which González Palma also offered individually as single portraits, but first I would like to examine Karen's description of this Latin Photography show as *Looking In-Looking Out*. Luis González Palma embodies the reality of the native Guatemalan-Mayan people through several artistic devices—by photographing directly face-to-face, by bleaching out the whites of the eyes, the ropes that bind, the skulls of an endangered society, the crown of colonial power, the Christian fish sealing the woman's mouth. However, the central figure is the Virgin, the maiden, the renewer, encircled with white roses, promising an abundant, loving future. As the figures look out at us they reveal themselves, and as we look in at them we share their suffering but find no despair, only endurance, hope and beauty. Throughout



Luis González Palma, b. 1957, Guatemalan, *Lotería #1*, 1989-91, Hand painted gelatin silver prints, Museum purchase with funds provided by the Wallis Foundation. INTERNAL USE ONLY



the exhibition we share the poverty, the struggle for life, all the way to Cartagena's *Fragmented Cities*, 2008, and its companion piece, *Car Poolers*, 2012, showing the suburbs ("Own Your own Home") without utilities or schools or transportation and the difficulties Mexicans are willing to surmount to fulfill their dreams. Gonzlez Palma's choice of the lottery game as a vehicle for his expression of contemporary Mayan life carries multiple loaded and ironic meanings. The game was developed by the Spanish conquerors to teach Spanish to the native Mayan speakers. Cards depicting Europeanized objects named the objects in Spanish. These cards, which redefined local culture and language, became a popular bingo-style game. Gonzlez reimagined the cards as Mayan, run-

ning an emotional gamut from whimsical to tragic. The bored Mayan boy taking a cigarette break from what we imagine to be a Christmas performance, angel wings tied to his back, not only reflects the Mayan view of Christianity as alien, but also echoes our own experience as children in a Christmas pageant promoted by parents and teachers. The image of the woman tied to the moon resonates in a very intimate way with all women, providing a dramatic image of women's primordial heritage—unlike the European lady in a dress on the lottery cards. So in *Looking In— Looking Out* we may see not only our Latin neighbors, but also ourselves. The sepia tint of Gonzlez Palma's images has remained a hallmark of his work and enriches our experience, suggesting that the images are very old, perhaps from colonial times, and thus carry importance. The irony is not wasted on us. Clearly what is old and European is more worthy of our contemplation than what is New World. The tint also underlines the ancient historical tradition of the Mayan people which is celebrated in the images of the shaman, face framed by eagle wings and by the animal skull mask worn by a girl we recognize as the princess in the center. Gonzlez Palma is a master of encapsulating multiple meanings in his manipulated images. He refuses black and white, good and evil, reduction of meaning to absolutes. His view of life is much more complex, much more poetic, much richer. The ropes that tie the skull mask to the girl's face, an evocation of Mayan ritual, are bleached in emphasis, as is the fish, symbolizing Christ, which covers the girl's mouth. What is he saying about the power of religions to enslave and silence people? The pregnant woman holds a bleached skull, reflecting a cycle of birth, life, death in a viscerally real tableau, at the same time that the image is highly contrived. The king is a very simple Mayan peasant, clearly not accustomed to wielding power, while the shaman exudes charisma. And at the same time our attention is constantly drawn to the creative exuberance of the work, to the act of creation. We recognize the princess as the masked Mayan ritualist, underlining the fact that these are staged portraits, using models in different guises. The critic Laura Gonzalez Flora says, ". . . contrary to documentary photography conceived as a reflection 'untouched' by photographer reality, the constructed photography involves open recognition of

authorial creation of the photographic image. More than an impartial witness of a scene, the photographer is an active generator of an image, like the painter, engraver and sculptor." In many ways González Palma is a playwright or a theater director, drawing us into the human drama as he experiences it, introducing us to the characters, showing us their suffering and their hope and their innocence and their complicity. He prefers the term Poetic Realism to the descriptions post-modern romantic and magic realism, seeing himself as revealing the underlying reality of life through creativity, not as creating an alternate reality. To my mind, this is how he touches us so deeply. His work does reveal pain and suffering, perseverance and tolerance, beauty and strength, with no easy or obvious answers, but a massive human dignity at the core.

Luis González Palma, of Mestizo heritage, lives today in Cordoba, Argentina, having fled the political chaos and violence in Guatemala. His wife, a poet and former dancer, often titles his works, including the catalogue for a recent show at the Tweed in Minneapolis entitled Poems of Sorrow. He is collected widely throughout Europe and the Americas.

"The Somnambulist" by Rufino Tamayo

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"The Somnambulist" by Rufino Tamayo is an oil on canvas anonymously gifted to The San Diego Museum of Art in 1964. The artist considered himself an international Mexican, bringing Mexican art and its cultural roots to the world and vice versa. One art school, two museums and over 2,000 works later, it is easy to see how he brought inspiration to Oaxaca, just as his birthplace inspired him and his art. Learn more about Tamayo and his work "The Somnambulist" with Roxana Velásquez, the Maruja Baldwin Executive Director and CEO of The San Diego Museum of Art. A new episode of Bank of America's Masterpiece Moment will be available every two weeks throughout the year. To sign up to receive notifications about new video releases, please visit

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Photo courtesy of Leslie Hay-Currie

<https://christojeanneclaude.net/artworks/arc-de-triomphe-wrapped/>

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