Phoenix Art Museum’s New Latin American Photography Exhibition Examines Politics, Power of Place

The Politics of Place on view August 4 – December 2, 2012 in Orme Lewis Gallery

PHOENIX (July 9, 2012) – Throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, artists working in Latin America have embraced photography as a means to capture their surroundings, document social injustice and political upheaval, and create images that define them as a people and a nation. Beginning August 4, 2012, Phoenix Art Museum will present The Politics of Place: Latin American Photography, Past and Present, an exhibition of historical and contemporary photography that evokes the pivotal role of place in Latin American art and the idiosyncrasies of life in the region.

The Politics of Place provides an intimate look at works that illustrate the power of place to alter the impact of an image and influence our interpretation of it, evoking the underlying politics and, at times, sociopolitical turmoil not necessarily pictured in the image itself. “What is most fascinating about these images,” says Vanessa Davidson, PhD, Lampe Associate Curator of Latin American Art at the Museum, “is all of the stories and histories that come alive in an image that is sometimes strangely simple, whether it is a store front, a lone figure, or a row of Mexican peasants pretending to be rebels for a photographer. These images capture a profound sense of place and document political themes, sometimes with great humor and irony. They make for wonderful, meaningful art.” The images range in subject matter, and include stirring, evocative scenes, such as Pablo Ortiz Monasterio’s 1996 photograph Volando Bajo (Flying Low), which features a young, shirtless man leaping dramatically before a mural of two guns.

Expanding the community’s awareness of the diverse artistic styles and media emanating from Latin America, The Politics of Place is the first exhibition of Latin American photography at the Phoenix Art Museum. It celebrates a long-standing tradition of photography in the region, beginning first with French-born Brazilian Hércules Florence who began taking photographs in 1833, four years before Louis Daguerre would capture the first daguerreotype in Paris, in 1837. Drawn primarily from Arizona collections, the works range in technique and style and include a video work and slide show. The exhibition will feature the work of major artists from across Latin America, including Alfredo Jaar (Chile), Marta María Pérez Bravo (Cuba), Luis Molina-Pantin (Venezuela), the late Lola Álvarez Bravo (Mexico), the late Ana Mendieta (Cuba-USA), and Rivane Neuenschwander (Brazil). It will also include works by American and European artists working in Latin America that provide an outside perspective. The exhibition will be on view in the Orme Lewis Gallery beginning August 4 through December 2, 2012.

Beyond the Gallery

In accompaniment to The Politics of Place, Phoenix Art Museum will also feature a rare screening of Mexican filmmaker Luis Buñuel’s 1950 film Los Olvidados (The Young and the Damned) on Friday, October 12, 2012 at 7:00 pm in the Museum’s Whiteman Hall. The film will be shown in 35-millimeter print format with a rarely seen alternate ending. Incorporated into UNESCO’s Memory of World Heritage Registry in 2003, the film is a brutal and honest look at life in Mexico City, capturing both the tragic and poetic realities of the largest city in the Western Hemisphere. This film screening is sponsored by Latin American Art Alliance, a support organization of Phoenix Art Museum.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for more than 50 years and is the largest art museum in the Southwestern United States. Critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions are shown alongside the Museum’s permanent collection of more than 17,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. Visitors also enjoy vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum’s landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more, visit PhxArt.org, or call the 24-hour recorded information line at (602) 257-1222.

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