

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Getty Surveys Mexican Photography in Two Major Shows

Stephen West · Tuesday, September 8th, 2026

Two sprawling exhibitions featuring the work of Mexican and Mexican American photographers have just opened at the [J. Paul Getty Museum](#) in Los Angeles. Together they present a broad sampling of styles and subjects across much of the past century.

The [first show](#), titled *Instante/revelación: Moments in Mexican Photography*, includes some prominent names, such as Manuel Alvarez Bravo and his wife, Lola Alvarez Bravo, whose work is often more arty and abstract than straight documentary photography. The [second exhibition](#), *Every Minute Is History: Five Views of Los Angeles*, ranges from scenes of political protests to highly personal portraits, often nudes.



Flor Garduno (1957-), *La espera/The Waiting Time*, 1980, gelatin silver print; Getty Museum, gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser; © Flor Garduno.

In the *Moments* show, Flor Garduno's eerie landscape *La espera/The Waiting Time* of 1980 (top image and above) depicts an almost medieval-looking wall punctuated by a series of short towers, much of it reflected by water on the ground. On the farthest tower sits a large black bird surveying the scene and perhaps looking for dinner. Below a cloudy sky and mountainous landscape, it's a mysterious and powerful image.



Lola Alvarez Bravo (1903-1993), *En su propia carcel/In Her Own Prison*, gelatin silver print; Getty Museum, gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser; © Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona Foundation.

Lola Alvarez Bravo's 1950 *En su propia carcel/In Her Own Prison* sets a small portrait of a young woman inside a complicated diagonal grid of light and shadows, with a second, contrasting grid behind her. While she appears to be resting her arms on the window ledge of her apartment, she also seems to be trapped in a giant cage. Why doesn't she go outside and take a walk? Who is she waiting for?



Manuel Carrillo (1906-1989), *Pulqueria, Toluca/Pulque Bar, Toluca*, 1970, printed 1981, gelatin silver print; Getty Museum, gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser; © University of Texas at El Paso Library, Special Collections Department, Manuel Carrillo Papers.

Manuel Carrillo's nicely balanced 1970 study of the front entrance to a pulque bar in Toluca, near

Mexico City, shares a certain ambiguous tone with many other photographs in the show. Shot head-on, *Pulqueria, Toluca/Pulque Bar, Toluca* balances two swinging barroom doors, the large Pulqueria sign above, and two wooden barrels sitting precariously on two small stools out front. Once again, there are no humans in the picture, just a suggestion that they may be somewhere nearby, probably inside drinking their pulque.



Manuel Alvarez Bravo (1902–2002), *Sombreros/Hats*, 1984, gelatin silver print; Getty Museum, gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser; © Archivo Manuel Alvarez Bravo.

Like other images in this exhibition, Manuel Alvarez Bravo's *Sombreros/Hats* of 1984 finds visual order amid the chaos of city life. In this case, he focuses on a horizontal store window containing vertical stacks of almost identical black fedoras with narrow brims. There's a bit of humor in the slightly uneven stacks, some tilting to the left, others to the right, as if they're in a conversation with each other.

The second exhibition, *Every Minute Is History*, is more of a mixed bag, with images ranging from striking farm workers to obese nudes to masked partygoers celebrating the Day of the Dead.



George Rodriguez, (1937-) , *Delano*, 1969, printed 2021, gelatin silver print; Getty Museum, © George Rodriguez.

George Rodriguez's *Delano* of 1969, for example, is classic "straight" photography. Members of the United Farm Workers hold signs ("Viva La Union," one says) as they lean against a car and look tired or bored. It's an excellent image for a newspaper article but not necessarily a work of fine art.



Ricardo Valverde, (1946-1998), *Loteria de Muertos*, 1983, printed 1993, hand-colored gelatin silver print; Getty Museum, © Esperanza Valverde and Christopher Jude Valverde.

On the other hand, Ricardo Valverde's 1983 *Loteria de Muertos* is a knockout. A young woman wearing a party dress, wide-brimmed hat, and white boots — along with a very creepy Day of the Dead mask — poses in front of a photographer's paper backdrop. She gestures like a fashion model, adding to the mix of humor and weirdness.

The two exhibitions run through January 3, 2027, at the [J. Paul Getty Museum](#), 1200 Getty Center Drive, Los Angeles. All of the works in *Moments in Mexican Photography* were donated to the Getty by longtime collectors Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser.

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