FALL LAUNCH FOR AFA EXHIBITION INTRODUCING INNOVATIVE WORK

"A SHADOW BORN OF EARTH: NEW PHOTOGRAPHY IN MEXICO"

New York, NY....The American Federation of Arts announces that the traveling exhibition A Shadow Born of Earth: New Photography in Mexico will open at the San Jose Museum of Art in California, where will be on view October 29-December 26, 1993. The first comprehensive survey of contemporary Mexican photography to be presented in this country, the exhibition will be seen at museums in ten cities (please see page 4 for itinerary).

The exhibition is organized and circulated by The American Federation of Arts. It is sponsored by a generous grant from Professional Imaging, Eastman Kodak Company. Additional support has been provided by the Benefactors Circle of the AFA.

Since the early part of this century photography has played a prominent role in Mexican art. While the work of pioneers such as the Italian-born Tina Modotti and Manuel Alvarez Bravo is widely known and admired, until now the work of the present generation of Mexican photographers has been little known outside their country. Selected for the AFA by Elizabeth Ferrer, an independent curator and critic specializing in Latin American art and photography, A Shadow Born of Earth features 77 recent works by 16 photographers, many of them under the age of 40.

The work of this new generation is grounded in the strong Mexican tradition of socially
aware black-and-white documentary photography. While several photographers in the exhibition continue to explore this expressive mode, many others take a more experimental approach to the medium, recasting their predecessors’ predominantly photojournalistic style into such varied methods as staging and photographing tableaux or live models; utilizing pinhole and other primitive cameras; manipulating negatives and other darkroom techniques; printing unusually large-scale images; producing color prints with Laser technology; and combining photography with other techniques (such as printmaking, collage, installations, assemblage). While contemporary artists worldwide -- photographers included -- freely borrow from any and all media, it is significant that Mexican photographers, even experimental ones, consider themselves to be, first and foremost, photographers. The variety of experimental approaches employed by the current generation, however, gives new meaning to the artform of photography in the context of contemporary Mexican society.

Whether traditional or experimental, the work of the new generation is frequently linked by similar iconography and concerns. The photographs in A Shadow Born of Earth reveal a society in which the diverse remnants of ancient indigenous traditions and colonial Hispanic cultures still exert a profound influence on contemporary life. But, as Ms. Ferrer notes in the exhibition catalogue, as much as the work of these photographers is distinctively Mexican, it is equally universal.

Thomas Padon, curator of exhibitions at the AFA, is coordinating the exhibition and its national tour.

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PUBLICATION

A Shadow Born of Earth is accompanied by a fully illustrated bilingual catalogue by Ms. Ferrer, published by The American Federation of Arts in association with Universe Publishing. An introductory essay outlines the manner in which leading practitioners of the medium have in the past stressed social concerns and the richness of Mexican culture in their work. Subsequent chapters explore the new artistic ideas and influences that contemporary Mexican photographers have combined with this legacy -- among them the neo-Mexicanist movement of the 1980s, conceptualism, feminism, and the various forms of photographic manipulation -- to explore such themes as spirituality, the land, identity, the body, and contemporary social and political issues. The 143 page book includes artist biographies, bibliographies, and 49 black-and-white and 40 color illustrations.

FEATURED ARTISTS

Alicia Ahumada, Yolanda Andrade, Laura Cohen, Laura González, Lourdes Grobet, Jan Hendrix, Gérman Herrera, Salvador Lutteroth, Eniac Martinez, Rubén Ortiz, Pablo Ortiz Monasterio, Adolfo Patiño, Jesús Sánchez Uribe, Carlos Somonte, Gerardo Suter, and Eugenia Vargas.
ITINERARY TO DATE (three additional venues to be announced):

. San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA, October 23-December 26, 1993

. Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK, January 7-March 6, 1994

. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE, March 31-May 29, 1994

. Western Gallery, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA, December 16, 1994-February 19, 1995


Note: Museum schedules are subject to change. Please confirm opening and closing dates with the presenting museums or with the AFA’s Public Information Office.

THE AFA

Founded in 1909, The American Federation of Arts is committed to broadening the public’s knowledge and appreciation of the visual arts by organizing traveling exhibitions of fine art and media arts. The nation’s oldest and most comprehensive not-for-profit art museum service organization, the AFA also offers its more than 500 museum members specialized services that help reduce operating costs.

For further information about the AFA or photographic materials for *A Shadow Born of Earth: New Photography in Mexico*, please contact:

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