

CONVIVENCIA

I am photographing ‘convivencia’, the concept of interdependent village life. My work is about raising up cultural symbiosis, documenting shared experience in communities through the nuanced views of people in private and public spaces that is only achieved by a participant observer. My language is the poetry of the image; I am recreating pentimentos of my own family origin stories.

I am the granddaughter of four Greek immigrants. For Greeks, the water holds mythic significance: a gathering place and a place of healing. At the water is a literal wellspring of ‘convivencia,’ the sharing of a community’s life-giving moments. It averts cultural collapse; it is the indigenous wisdom that locates the health, healing and cultural preservation of a community. This was my grandparents’ experience in Greece which they were forced to flee and recreated through reminiscence every day of my life.

When I was introduced to the concept of ‘convivencia’ during my Fulbright Scholar year in Mexico, I photographed what felt like familiar scenes; ‘comadres’ (godmothers/close friends) cook together days in advance for a wedding, just as their counterparts do in the mountains in Greece. An entire village represents the actors and the scene for the celebrations of life: a wedding, a funeral, a communion.

I was surprised to find 21st century ‘convivencia’ at the Venice Beach skate park in California. I was thrilled to see how the relationships I witnessed there mirrored what I have photographed in the villages across Latin America, Africa and Greece. In this urban village, skaters help each other with tricks and want to be photographed by each other and anyone with a camera, sharing both their successes and failures. I am drawn to this interdependence, and am delighted that the doors of co-creation are still open in a steadily polarizing world. There is a 21st century power in this iteration of centuries-old processes of enculturation, ensuring a culture remains vital, stays alive.

My work investigates individuals seeking connection in open and communal spaces of land, sky and water. I fear we will losing our ways of living together and sharing in public spaces. The lives we live in these spaces allow for beauty, health and joy. The storyline throughout my bodies of work over the decades is close observation of

and participation in community – –an observer, while using the traditional language of the camera, creating a narrative of form and content in the frame.

Kinship drove my grandparents' obsession with their village life; every story centered around a relationship. It drives my work, indeed my life. I have investigated, experienced and documented traditional 'convivencia' in Greece and Mexico. In L.A., I understood an unconventional yet totally recognizable village bursting with community spirit at the Venice Beach skate park.

My photography explores how interaction and congregation is transforming to meet our current need and demand for community. I will continue investigating, photographing, celebrating and sharing 'convivencia' in non-traditional places.

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