

Celebrating Oil

Curator: Alfonso Morales



Celebrating Oil, 1987.
Minatitlán, Veracruz, Mexico.
35mm b/w negative.

Based on the notion of time as a social institution, Alfonso Morales proposes the existence of a “Mexican time”, whose calendar has more memorable days to honor saints and virgins as well as national heroes, *compadres* [godparents], mothers, and even tacos; in other words, to commemorate collective identity.

After this initial chapter, what follow are aimed at a historical review of the oil industry in Mexico.

They go from the first years of the twentieth century –with its exploitation in the hands of foreign companies– to the nationalization of petroleum, decreed by President Lázaro

Cárdenas in 1938, that gave rise to the stateowned Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex). The curator's well-documented text recalls political scenarios and the social atmosphere of those years to then contextualize the fiftieth anniversary of Pemex and how it came to be that Pedro Meyer –hired in 1987 to do a photo exhibition and a book (entitled *Los cohetes duraron todo el día* [The Skyrockets Lasted All Day])– built an iconographic discourse “loath to facile or demagogic enthusiasm” that, together with “the anti-Cardenist obsession of the president-elect,” led to the disappearance of the publication. However, if “Pedro Meyer’s skyrockets” could not rise then (a possible metaphor of the “oil festival” that has also not yet been fully celebrated?), his images continue to be journals of the work and the emotion focused on that company that has become a symbol, because –as Meyer says in the preface to his book– “the office worker, the fireman, . . . the shoe repairman, and the tailor who fixes the clothes of laborers, the ice-cream vendor, the peasant and the fisherman of the region, among others, are also oil workers. For me, each one of them and their families, at any time of day or night, are also . . . oil workers,” builders of that reality.

Original text:

<http://www.pedromeyer.com/galleries/pemex/>

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