

In 1996, I arrived to Minnesota from Mexico City. Since then, I have permanently relocated to the United States. For the past 20 years, I have been building a career as a photographer by exhibiting extensively locally, nationally, and internationally including Chile, Portugal, Uruguay and China. I am probably best known for my color-saturated large-scale portraits of people living and working on the margins of society.

When I relocated to Minnesota, I learned what it felt like to be part of a subculture--the immigrant community. I began to document my community through photography to address important questions about cultural, social, racial, and political issues. As a photographer, my response to this alienating experience was to document all walks of life within the Latino community: cowboys, wrestlers, transvestites, community leaders, Aztec dancers, musicians, and punk rockers. The images are not about exoticism or exposing the 'Other'; the portraits are meant to encourage a dialogue for people to discuss difficult matters including stereotypes, misperceptions, and assumptions. My photographs may challenge the viewer to acknowledge their own assumptions, biases and prejudices; the opportunity arises to uncover binding similarities of themselves with others from diverse societies.

My curiosity regarding these subcultures led me to question how people express themselves individually through visuals in their environments. My portraits and films expanded to capture compelling portrayals of people from numerous cultures. My themes vary greatly from gang members to religious leaders, from births in hospitals to mourning in funeral homes, and from war protesters to World War II veterans. My subjects are often selected inadvertently by whom I encounter and find unintentionally theatrical or incongruous. I look for settings, symbols and characteristics, many times subtle, to be included in the photograph to share stories about the person in the photograph. My camera has become a tool that allows me to enter those worlds, participate, and experience other communities. The photographic process is collaborative in nature with the sitter being a willing participant in the making of his or her own image.

More recently my interest in the material culture of my subjects tied to the representation of personas has influenced my films, photographs, and film stills. My art becomes a means to describe an account of a person; my intent is not to speak for them but to simply analyze these personifications as a signifier, distinct from the original. In general, the final product reflects the individual character and their distinct lives through their expression, posture, and setting. Although most of my photography is documentary-style, I also have experimented with creating characters and constructing stories through moving image projects. My photographs reveal and highlight the productive and active role of the sitter in the making of the portrait. Similarly, the untrained actors contribute to the creation of characters in my films that often correspond very closely with their own lives.