

Echoes and Sediments

Graciela Iturbide

19 October – 13 November 2021



SELF-PORTRAIT AS SERI, SONORAN DESERT
1979

Huxley-Parlour are excited to present an exhibition of 30 works by Mexican photographer, Graciela Iturbide. It will be Iturbide's first UK show since her 2013 retrospective at the Tate Modern. Despite being the recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship and a Hasselblad award, Iturbide forms one of a long line of women who have been critically under examined in the wake of her peer, male, photographers.

Photographing exclusively in monochrome, Iturbide's photography turns on themes of spirituality, ritual, and folk and religious symbolism, often incorporating a strong social element. In particular, her work has been heavily influenced by her time with the indigenous and migrant communities of Mexico - namely, the Zapotec, Mixtec, and Seri communities. Her portraiture has been described as 'anthropoetic' for its twin desires to document Mexican ethnic communities, and her commitment to an intimately poetic style of portraiture which is often labelled surreal.

Echoes and Sediments exhibits some of Iturbide's most famous images: *Mujer Ángel* (1978), *Nuestra Señora de Las Iguanas* (1979), and *El Baño de Frida* (2008). The latter is from Iturbide's 2005 commission to photograph Frida Kahlo's bathroom and belongings. This was of particular significance as the room had been locked under the instruction of Diego Rivera, Kahlo's bereaved husband, until 15 years after his death. The photograph *El Baño de Frida, Coyoacan, Mexico City, 2005*, depicts Iturbide's feet, prone, by the taps, and directly references Kahlo's 1938 painting, *What the Water Gave Me (Lo Due el Aura me Dio)* - a surreal scene with mythical figures, flora, and fauna emerging from the bathwater. More than pure documentary photography, here, Iturbide's work creates a dialogue between the two women and their artistic practices across the decades.

Echoes and Sediments also features many photographs from Iturbide's time in Juchitán, a place that forms part of the Zapotec culture native to Oaxaca, Mexico. Iturbide's photographs of the women of Juchitán document the communities novel approach to traditional categories of gender and gender roles. The Juchitán are described as a broadly matriarchal society, in which the market is the sole domain of women and Muxe - a third gender category - and men are forbidden to enter. Iturbide's photograph, *Nuestra Señora de Las Iguanas*, which translates to *Our Lady of the Iguanas*, depicts a woman adorned with lizards, shot from below. Iturbide's use of perspective comments on hierarchy and power within a matriarchal community, lending her subject regal qualities.

The title of Huxley-Parlour's exhibition comes from Mexican writer Carlos Monsiváis, who once described Iturbide's photography as an art of 'echoes and sediments'. Here, he references her ability to photograph at the intersection of surrealism, abstraction, documentary photography, and the social themes of urbanisation and globalisation. This exhibition at Huxley-Parlour highlights thirty works, from 1978 - 2005, revealing symmetries and resonances that proliferate across Iturbide's oeuvre - from moments that celebrate community to those that capitalise on introspection, from social landscape to portraiture, from angels to crocodiles. *Echoes and Sediments* seeks to highlight the breadth of Iturbide's canon, which has long been marginalised from a twentieth century photographic art history, and to display the fractured lyricism of Iturbide's subject matter.

Graciela Iturbide was born in Mexico City, Mexico, in 1942. Having been given her first camera at the age of 11, Iturbide went on to study photography under Manuel Álvarez Bravo at the Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos. Iturbide has authored several publications with publishers such as Phaidon, Aperture, and the J. Paul Getty Museum. For the last several decades, her work has exhibited internationally, most notably the touring exhibition 'Graciela Iturbide's Mexico', which was displayed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Minneapolis Museum of Art, and the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington. Most recently, Iturbide exhibited at the Tate Modern in 2013. Iturbide currently resides in Coyoacán, Mexico.