

Graciela Iturbide - Pajaros

15 March, 2003 - 3 May, 2003

If birds are the recurring subject in Graciela Iturbide's most recent exhibition of silver as well as platinum prints, there is at least one other leitmotif which binds the photographs together. Iturbide's variations on her avian subject matter are of such breadth and ingenuity that thematic cohesion is provided by her distinctive talent; the birds are Graciela's birds and the territory they describe are a microcosm of the topology she has long-since hewn with her distinguishing eye. The bird images are fluently incorporated into Iturbide's ever-expanding and intricate ideography, providing a sense of continuity with and elaboration on her already rich oeuvre. The pages are populated with overwhelming throngs, loose confederacies, silhouetted sovereigns. Roosters vacillate between torpor and panic. Pigeons and monkeys cohabitate. Some birds are dead, skinned, or stuffed, some circle at unreachable height, some fill the frame with their corporeality. They are by turns visceral and ephemeral. They are subsumed by the metaphors we can't help but dress them in, they are stripped down to icons, or they are so physical and so alien that they allude only to themselves. Taken together they circumscribe the intersection of parable and candor which Iturbide knows so well.

Now, at the name of the fabulous artificer, he seemed to hear the noise of dim waves and to see a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air. What did it mean? Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols, a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being? His heart trembled; his breath came faster and a wild spirit passed over his limbs as though he were soaring sunward. His heart trembled in an ecstasy of fear and his soul was in flight. His soul was soaring in an air beyond the world and the body he knew was purified in a breath and delivered of incertitude and made radiant and commingled with the element of the spirit. An ecstasy of flight made radiant his eyes and wild his breath and tremulous and wild and radiant his windswept limbs.

-James Joyce

Born in Mexico City in 1942, Graciela Iturbide began studying filmmaking at the Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos in the late 1960s. In the 1970s she studied and became enamored of photography under the tutelage of Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Henri Cartier-Bresson also became a significant influence on her work after her trips to Europe, during which time she met the artist. In 1978 she became a founding member of the Mexican Council of Photography. Assisted by Francisco Toledo, she worked for several years on her "Juchitán" project, for which she was awarded the W. Eugene Smith award in 1987. In 1988 she was given a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation and her exhibition "Juchitán" received first prize at France's Mois de la Photo. Prior to the book *Pajaros*, 2002, she was the subject of several monographs, including *Images of the Spirit*, Aperture, 1996. Her work is included in numerous private and public collections, including the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the Musée d'Art Moderne Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, and the J. Paul Getty Museum. Iturbide lives in Coyoacán, Mexico.

Santa Monica -- Graciela Iturbide, *Pajaros*, an exhibition of gelatin silver prints and platinum prints will be on view from 15 March, 2003 through 3 May, 2003. An opening reception for the artist and book signing will be held on Saturday, , from 6 to 8 PM. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 6 PM.

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