

**#59 March 2021 Cameraderie
Graciela Iturbide (1942-)**



Graciela Iturbide is a Mexican photographer whose engagement with the peoples and cultures she photographs is beyond intense. Here is a quote from the Wikipedia article:

Iturbide eschews labels and calls herself complicit with her subjects. With her way of relating to those she is photographing, she is said to allow her subjects to come to life, producing poetic portraits. She became interested in the daily life of Mexico's indigenous cultures and people (the Zapotec, Mixtec, and Seri) and has photographed life in Mexico City, Juchitán, Oaxaca and on the Mexican/American border (La Frontera). With focus on identity, sexuality, festivals, rituals, daily life, death, and roles of women, Iturbide's photographs share visual stories of cultures in constant transitional periods. There's also juxtaposition within her images between urban vs rural life, and indigenous vs modern life. Iturbide's main concern has been the exploration and investigation of her own cultural environment. She uses photography as a way of understanding Mexico; combining indigenous practices, assimilated Catholic practices and foreign economic trade under one scope. Art critic, Oscar C. Nates, has describes Iturbide's work as "anthropoetic."

See the Wikipedia article here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graciela_Iturbide

See her personal website here:

<http://www.gracielaiturbide.org/en/>

As always, Google Iturbide's name and select "images" to see more of her work.

Here are some of Iturbide's most famous images.

Mujer Ángel, Desierto de Sonora (Angel Woman, Sonoran Desert), 1979



This is a simple capture of a woman purposefully walking somewhere, carrying a tape recorder. But look what Iturbide has turned this into. An angel, as per the title, but an angel of what?

Nuestra Señora de las Iguanas (Our Lady of the Iguanas), 1979



These are live animals being taken to market. Here is the story below, from this site: <https://fansinaflashbulb.wordpress.com/2013/09/03/our-lady-of-the-iguanas/>

Fascinated by the power and grace of the Juchitán women, Iturbide sought to capture the essence of this matriarchal society where women control the finances and, thus, have more freedom and independence than many others of their gender in Mexico. The men work, but they give their wages to the women, who run the marketplace.

In the market, the women carry goods of all kinds on their heads. It was here that Iturbide encountered a woman named Zobeida with iguanas on her head. Recounting the experience, Iturbide said, "I could not believe it!" Preparing to sell them as food, Zobeida set the lizards on the ground, but Iturbide asked her to put them back so that she could take a photo.

Zobeida passed away in 2004, but Iturbide's image of her became famous among the locals. In an exhibition of Iturbide's photographs at a center for indigenous culture, Our Lady of the Iguanas was an instant favorite. People turned it into banners, posters, and postcards, the image becoming a symbol of women's strength and confidence in Zapotec culture.

Magnolia I * Magnolia II, 1986



The sexually non-specific person, named Magnolia. The story from a sales website is below.

In 1979, Graciela Iturbide was asked by Mexican painter Francisco Toledo to visit and photograph his daily life in Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico. While there, Iturbide began a project in which she photographed local women, especially those of the indigenous community of the Zapotec people. These women are politically, economically, and sexually independent, and have been idealized as a source of national strength for over a century.

In Zapotec culture, there is markedly little hostility towards homosexuality and gender non-conformity. The acceptance of a community of people of a third gender, called muxe (pronounced MOO-shay) is widespread in this region. Muxe are individuals who do not identify as men or women, but rather have some feminine and some masculine characteristics. One such person is Magnolia, the subject of these photographs by Iturbide. In a Spanish-language interview with Adela Micha, Iturbide spoke about meeting Magnolia by chance at a bar in Juchitán. 'There, Magnolia asked me if I would like to photograph her and I said of course. So then she went to her room and made herself up the way she wanted to. I only photograph people with their permission.'

Following are four images from the death series.

Upper left: mourners.

Upper right: I am not sure.

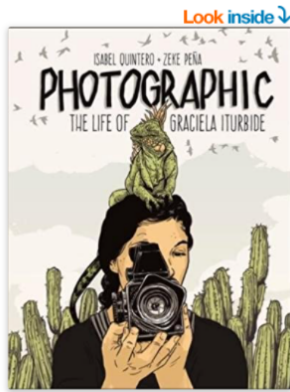
Lower left: the swirl of birds is somehow appropriate to death.

Lower right: a child's coffin.



A final note. As I researched Graciela Iturbide across the internet for this article, I came across this book sale reference. Full disclosure: I do not have any interest in the book or any company selling or distributing it. But I love quality graphic books, like *Maus* or *March*, so here is another one that might be interesting.

Books › Children's Books › Geography & Cultures



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Photographic: The Life of Graciela Iturbide Hardcover – March 6, 2018

by Isabel Quintero (Author), Zeke Peña (Illustrator)

★★★★★ 57 ratings

[See all formats and editions](#)

Hardcover

\$17.95 ✓prime

21 Used from \$7.95

22 New from \$14.38

2 Collectible from \$20.00

A 2018 Boston Globe Horn Book Nonfiction Award Winner and a 2018 Moonbeam Children's Books Gold Award Winner!

Graciela Iturbide was born in Mexico City in 1942, the oldest of 13 children. When tragedy struck Iturbide as a young mother, she turned to photography for solace and understanding. From then on Iturbide embarked on a photographic journey that has taken her throughout her native Mexico, from the Sonora Desert to Juchitán to Frida Kahlo's bathroom, to the United States, India, and beyond. *Photographic* is a symbolic, poetic, and deeply personal graphic biography of this iconic photographer. Iturbide's journey will excite readers of all ages as well as budding photographers, who will be inspired by her resolve, talent, and curiosity.