

# Flor Garduño

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Flor Garduño was born in Mexico in 1957 and grew up on a farm outside of Mexico City. She studied art at the Antigua Academia de San Carlos (UNAM), and was especially influenced by the expressive work of her mentor, Kati Horna, a Hungarian photographer who left Europe during the escalation of socialism in the 1950s. Garduño left her studies early to work as a darkroom assistant to the distinguished Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo. Under his direction, she honed her technical skills by printing extensively in silver, platinum, and palladium processes. Her own first serious photographic project for the Secretary of Public Education under the direction of photographer Mariana Yampolsky, was to travel to remote rural areas of Mexico to collect cultural images for school textbooks. This opportunity to explore her own country and the lives of the indigenous people helped to shape Garduño's photographic vision.



*Basket of Light,*  
Sumpango, Guatemala, 1989

In her book *Witnesses of Time*, Garduño expanded upon her earlier experience by photographing not only in Mexico, but also throughout Central and South America. She depicted the secular and religious rituals that dominate the lives of indigenous peoples; themes of sacrifice and prayer abound. The images tell of cultures caught at the intersection of Indian identity and the strong Spanish colonial and Catholic influence that remain from the Spanish conquest.

More recently, as evidenced in this exhibition, Garduño has begun to explore the world outside of Latin America, asserting a universal cultural mythology. While photographing in many countries and working in genres that include still life, landscape, and portraiture, she continues to address the grand themes of life and death in images of disembodied sculpture, holy relics, and mystical animals. Through her use of iconic imagery, Garduño creates a mythical view of the world that is both timeless and placeless. For example, her image *El Señor de Los Pájaros, Polonia* (Lord of the Birds, Poland), 1988, depicts a formal oil painting of a gentleman surrounded by an eclectic array of wooden birds. The figure in the painting seems to be asserting authority over the birds, which, fixed to the wall, huddle around the painting, awaiting his command.

Garduño's work has been exhibited all over the world and is collected by numerous prestigious institutions such as The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Art Institute of Chicago, and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Currently, she divides her time between Mexico and Switzerland.