

RECAPTURING THE PAST: PHOTOGRAPHS OF HOME AS FOUND BY FERNANDO MEZA

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Fernando Meza was born in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, at the mouth of the Rio Bravo del Norte in 1955. Even the name of the river is a symbol of the separateness of the United States and Mexico, since those looking south from Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona speak of the Rio Grande, while those looking north from Tamaulipas, Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Sonora see the Rio Bravo.

Meza spent his formative years on a ranch in the river town of Rio Bravo, Tamaulipas. He attended primary and secondary school there and was, in general, a good student. He showed an early talent for art. He no doubt achieved in these schools the discipline and seriousness that he would bring to his life work as an artist and photographer. For two years he attended a preparatory school in nearby Reynosa, but during this period his attention was diverted by the wanderlust and hunger for experience of a seventeen year old.

Many days when he left the ranch in Rio Bravo for class he never made it to school.

He would instead wander the towns and countryside of Tamaulipas with friends or cross into Texas on visits to such towns as Mercedes, McAllen, or Harlingen. The winds of the counter-culture of the 1960s still blew strong in the early 1970s, and Meza immersed himself deeply in the music and popular culture of the period.

If primary and secondary school had given him the discipline he needed, then the erratic year he spent missing classes at preparatory school offered the inspiration and aesthetic education he would bring to his mature work as a painter, lithographer, and photographer.

Instead of studying literature he went to bars and listened to Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan and countless other popular singers and blues singers on the juke box. Instead of improving his knowledge of history, he delved into the vibrant