SESSION 25 · UNIT 3 — LIGHT & BRIEF · Mar 30, 2027

Graciela Iturbide

1942–present · Mexican

The documentary image that transcends document — magical realism in photography



Nuestra Señora de las Iguanas · 1979

"For me, there are two moments: the moment I take the photograph and the moment I choose the photograph."

— Graciela Iturbide, The Brooklyn Rail, 2020

KEY WORKS

- Nuestra Señora de las Iguanas, Juchitán, 1979 — the defining image
- Mujer Ángel (Angel Woman), Sonora Desert, 1979
- Pájaros en el poste, Guanajuato, 1990 — birds swarming a cross-shaped pole
- Eyes to Fly With — her lifelong practice

CONTEXT

Iturbide studied with Manuel Álvarez Bravo and has spent her career photographing Mexico — its people, landscape, spiritual and material life. Nuestra Señora de las Iguanas shows a woman in the Juchitán market with iguanas arranged on her head like a crown. It is at once a document of a specific cultural practice and an image of mythic power. Her photographs occupy the space between documentary and poetry.

WHY THIS PHOTOGRAPHER

Iturbide demonstrates that documentary photography can aspire to poetry without falsifying its subjects. She's also a living practitioner whose new work students can follow. Her work connects to the multiple exposure ice breaker this unit — layering realities in a single frame.

MORE KEY WORKS



Mujer Ángel (Angel Woman) · 1979



Pájaros en el poste, Guanajuato · 1990

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Nuestra Señora de las Iguanas could be a myth or a religious image — but it's a photograph of a market vendor. What makes an ordinary moment look mythic?
2. Her photographs are made in collaboration with communities that trust her. How does long-term relationship change what you can photograph?

MORE IMAGES



Juchitán series



Angel costume, Chalma pilgrimage



Early work, Mexico City · 1969



Iguanas, Juchitán series (detail)