

Making Memory in a Megalopolis: A photographic ethnography of the daily life of cemeteries in Mexico City

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Lecture by Marcel Reyes-Cortez, 15.06.2015.

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My visual research project explores how through daily and yearly cycles, the bereaved, mourners and workers develop and maintain intricate funerary rituals involving the dead buried in the cemeteries of Mexico City. Commemorative visual and material culture both religious and secular already plays an important role in mourners' everyday life and activities. A more extensive use of the photograph and the practice of photography became a valuable social research tool, especially when looking at the exchanges and interactions between the dead, memory and the visual material worlds that assist the living, the dead and the *ánima* (spirit/soul) to stay connected in the spaces in which they interact.

I have chosen to explore the above social and cultural processes in part through a visual methodology, documenting meticulously through photographs as well as text the numerous ways in which the living and the dead remain connected over generations. The practice of photography eased and speeded the entry into the cemetery and mourners private and public spaces, it also opened access to the possibilities of collaboratory encounters within the field and with those people with whom I was working. Thus, I examined and extensively recorded through photography the cyclical memorialising and mourning practices, ritualised routines, and daily habits associated with the dead and the cemetery space in the borough of Álvaro Obregón, Mexico City. A visual methodology in combination with traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation, formal and informal interviews, investigation of life histories of the bereaved, mourners, visitors and workers with an overview of contemporary Mexican funerary practices in Mexico City offered the project a productive instrument, providing a more nuanced understanding of the bereaved and mourner's ideas about their relationships with the dead.

Source URL: <https://etnologia.uw.edu.pl/en/multimedia/making-memory-megalopolis-photographic-ethnography-daily-life-cemeteries-mexico-city>

Links

[1] https://youtu.be/6IjKkLkzmqol?list=PLVi6w9hRT7I7SMqqjkEfb_qxGKec-fkQs