Realismo Mágico Digital: An Exploration of Self-Identity

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The internal necessity to rediscover myself constantly drives me back to the country where I spent most of my life, México. I was born and raised in the heart of the world’s largest metropolis, México City and through the years I have photographed in locations with important significance for Mexican culture as well as for my personal history. I reorganize and reinvent these places, and by staging models there, I construct my personal interpretation of the Mexican way of life involving the world of “mañana” (tomorrow) with its “dictadura perfecta” (perfect dictatorship), where opposite and contradictory situations exist side by side. I am particularly interested in the relationship between people and their environment and I use this theme as a means to explore my own identity as a Mexican. One strategy involves juxtaposing cultural signifiers of Mexican culture. My images are an examination and a projection of my ideals, fears, and dreams about my country and myself.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

My works are not intended to be a dissertation on psychology, neither on sociology. They are a confession and a declaration of love. Inside of every one of us lives a stranger. I wanted to penetrate inside of myself to dig, and expose this stranger. My books about México are what I am, also what I am not but I wish to be: The stranger who inhabits me. It is an attempt for unveiling myself to contemplate the real me, and in my own image, discover the authentic face of my country.

Octavio Paz, Nobel prize 1982

The internal necessity to rediscover myself constantly drives me back to the country where I spent most of my life, México. I was born and raised in the heart of the world's largest metropolis, México City and through the years I have photographed in locations with important significance for Mexican culture as well as for my personal history.

For thousands of years, these places have been scenarios of the drama of Mexican history. The magnificent Zócalo of México City, the colonial Santa Prisca church in Taxco, the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan, as well as the infinite shores of the Pacific Ocean represent—for me—fragmented pieces of México. I reorganize and reinvent these places, and by staging models there, I construct my personal interpretation of the Mexican way of life involving the world of
“mañana” (tomorrow) with its “dictadura perfecta” (perfect dictatorship), where opposite and contradictory situations exist side by side.

Reality, from my perspective, constitutes raw material for a subjective interpretation. Any picture presents a fragmentation and reconstruction of the world. The focus of my work is a personal interpretation of Mexican culture. Fish, nets, roots, crabs, and coconuts are some of the elements I use to surround the models I pose in the middle of the Mexican landscape.

I am particularly interested in the relationship between people and their environment and I use this theme as a means to explore my own identity as a Mexican. One strategy involves juxtaposing cultural signifiers of Mexican culture. My images are an examination and a projection of my ideals, fears, and dreams about my country and myself.

I believe that the crucial battle between good and evil, rich and poor, tradition and modernity, happiness and desolation shape the soul of the Mexican people. Therefore, duality is a recurrent theme in my images.

I choose fishermen, farmers, students, and workers as the protagonists in most of my photographs. In some of my images, I attempt to transform them into demons, gods, religious virgins and warriors in front of the camera’s eye. I select specific locations where the beauty of the Mexican landscape may serve as a dramatic background for my stories and their mythical inhabitants.
I stage images because I am attempting to materialize ideas and points of view about my country to communicate and express my deepest feelings. Every image is a micro-universe made from a mixture of my memories, personal experiences, dreams, and expectations.

My work may be considered “Magic Realism,” or “Realismo Mágico.” The German critic Franz Roh first used this phrase in 1925 to characterize a group of Post-Expressionist painters. Later on, the term “New Objectivity” replaced Magic Realism. Despite this change, the term Magic Realism survived to define a narrative tendency in Latin American literature from 1949 to 1970 and soon after was applied broadly as a critical term for the arts in Latin America.

Realismo Mágico mingles realistic portrayals of events and characters with elements of fantasy and myth, and it can be defined as a preoccupation or interest in showing something common as something unreal or strange. Luis Leal in his essay Magic Realism in Hispano-American Literature explains, “In Realismo Mágico, time flows without the restriction of time, and what can be unreal appears as real. The artist confronts reality and tries to reveal it by looking for what can be mysterious in life, objects, and even human actions. A magic realist artist creates the illusion of unreality, faking the escape from the natural, and tells an action that even if appears as explainable it comes across as strange. The artist’s strategy consists in suggesting a supernatural atmosphere without denying
the natural, and the tactic is deforming the reality presenting dreamlike compositions. Characters, things, and events are recognizable and reasonable, but because the artist’s intentions are to provoke strange feeling, the explanations are not clear nor logical. Also, there is no ambiguity or psychological analysis of the characters, instead they are well defined almost in opposition, and they never appear confused or surprised about the supernatural.”

During the last decades certain elements of Realismo Mágico have been part of the work of many Mexican and Latin American artists. Their artistic production has been a deep influence in my artwork. Among them, Luis González Palma, Gerardo Suter, Pedro Meyer, Graciela Iturbide, Flor Garduño, and Manuel Alvarez Bravo are some of the artists who inspired me. My pieces contain references to their images, ideas, and styles.

I think it is possible to consider Manuel Alvarez Bravo to be the most influential photographer in México. Bravo started working during the early twentieth century. His work always presented a unique perspective of life in México. He also uses models in an archetypal Mexican landscape. During the 1930s, the Surrealists became very interested in his work and considered him as one of their own. Bravo had a good relationship with the Surrealists but he never intended to be part of their group. His images are playful and mysterious at once, and many represent the idea of
seeing. The way I present some of my images, and the attitude represented in my models, is deeply influenced by Bravo’s pictures in the Mexican landscape.

The content of my work is related to my experience as a traveler. When I fly from the United States to México City and go to these small towns, my perception of reality dramatically changes. All these places are so far away from each other in many ways. Whenever I am immersed in any of them, the other seems to be unreal, and ethereal.

Travel empowers the voyager with a multiple ethnographical perspective, which is the knowledge and understanding of the places visited and the people who live there. Nevertheless, the ethnographical translation of these cultural entities is hard and may easily lead to misinterpretations for the non-traveler. The only way to experience and understand these places is by visiting them. Thus, my work does not intend to explain or represent the complex cultural situations of these entities but offer instead a personal interpretation of my experience as a traveler.

It is hard for me to define myself in reference to the places I visit. It is clear that I am an outsider for the culture of these remote villages. However, throughout my life I spent an important amount of time as a regular traveler to these cities and villages. Part of my family and close friends still live in these places. Therefore, it is necessary or more truthful to consider myself as an “inside-outsider.” After all, the idea of hometown,
and belonging, becomes blurry and hard to define for the nomadic traveler.

For example, for the past five years I have called Texas “my home.” Am I a “Mex-Tex?” Have I lost part my “Mexicanidad,” or am I only experiencing a long trip? Living in the United States and traveling back to my country has given me a new understanding of my own identity. I believe that my work reflects my questions of identity and gives me an opportunity to find valuable answers. The experience of living abroad gives me a new understanding of my ethnic and cultural background. I try to present in my artwork a positive image of México.

The Mexican photographer Pedro Meyer works between Los Angeles and México City. His work, too, stresses his experiences as a traveler, the complex relationship between the United States and México, and the combined use of analog and digital photographic technologies. Some of his images are the result of digital manipulation, giving him the ability to juxtapose different pictures to create a totally new interpretation of reality. In his work, I find inspiration for my images’ format and approach to the subject matter. As a result I am very interested in the combination of media as well as the exploration of new technologies because they are an efficient way to transform and distort reality.

The micro-universes I present in my work serve as homage to the people of my country. The women and men survive in the shadows of
post-Spanish conquest, American imperialism, and domestic incompetence and corruption. I consider that my model’s gestures and body language silently represent the fragile but heroic and brave attitude of Mexicans, which makes them able to survive and overcome the challenges of the third millennium.

**Statement of the Problem**

My newest body of work focuses on the exploration of digital media as a vehicle to represent my ideas and feelings about my home country. I am searching for an effective process to obtain better and bigger pieces directly from the computer. The quality and larger format of my images will enhance the content I am trying to communicate. Thus, I will apply the digital media possibilities of manipulation to generate a new body of work that presents a personal interpretation of Realismo Mágico.

Also I want to find interesting and innovative combinations of digital output and special papers. I will address the complexity and interoperability of the digital equipment and its application to represent and communicate my ideas and feelings about México. It is important for me to match the representational aspect of the content with the technical issues and their limitations.

My ultimate goal is to create a personal approach to Realismo Mágico based on my personal experiences and dreams. The following questions will be addressed to serve as guidelines during this process:
1) How do these new images relate to my own identity as an emigrant traveler, and represent the cultures that have shaped me?

2) Which are the best and most efficient technical specifications and strategies of presentation I need to consider in printing my digital images?

3) How do techniques of creation and presentation of images relate to my personal interpretation of Realismo Mágico and Mexican identity?

Methodology

In order to achieve these goals, I needed to have a profound understanding of the theories and concepts related to Realismo Mágico, traveling, and personal identity, as well as the technological elements involved. To analyze, understand, and apply this knowledge it was necessary to research, experiment, and develop a particular methodology.

Through my travel, interaction with my subjects and their environments, and research on contemporary practices in Latin American photography I was able to learn more about my cultural identity, my native country, and myself. The experimentation of digital manipulation,
color alteration, and unconventional printing surfaces was the medium through which I present my personal ideas about Realismo Mágico.

I wanted to transmit my personal interpretation of “Realismo Mágico” and its relation to my personal identity through my final pieces. The creation of these images through digital technologies involved several considerations. With enough time and effort it was possible to get almost anything imaginable. Nevertheless, I operated within a modest budget. The challenge resided in accomplishing high quality work with limited resources. I tried to balance and integrate the technical issues into the final goals of my project. I was thus able to document my experiences in a journal and present a solo exhibition at Cora Stafford Gallery from April 2 - 6, 2001 as a final requirement to conclude my degree.
CHAPTER II

DISCUSSION OF WORK COMPLETED

Traveling and Identity

In response to the first question of the problem, I will explain how these new images relate to my own identity and represent the spirit of the culture that has shaped me. This question is connected to my experiences as a voyager.

Traveling has become a very significant part of my life and my artistic work. For my last body of work I traveled to “Paráíso Perdido” (Lost Paradise), a tiny village of fishermen on the Pacific Ocean between Acapulco and Zihuatanejo. Travel to Paráíso Perdido was an amazing adventure in space and time. In less than twenty-four hours I went from Denton, Texas to the seashores of the Mexican state of Guerrero—that is, from longhorns to long-fish in a single day. It was a personal experience that reached deep into my earliest memories. Every time I fly into México City, my mind races with excitement. It is always rewarding to see my family, friends and my hometown with all its wonderful characteristics and problems. Then, more memories returned while in a long bus ride through the mountains to Acapulco.

The port of Acapulco is rich with hundreds of years of Mexican history, and it marks a very special place in the history of my own personal journey. My best friend from childhood had a small hostel on Caleta
beach, and my godfather and other relatives lived there as well. I spent an important part of my early years there.

My best friend and I used to hang out with the “Acapulqueños” (people from Acapulco) around his family’s hostel. Fishermen, tourist guides, restaurant workers, and their children were familiar characters for us. We used to “escape” at night to go fishing. My memories of Acapulco have nothing to do with margaritas, nightclubs or hangovers, but with the people who live there, and the sea. My life there was simple, surrounded by common people and very happy moments.

Acapulco has changed a lot during the last twenty years. The city keeps growing and growing. I decided to take my journey further into the small town I mentioned before, because it is more representative of the general situation of the Mexicans living on the Mexican coast. Besides, it is more like the Acapulco of my memories.

While traveling to this remote area, I started to remember, decipher, understand and question my own identity as a Mexican. Sometimes I forgot the words in Spanish, or English words came out from my mouth unintentionally, but little by little my conversation skills came back to me. Like a chameleon, I begin to assimilate into this environment in a natural and honest manner. Memories started to become real and tangible.

On the bus from Acapulco to Paraiso Perdido I met Edgar (figure 14 right), the first of my models who became a very important part of my
project. He modeled for me and also introduced me to the fishermen family who gave me the chance to stay on their property. Edgar had family and friends there, and it was his suggestion to choose this village.

We arrived at Hacienda Cabañas, a little town thirty minutes away from the sea. Guerrero state has a huge mountain region that drops abruptly into the ocean. Edgar and I finally arrived at Paraíso Perdido. We rode a donkey for a couple of miles until we reached a lagoon. Then we got into a small boat that took us to the other side. There is a narrow strip of beach between the lagoon and the Pacific Ocean. Fresh and salt water meet each other in some areas. A large variety of life flourishes there; jungle, palm trees, and birds coexist with fish and crabs. My least favorite companions were the scorpions that flourish there.

Paraíso Perdido has a “palapa” complex for local visitors. Palapas are simple constructions made of palm tree leaves. Edgar introduced me to Don Gaspar (figure 8) and Doña Cristina (figure 6), head of the Valderrama Hernández family. Palapas are a family business. Men fish, women cook, and kids clean and wait tables. I lived with them for a week. My bed was a hammock, one of the walls the ocean, and the ceiling was the sky. It was a refreshing experience far away from my computer.

From this moment on it was easy to find my models. The whole village knew I was taking pictures and mothers wanted their children to participate in the project. All my work was based on trust and community
cooperation. Inside of me a dormant feeling was awakening, I felt at home and safe. All of these people reminded me of my cousins, grandmother, and friends. Working with models gives me the opportunity to interact with them and establish direct communication with the common Mexican people.

Following the pattern set by Alvarez Bravo, various Mexican photographers, including Graciela Iturbide and Flor Garduño, among others, have traveled all over México and Latin America capturing the startling beauty and strangeness of these remote places. Both Iturbide and Garduño started their artistic careers as assistants to Manuel Alvarez Bravo. The evolutionary inheritance is evident in their work, as it is in mine.

The images of Iturbide and Garduño present a spiritual representation of the people and their environment. In many of their photographs, the rituals and religious elements are omnipresent. They also work with simple objects found in these remote locations; dead chickens, live iguanas, vegetables, and fabrics become unusual and captivating images when they are isolated from their context with the camera.

It is not truthful to represent a whole area or country with a few elements. Nevertheless, it is possible. Bundled dead fish and hanging dead chickens are a familiar sight in the Mexican markets. Through the interaction among objects, animals, people and landscape in my images
I create stereotypes able to represent México in a positive and honest manner.

I work in a similar way to Iturbide and Garduño, but instead of presenting Catholic and indigenous traditional rituals, I create my own interpretation of the spiritual realm (figures 3, 5, and 14), trying to represent my personal spiritual identity.

I am a “mestizo,” the product of European and Mesoamerican strains. My father’s father was a blond Spanish person with green eyes, and my mother’s mother had very dark skin, black hair and Native American features. México has been a melting pot for the last five hundred years. I rediscovered this diversity through my models. Edgar has a very light skin and a more European profile, while Lolita and Rosa (figures 5, 13, 16) are almost black “mulatas.” In México racial features are taken for granted, which is both good and bad. We do not promote multi-cultural diversity because we already have it, but we simply are not aware of it. The Mexican identity is a very complex issue.

“The Mexican does not want to be either an Indian or a Spaniard,” says Octavio Paz. “Nor does he want to be descended from them. He denies them. And he does not affirm himself as a mixture, but rather as an abstraction: he is a man. [He] becomes the son of Nothingness. His beginnings are in his own self.” This description of the Mexican identity by Paz represents a cruel reality in my country.
My work is a personal response to his statement. It intends to reconcile the parts that integrate me as a mestizo, and my country as a product of “mestizaje.” The models in my images suggest a stoic attitude, between acceptance and pride. I do not want to deny the cultures that gave shape to my country. I want to make peace between them.

Eyes appear in most of my images (figures 1, 2, 5, 8, 15,16) as a metaphor to present the central idea of sight and self-contemplation as a product of the search for my identity. Through my models and the landscape I activate my memories and begin to have a better understanding of the culture that shaped me.

Technology Issues

As a photographer I have always had a profound interest in the technological aspects of picture-taking process. Instead my artistic activity has always been related to some kind of technological equipment, which is continually becoming more and more newer and more innovative. During the last twenty years computers have evolved in an incredible manner. The advancement in digital technologies finally found its perfect match pairing in the photographic field. For the first time in a hundred and fifty years, the creation of pictures does not rely only on film, but also on silicon chips and infinite rows of “ones and zeros.”

I started three years ago to manipulate my images by using scanners and a computer, as well as high-resolution inkjet printers. My second
question is related to the problem of finding the best and most efficient technical specifications and strategies of presentation for my digital images.

Working with digital files is very different from working with film and requires different skills and represents different problems. I started with a regular 35 mm film camera. The only reason I did not shoot with a digital camera was due to the costs involved, which were unaffordable for me at that time. However, once I got the negatives and scanned them, the rest of the process did not involve any traditional processes at all.

I used different kinds of film; color (figures 5, 6, 10, 11), and black and white (rest of the figures) with different sensibilities; this allowed me to work under a variety of light conditions. The reason I shot black and white film was because I thought I would be able to get a broader tonality range. However, I got a better result by using color film and then converting the image to grayscale in the computer (figure 11).

The way I colored the images was a very simple but time-consuming process. I started by opening the file in Photoshop and cleaning all scratches. Then I cropped the frame and resized it to a 200 dpi (dots-per-inch) resolution, at 3765 x 2540 pixels, and I converted the images from grayscale to RGB (Red, Green and Blue). I tested many different resolution and sizes to find the most effective. Later on, I duplicated the image as a second layer. I needed to repeat the duplication of layers to get any
additional colors. Every layer has independent control; thus it was possible to modify the color balance, contrast, brightness, and any other feature separately from the others.

Each element I wanted to colorize needed separation from the rest of the picture by deleting the other elements. I repeated this process as many times as needed depending on the image. In average the color separation took about six hours per piece, but I got total control of the image when it was done.

I think the digital multi-coloration of the pieces enriched the final presentation because it reinforces the concept of Realismo Mágico. For the viewer, the color in the images looks “correct;” however, there is something “unusual” about it. The fish, sand and sea glow, and the people’s hair and eyes seem to be sepia. Characters, things, and events are recognizable and reasonable, but because of the digital manipulation, the image provokes a strange feeling, which explanations are neither clear nor logical.

The artist Pedro Meyer manipulates some of his images in the computer as well. He combines pictures he shot at different times and places. He presents “impossible” situations confronting the viewers with their own perception of reality. Meyer’s computer work influenced me to alter my images. Nevertheless, I rarely combine my images and only modify the color of them. Only if I consider it extremely necessary I do
alter my pictures beyond coloration. Sometimes I add or delete elements, but this is not my main goal I prefer to manipulate my images at the time I am shooting in the location.

Once I contacted my models, I allowed them to choose a quiet area in which to shoot the pictures, and we moved there carrying with us the nets, fish, coconuts, and other items. We prepared the setting as I explained my ideas to them. I was always open to their suggestions, and I found this very helpful because they know the space and elements much better than I. This freedom led them to be more relaxed and comfortable in front of the camera.

Most of the time I shot the same arrangement from different angles and distances. This allowed me to avoid cropping because I had enough material for editing. It was very important for me to plan this way because when you crop, you lose valuable information needed to convert the picture into a high quality digital file.

I tried to keep my film as cold as possible at all times. I developed all my rolls as soon as I got back to Denton. I did not print any contact sheets; instead I scanned all my images and started with the selection process. I experimented with different resolution sizes and experimented printing these files as large as possible for my inkjet printer. It is paramount to run several tests because you may find several problems you should solve before you start with the whole production. If the file is too small, then you
may lose quality in your final print. If the file is too big, it is hard to work with it and it may not result in better quality anyway.

The most effective file size was about twenty-four Megabytes for an output of 13 x 19 inches. An important consideration was that I needed to work these images in layers using Photoshop software to add the color. Every time one layer is added, the file increases another twenty-four Megabytes. Most of my images needed four layers to achieve all the different colors.

Once I finished the pieces, I flattened and saved them as a TIFF (Tag Image File Format). TIFF files have no compression and preserve all the information possible to transmit to the printer. To get the hard copy of the final pieces, I tested different large format, photo-quality printers and found out that the Epson and Hewlett Packard models offered me the best quality and richest variety of features. Like in the chemical process, there is no such thing as the best option, but different choices to satisfy different kinds of customers and their needs.

The papers I tried were made of a variety of materials and ranged from specialized inkjet papers to “amate” paper (tree bark) I brought from México and artistic papers for watercolor paintings. I considered the most successful material to be the heavyweight matte and one-face-coated Aurora paper. This paper gave me the effect I was looking for in my prints
because it is not very bright and diffuses the colors in a very soft manner adding a strange look to the image.

One of the most useful features I found using the Epson printer was the ability to print from a roll of paper. I was able to print up to a hundred feet or more of paper continuously with a small separation between each of the pictures. I present some of my individual photographs together because I want to give the viewer the opportunity to construct a narrative on their own.

I decided to print three multi-frame pieces, two containing seven images, and one made out of five pictures. The choice of order for these images was based on elements of design, such as color, contrast, repetition, balance, composition, and narrative. One of the two longest pieces contains only male models and the other only females to emphasize the idea of duality. The third piece presents a basic story about life and death, but it is up to the viewer to decipher or reinterpret these stories.

Realismo Mágico Digital

In the last question I addressed the issues regarding the techniques of creation and presentation of images as they relate to my personal interpretation of Realismo Mágico and Mexican identity. Together these issues represent the ultimate goal of this project: to learn and rediscover
through my images and the technology involved, a piece of my own identity as a Mexican artist and human being.

In this section I want to scrutinize the images from my body of work that I found the most successful. I based my analyses on content, context, formal elements of design and photography, esthetics and their connection with Realismo Mágico and identity issues.

I am inspired by the work of the artist Gerardo Suter, who uses photography as the means of documenting a moment in time to recreate pre-Colombian legends – of origins, gods, and rituals – as metaphor. Unlike many photographers who capture and reframe the existing world, Suter creates each image according to a preexisting mental picture, constructing elaborate tableaux to convey themes of ancient but universal resonance. He sketches his concept on paper, then orchestrates live models, objects, and lighting in his studio to embody a vision invoking life’s fundamental dualities: birth and death, male and female, the sacred and the profane.

The idea of duality is a recurrent theme in my work, and it is evident in most of my pieces (figures 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16). Crabs and turtles (figures 9, 11) are animals that are able to switch back and forth from water to land; they are a very powerful metaphor of adaptability. These dualities reflect my own identity as someone who lives between two worlds. In
in order to survive I need to master the ability to adapt to different circumstances.

My models represent a wide variety of individuals, ranging in age from two to sixty-eight (figures 7, 8). I was very consciously trying to gather all these different stages of human development as a metaphor for the cycle of life and death. One of my deepest concerns about identity is related to the aging process and its consequences. Who was I, who am I, and who will I be? Memories of the past, the present, and my dreams all weave together to create my own personal identity.

The scenarios, animals, and plants presented in my images also reinforce the idea of cycles. I think that the most powerful element is the fish, because for many cultures it represents the idea of life, death and rebirth. Realismo Mágico is characterized by rich metaphorical language. The ocean is an infinite source of life and a harsh environment where competition for survival is omnipresent. Coconuts and palm trees, toddlers and old men, fishermen and fish, men and women, sand and sea —for me, all of them represent the cycles existing within my own humanity.

In his masterpiece Cien años de soledad (One hundred years of solitude), Gabriel García Márquez, master of Realismo Mágico literature, represents the Latin American identity expressed through the life of a small town. The sum of all of the characters symbolizes a metaphorical portrait of the past, present, and future of the Latin American people. I tried to
achieve a similar result about México and my own identity though the images of this remote little village.

Realismo Mágico deals with the representation of ordinary things from an unusual point of view. All the elements in my pictures are common and I try to generate compositions that present a strange and surreal look. I achieve this effect by using close-ups of my models interacting with some of the animals, nets, and other elements. Evidently, some of the formal elements of the photographs are more successful than others.

A formal analysis of figures 1 and 2 shows which photograph is more successful. I consider figure 1 to represent my ideas in a more effective manner. Both images present a person holding a couple of fish in front of their faces to match the fish eyes with their own. These are the differences I found between his and her images: she is wearing a shirt and I consider the color a distraction for the main subject. The background in her picture is also a distraction and does not contribute to any relevant information, while his background is out of focus but helps to hold the image together allowing the viewer to concentrate in his face. The way he holds the fish is more natural and presents more stability. His hands frame the head and direct the attention directly to the eyes. He aligned the fish with more precision with his own eyes, giving a better impression of a superimposition creating the visual effect of a foreground-background unity. Finally, one
of his fish shows the whole body including the tail, adding more dynamism to the image.

I applied the same analysis to figure 3 that shows a man holding a couple of long fish crossing his arms in front of him, compared to figure 4 where a young man is fishing with a net. Once again, the representation of the background in focus in figure 4 is a distraction for the image; there is too much happening there. In contrast, the man with the long fish stands out against the ocean waves. Even though the man holds the fish in a non-naturalistic pose, he seems to be more comfortable and relaxed than the young man holding the net. The close-up view works much better than the full shot because it takes the viewer into a personal contact with the subject. At last, the vivid blue color of the fish generates a focal point for the viewer.

Referring back to the multi-frame pieces mentioned in the previous chapter, these images resemble pieces of Mexican cinematographic film. During the 1950s Realismo Mágico style flourished in Latin America. In México, films like “Canasta de cuentos Mexicanos” (Basket of Mexican stories, 1956), from director Julio Bracho, presented a format influenced by Juan Rulfo’s book El llano en llamas (The burning plain, 1953), presenting a collection of different stories revolving around a general theme but without a formal relationship to each other. I think I succeeded in presenting a similar idea with my multiple images as a reference to this
important period of Realismo Mágico production. Each image presents a single story without a particular connection to any of the other images, however all images are bound by similar imagery.

I tried to create this body of work based on Realismo Mágico. I found a strong personal connection with the idea of presenting illusions of unreality in realistic settings to create a dreamlike composition that provokes a strange feeling about the familiar.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

The technology of digital photography is a very promising field, and has already revolutionized the way we take pictures and look at them. I believe technology opened a whole new set of possibilities for me in terms of my creative process. The connections I made between the application of technology and the expression of the Realismo Mágico style demonstrates the flexibility of this medium.

In part I see myself as a product of a traditional Mexican society combined with my experiences as a visitor to the industrialized United States and the intricate relationship between these two different realities. The constant search for a personal identity has always been an inspiration for artists anywhere and anytime in the art world. I think I found many answers, and also I faced new questions for further analysis and discovery.

It was equally important to research and learn about the many other artists working in a similar way. They became an inspiration and guided me throughout my creative process. This influence will endure beyond the creation of this exhibition, and it will be present in my future artistic projects.

I discovered that Realismo Mágico is much more than an old-fashioned style. Latin America, like the rest of the so called third world is still immersed in this amazing state of unreality. The simple fact that most of
these people survive on less than a dollar a day is just unbelievable. What I found more fascinating is the brave and happy attitude they have about their situation.

For my future work, I have many plans and ideas. I definitely want to keep traveling back to my country. I am interested in places such as Baja California Sur, Veracruz, and the Maya region. I am satisfied with the results I obtained so far with the interaction of models and their environment. I want to explore more deeply the working styles of Gerardo Suter and Luis González Palma, which have many similarities, such as the way they control their tableaux. They use large-scale pieces and installations. I feel greatly attracted to the way Palma applies and combines unusual materials with photography, and the earthy-look of Suter’s images with his unique language of stark visual contrasts, pairing primitive objects with contemporary backdrops, and employing a modernist vocabulary of clean lines and forms.

I took for granted many things about México while I was living there, and the opportunity to be far away, here in Texas, gave me the chance to visualize my country with a different perspective. I hope that my pictures will pay tribute to the Mexican people, my ancestors, and the ideals of the Latin American artists and movements that inspired me to create the present body of work.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


