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Título: Sobre los humanos, demasiado humanos, de Pedro L. San Miguel

Title: On Humans, All Too Human, By Pedro L. San Miguel

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Resumen: El fotógrafo puertorriqueño Pedro L. San Miguel exhibe en la Galería Guatíbiri un conjunto de fotografías, principalmente retratos y paisajes de México, las cuales configuran una muestra de un gran archivo acumulado de vivencias.

Abstract: The Puerto Rican photographer Pedro L. San Miguel exhibits a set of photographs in the Guatíbiri Gallery. These photographs mainly consist of portraits and landscapes of Mexico, which make up a sample of an archive of accumulated experiences.

Palabras clave: Fotografía, Galería Guatibirí, Pedro L. San Miguel, Nora Rodríguez Vallés, México, Puerto Rico

Keywords: Photography, Galería Guatibirí, Pedro L. San Miguel, Nora Rodríguez Vallés, México, Puerto Rico

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Pedro L. San Miguel, *The Old Woman with the Umbrella in the Zócalo*
(*On Humans, All Too Human Series*), 2015.

Though it is not the only one, there is an invitation to play in *Corriendo bici en la vecindad* (*Bike-Riding in the Neighborhood*), which shows children riding bicycles in an alleyway photographed through an open doorway. It is another world that in passing captures and transports us to the dimension of a relative now, a crossroads of yesterday, today, and forever. Playing with mirrors is not an innocent exercise. Not in vain did Carl Jung point out that “the creative activity of the imagination frees man from his bondage to the ‘nothing but’ and liberates in him the spirit of play,” or as Friedrich Schiller said, “man is only completely human when he plays” (Polo Dowmat 80).

In the seventeenth century, Jean-Baptiste Nolin created a map titled “L’Archipelague du Mexique,” which represented the islands of the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican photographer San Miguel facilitates a parallel transfiguration, carrying the viewers here in his home community of Río Piedras to various locations in Mexico—the Mexico he has come to know—so that it can become ours as well. San Miguel has been primarily known as a historian and tenured professor at the University of Puerto Rico, and whose works on history have been published in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and the United States. Through these photographs he now reveals to us a very different facet—that of a photographer chronicling the human experiences of the common people of the many worlds of Mexico. We see here a first sample from a vast archive of experiences he has collected. Each soul, lost in uncharted lands and captured wandering through the city and other spaces/times, represents us. Does this piece of land again become Mexican, this otherness, our own? The wayfaring photographer arrived on the lucky day described by Mexican author Monsiváis in his *Antología personal*, and found “a place at the disposal of the wandering gaze,” his own, reflected in the eyes of *La anciana del parasol en el Zócalo* (*The Old Woman with the Umbrella in the Zócalo*) [cover] or in those of another elderly woman *En el pasillo del convent* (*In the Hallway of the Convent*).

What do we play? We can play at remembering that rage has always been a part of our life and that it tends to hide a sadness that at times seems ancestral. In his book, *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche describes the slow process of becoming a free spirit. Upon finally arriving at that place, the free spirit thinks that “it is only now, at the midday of our life, that we understand what preparations, bypaths, experiments, temptations, disguises the problem had need of before it was allowed to rise up before us, and how we first had to experience the most manifold and contradictory states of joy and distress in soul and body, as adventurers and circumnavigators of that inner world called ‘man,’ as surveyors and gaugers of that ‘higher’ and ‘one upon the other’ that is likewise called ‘man’—penetrating everywhere, almost without fear, disdaining nothing, losing nothing, asking everything, cleansing everything of what is chance and accident in it and as it were thoroughly sifting



Pedro L. San Miguel, *Bike-Riding in the Neighborhood* (*Humans, All Too Human Series.*), 2015.

it—until at last we had the right to say, we free spirits: ‘Here—a new problem! Here a long ladder upon whose rungs we ourselves have sat and climbed – which we ourselves have at some time been! Here a higher, a deeper, a beneath-us, a tremendous long ordering, an order of rank, which we see: here—our problem!’ (Nietzsche 10). Octavio Paz states in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* that “the rational language of our day can barely hide the ancient myths behind it” (Paz 211). In the presence of the masked myths, *Darketo (Goth)*, *El Negrete: Charro de fantasía (Negrete: The Charro of Fantasy)*, *Trascendencia del tiempo o el reloj lo dice todo (The Transcendence of Time or The Clock Says It All)*, love is again the central theme, even if it is dissimulated, because dissimulation is part of the Mexican’s national modesty. But in good Puerto Rican style, with *Laura (Laura)*, *Antes que se nos derrita (Before They Melt)*, *Tiempo de lluvia (Rainy Weather)* and *Madonna mexicana (Mexican Madonna)*, is it love out in the open that unveils itself as the protagonist in this work?



Pedro L. San Miguel, *Negrete: The Charro of Fantasy* (Humans, All Too Human Series.), 2015.

There are more layers to uncover and explore. A violinist melds with a wall, and field laborers are interwoven into the very texture of their crops. *Miradas cruzadas (Crossed Gazes)* should make it clear that only the artist/photographer knows what he wished to say. This is my own version.

In a game of mirrors, spectators get to give their own versions of what they see in *Humans, All Too Human*.

“He who has attained to only some degree of freedom of mind cannot feel other than a wanderer on the earth—though not as a traveller to a final destination: for this destination does not exist” (Nietzsche 203). But they propose to observe well, with their eyes wide open to everything that really happens in the world...



Pedro L. San Miguel, *Rainy Weather* (Humans, All Too Human Series.), 2015.

***Humans, All Too Human*, an exhibition of photographs by Pedro L. San Miguel at Galería Guatíbiri, Río Piedras, April 16 – 29, 2015.**

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