



*Christian Poveda, a photographer born in Algeria, had devoted his work to portraying conflicts in almost all of Ibero-America. In the 1980s his lens focused on the ups and downs of El Salvador, a country that he loved and that captivated his soul.*

The international community has been moved by the recent murder of French-Spanish photojournalist Christian Poveda. Who killed him and why? It seems to have been the work of at least four of the protagonists of his last documentary, *La vida loca*, which deals with the Maras and gangs in El Salvador. The world will have to wait for the results of the investigation, while his body is repatriated to Spain.

But, who was Poveda? Here we'll try to render a semblance of this singular journalist. It is always difficult to be objective when a colleague dies, particularly when he is assassinated at one of the best moments of his life, when he was on the verge of premiering his most recent work in Paris and Mexico.

Christian Poveda was in Mexico only 72 hours before he was killed by unidentified individuals in a land that he deeply loved, El Salvador. He had come to Mexico only a few days earlier to give a week-long workshop as part of the third photography meeting, organized by Mauricio Palos and held in San Luis Potosí. This was his first and last course given to a group of professionals, including a staff member of Excélsior, Abdel Meza, a photojournalist who shared his final days with him.

Abdel told me that in that workshop, Christian insisted on transmitting the idea of how we should get involved in our work and always be honest with the individuals that were the object of our obsessions. And he practiced this to its utmost. He presented his complete documentary to the workshop participants.

Christian went to El Salvador with the Nikon cameras and lenses that he had bought from Sebastián Salgado (a special edition made for the Brazilian photographer), according to what he told me years ago at the photojournalism festival in Perpignan. Poveda spent more than three years in El Salvador and close to two working with the Maras and the 18, rival gangs who killed each other daily. He proposed to document their human side and their everyday life, including birthdays, romances, visits to doctors, and arrests. During the course of his work with them, several of them died and he even documented their funerals and the community's pain each time they lost a member.

# Life among the Social Causes of Photojournalism

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