

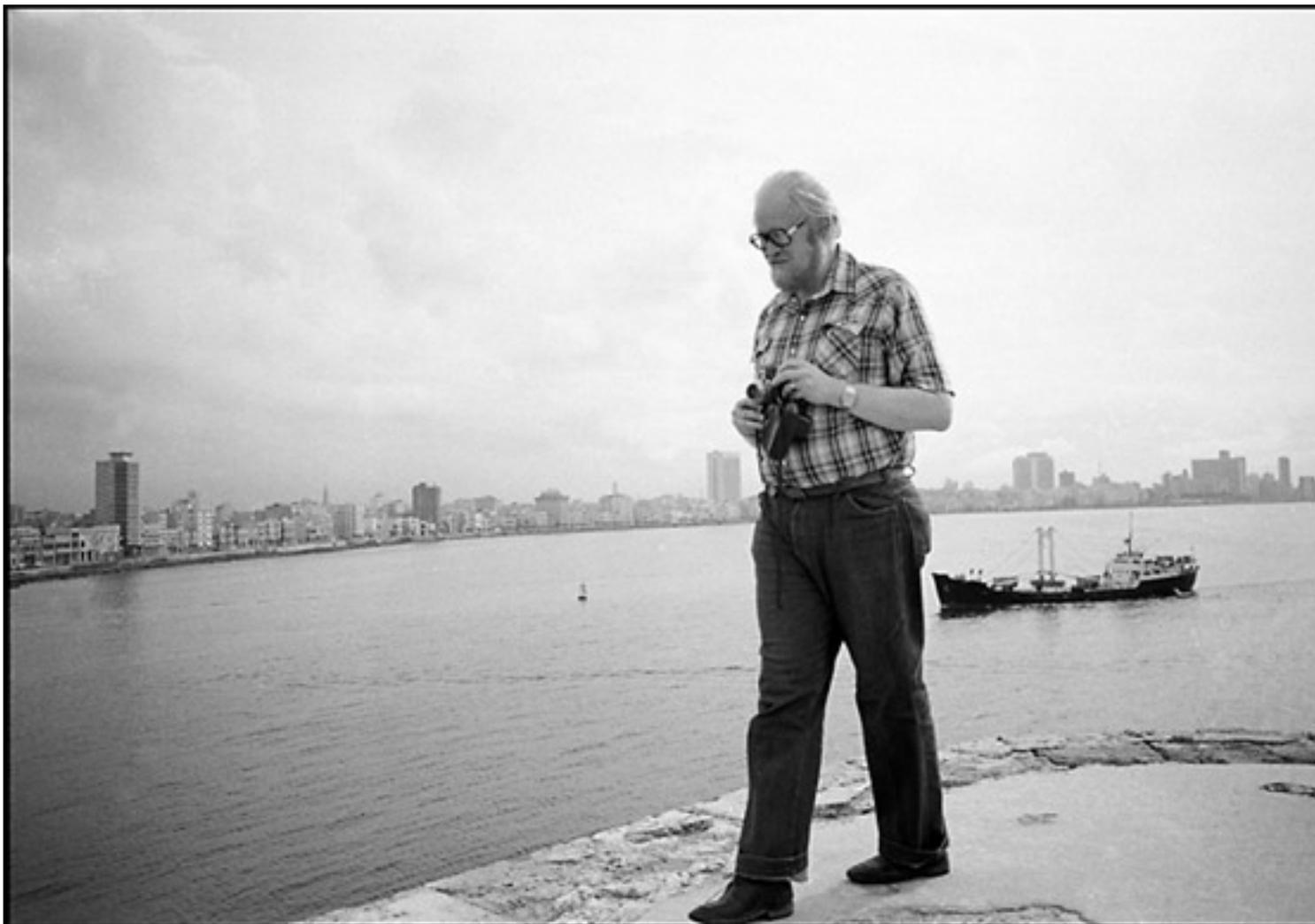
**Enrique Bostelman (1939-2003)**

Written by Elisa Ruíz / ZoneZero

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## **Mexican Photographer**

**1939 - December 3rd, 2003**



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We are sad to inform you the decease of our dear friend and photographer.

### **Enrique Bostelman.**

Was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco (Mexico) in March, 1939. In 1958 he received a scholarship for studying a Master's degree in Photography at Bayerische Staatslehranstalt der Photographie in Munich, west Germany.

In 1960 he got initiated as a professional photographer and he later taught at the Instituto Paul Coremans in Mexico City. From 1983 to 1986 he was vicepresident of the Consejo Mexicano de Fotografía (Mexican Photography Council). He has been through the years a member of the jury of different photography events like: Bienal de Artes Gráficas and Bienal de Fotografía del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Kinsa prize in Rochester, E.U.A., Geomundo prize in Mexico City, Casa de las Américas prize in Havana, Cuba, between other more.

He was a member of the Sistema Nacional de Creadores del FONCA (National System of

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FONCA Creators). He participated in multiple collective expositions in Mexico, Europe, the USA and Southamerica.

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### **INTERVIEW TO ENRIQUE BOSTELMAN**

**BY ELISA RUIZ FROM CONACULTA, AUGUST 22, 2003**

Oaxaca, Mexico. - Next to a hot cup of coffee, a small city map is explored by Enrique Bostelmann's hand. He comes back after thirty years and finds that things have changed. "When I came to Oaxaca there were no museums or galleries, and getting around was easy" he says, taking his coffee cup as he stands up.

He was born in Guadalajara in 1939. He has won several International awards such as the Casa de las Américas, the Geomundo and the Kinsa awards. Bostelmann belongs to the generation of Mexican photographers who, during the 50's and 60's, made pictures of the Mexican rural areas walking them inch-by-inch. Due to his German ancestry, his blonde hair attracted the attention of the townspeople. "People who used to want to pay for getting their picture taken now asked for "one dollar" , and called me names like fucking gringo, straw head, corn hair, everyone thought I was not a Mexican".

After 30 years, Bostelmann comes back to Oaxaca for a conference on visual arts and the opening of the “Silver on Zoology” exhibition -with ten other artists of the National creators fellowship-held at the Santo Domingo cultural centre. This show included pictures of Manuel Álvarez Bravo and Mariana Yampolsky who, like Bostelmann, traveled throughout Mexico “looking for the light”

Photographers traveled because the world is light, we searched for the light. Now life takes place in the evening, in poky little rooms, while smoking marijuana cigarettes. Photographers do not go to the sierra of Puebla anymore, they go to Cancun or Acapulco and at the most take the picture of someone’s backside”.

“It not easier because of the airplanes or cars, but it used to be safe, if you went to the Huasteca region, people did not allow to be photographed because photographers used to charge them. Now it is the other way around, they want ‘one dollar’. The further away you were of the so-called ‘civilization’, the safer you felt. People were very hospitable, we would arrive by foot -sometimes we had to walk 50 kilometers in a day- and people wouldn’t let us leave; ‘Stay’ they said’ we’ll kill a lamb for supper”.

“Man had a closer relationship with nature in those days. I belonged to The Explorer’s Club of Mexico, it’s members knew every mountain in the country and every language. When we visited a place we would write down the directions to get to it in a little book. Photography was an adventure”

With images from those days, Enrique Bostelmann has prepared an exhibition for INBA (National Fine Arts Institute) "Recovered Time: A cartography of Imagination" and a retrospective exhibition in Mexico City on September.

Though he makes it clear that his photographic work is not over yet. Despite not traveling as frequently since "one makes up one's world according to the age", he is currently working in Mexico City with several artists such as writers, painters and sculptors in multidisciplinary projects.

"The eye becomes very sharp with time. Nowadays, I am drawn to the small nameless objects that express a man's way of being. After taking pictures of so many people one starts to feel repetitive, we see the same expressions of joy, sadness, amazement in everyone. These gestures are universal even reiterative. I wonder, How can I talk about Mankind through its objects? I try to interpret everything through a different media".

Bostelmann, who has had exhibitions in Europe, Asia and South America is currently working in the book "Post No Bills" which will compile 150 images from several photographers. This book will be published by Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana of México.

“Elena Poniatowska gave me the spoon used by his father in prison. I came up with a concept, so I looked for the right lighting and cast a bar’s shadow over it . Luis de Tavira gave me a tiny music box; Carlos Monsivais owner of quite a few cats- his studio reeks of them -, gave me a Garfield doll; Carlos Montemayor , who writes about guerillas, gave me a bottle with land from Crete; Vicente Leñero gave me the original copy of one of his writings and a tiny toy typewriter his daughter gave him as a present; Emilio Carballido gave me a lilac typewriter given to him by Salvador Novo, which is so old you can not see the letters anymore. These objects, when seen in detail , are a universes revealing their owners. A small key or a shoe cease to be objects and become landscapes”.

This project keeps him quite busy, not only because of the photographic work , but also because the texts that each artist has to write for the book, he has to be in touch with all of them and that means he has to get around all over Mexico City everyday.

He has no intention of retiring . “When one gets involved in something, it becomes life itself. That's what happened with Alvarez Bravo, Yampolsky, Nacho López. Picasso died working at 95, Rossini and Verdi died writing their music. Retirement is for people with day jobs. Those of us who work for fun for the joy of it all never retire”

I take this opportunity to give a word of advice to photographers attending courses at the so-called “active” photography schools, participating in contests with portfolios that are full of diplomas and course certificates but hardly have got any work in them. I honestly say to you that I have little communication with other photographers because photography is like a funnel, small on top, wide on the bottom, we all can take pictures, there are automatic cameras, but there are only a few that use the camera like a sculptor uses a chisel or a painter a brush, very few are interested in art in general. They go to “active” photography courses to get a little diploma. I

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have been a judge in these contests and I received portfolios thick as telephone books filled with diplomas and course certificates, but when you look at the pictures...it doesn't make any sense. I say this to you: Work harder and forget about the diplomas!!

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<http://zonezero.com/magazine/obituaries/bostelman/bostelman.html>