

Janelle Lynch: *Los Jardines de México*

The photographs displayed in *Los Jardines de México* explore themes related to the life cycle and its representations in the urban and rural landscapes. Lynch spent five years working on the images encompassed in this exhibition. For three of the five years, Lynch lived in Mexico City where she became familiar with the city, its landscape, and its rich traditions.

Los Jardines de México is comprised of four series—three from Mexico City and one from Chiapas—each series investigating different facets of existence: loss, death, regeneration, and life.

El Jardín de Juegos highlights the relics of a children's playground conquered by nature and neglect. *Donde Andaba* focuses on wild plants that grow out of the urban infrastructure and architecture. *Akna* (the Mayan goddess of birth and fertility or "mother" in Mayan) delves deep into a nature preserve to anthropomorphize dormant tree stumps serving as hosts of new life. *La Fosa Común* beautifully features the vegetation in a century-old common grave in different stages of the life cycle.

Lynch's graceful eye and keen awareness of her subject allow her to create photographs that explore notions of loss and death, all the while celebrating life and its intricate beauty.

About the Artist

Janelle Lynch has garnered international recognition over the last decade for her large-format photographs of the urban and rural landscape. Widely exhibited, her work is in several public and private collections including the George Eastman House Museum (Rochester, New York); the Brooklyn Museum; the Fundación Vila Casas (Barcelona, Spain); and the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Salta, Argentina). In 2012, the Robert Morat Galerie (Berlin) will host a ten-year survey of her work, and the Newark Museum (New Jersey) will exhibit her River series, which the museum recently acquired. Presently, Lynch is working on a commission for Wave Hill (Bronx, New York), a public garden and cultural center, which will also be exhibited next year. She is currently based in New York City.

Acknowledgements

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Installation: Vincent Marasa, Boston

El Jardín de Juegos

El Jardín de Juegos is a series of images that investigates representations of loss in the urban landscape. I made the work in an abandoned playground adjacent to the city's largest cemetery between 2002 and 2003, after I moved from New York to Mexico City.

Intuitively drawn to the space by the dilapidated play structures, overgrown vegetation and the pervasive sensation of absence, I used my 4x5 camera as a tool with which to explore loss, a practice that dates back to the medium's invention with its use for post-mortem and mourning photography and a subject that resonates with a related early life experience. Loss, as Roland Barthes posited in *Camera Lucida*, is inherent in the photographic medium. For Barthes, photography was a sign of absence, not presence.



Untitled 7, from the series El Jardín de Juegos
2002–2003
Edition 1/6
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
40 x 50 inches
\$4,475



Untitled 1, from the series El Jardín de Juegos
2002–2003
Edition 1/6
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
40 x 50 inches
\$4,475

El Jardín de Juegos



Untitled 3, from the series *El Jardín de Juegos*
2002–2003
Edition 1/6
40 x 50 inches
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
\$4,475



Untitled 2, from the series *El Jardín de Juegos*
2002–2003
Edition 1/6
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
40 x 50 inches
\$4,475



Untitled 8, from the series *El Jardín de Juegos*
2002–2003
Edition 1/6
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
40 x 50 inches
\$4,475

Akna

Akna is a series of portraits of tree stumps, which explores the theme of regeneration. I made the work in 2006 with an 8x10 camera in a nature reserve in the central Chiapas mountain range. The Mayan word for "mother," *Akna* is also the indigenous culture's goddess of birth and fertility.

The tree stumps in the images are covered with epiphytes—such as ferns, mosses, bromeliads, and orchids—which are not parasitic, but rather they feed off of the air and rain and simply need a supportive base from which to grow. As a nurturing source for new life, the stumps, despite being truncated, experience a metaphorical rebirth. I anthropomorphized them through photography ascribing gender and age and naming them after people who played a similar role in my life as the stumps do to the epiphytes.

This project was made possible by a generous 8x10 Kodak Professional Portra 160 film grant.



Bertha*, from the series *Akna

2006

Edition 1/3

50 x 60 inches

Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper

\$6,350



Susannah*, from the series *Akna

2006

Edition 1/3

50 x 60 inches

Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper

\$6,350



Charles*, from the series *Akna

2006

Edition 1/3

50 x 60 inches

Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper

\$6,350

Donde Andaba

The images in *Donde Andaba* juxtapose wild plant life and urban architecture to explore the perseverance of life despite its ambient conditions. For the series, I used a 6x7 camera and photographed the vegetation that emerged from the cracks in the sidewalks or from between the bricks on the walls of buildings in my neighborhood. I made the work in 2005 after living in Mexico City for three years and was inspired by my observations of Mexican culture, in particular its tenacious spirit.



Triptych III, from the series Donde Andaba
2005
Edition 2/6
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
11 x 14 inches
\$1,200



Triptych I, from the series Donde Andaba
2005
Edition 2/6
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
11 x 14 inches
\$1,200



Triptych II, from the series Donde Andaba
2005
Edition 1/6
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
11 x 14 inches
\$1,200

La Fosa Común

La Fosa Común is a series of photographs that I made with an 8x10 camera in Mexico City's common grave. Located within the main cemetery and established in 1905, the common grave continues to function today as a burial site for the indigent. I began the project in 2007 with the interest of exploring through photography representations of death in the urban landscape. As I worked, the theme organically broadened to include a more comprehensive investigation of representations of all aspects of the life cycle within the landscape, including life, death, loss and regeneration. The work also celebrates the beauty in life.

This project was made possible by a generous 8x10 Kodak Professional Portra 160 film grant.



Untitled 6, from the series La Fosa Común
2007
Edition 1/6
20 x 24 inches
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
\$1,700



Untitled 11, from the series La Fosa Común
2007
Edition 1/6
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
20 x 24 inches
\$1,700

La Fosa Común



Untitled 8, from the series La Fosa Común
2007
Edition 2/6
20 x 24 inches
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
\$1,700



Untitled 1, from the series La Fosa Común
2007
Edition 1/6
20 x 24 inches
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
\$1,700



Untitled 5, from the series La Fosa Común
2007
Edition 1/6
20 x 24 inches
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
\$1,700



Untitled 3, from the series La Fosa Común
2007
Edition 1/6
20 x 24 inches
Digital C-print on Kodak photographic paper
\$1,700

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