

## MARTHA ROSLER - 1981(the year te future began)

àngels barcelona 28.09.17 > 17.11.17



Vista de exposición. "Cuba series", 1981. Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE  
20,3 × 61 cm. Ed 6 + 2 AP (C/U)

*1981 (el año en que el futuro comenzó)*, es una exposición de fotografías de Martha Rosler que fueron tomadas en 1981, un momento clave en la politización neo-vanguardista de su obra.

La exposición plantea un enfoque micro-historiográfico al presentar tres series fotográficas distintas realizadas ese mismo año. Cada una de esta series refleja una faceta diferente de las luchas de liberación latinoamericanas que fueron el contrapunto del primer surgimiento del neoliberalismo en estos países. En enero de 1981, Rosler visitó Cuba como parte de un grupo de artistas e intelectuales (muchos de ellos amigos) en un viaje organizado por Ana Mendieta y Lucy Lippard. Poco después, a finales de abril, Rosler participó en el debate sobre "la fotografía como instrumento de lucha" en el segundo Coloquio Latinoamericano de Fotografía en la Ciudad de México, que terminó coincidiendo con el Primero de Mayo. Rosler se unió a la manifestación de ese día en el centro de la ciudad. Un par de días más tarde, el 3 de mayo, participó en la marcha contra la intervención estadounidense en El Salvador frente al Pentágono, en Washington DC, la mayor manifestación de esa década contra la guerra.

Además de su trabajo fotográfico, los escritos de la artista en ese momento contribuyeron decisivamente a un cambio de paradigma en el discurso documental que, en muchos aspectos, estaba ligado a las luchas democráticas en América Latina. También en 1981 publicó *3 Works*, un libro que recopiló algunas de sus obras claves de la década de los setenta, incluyendo *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* y *The Restoration of High Culture in Chile*, junto con su influyente ensayo "In, Around and Afterthoughts ... On Documentary Photography" (Traducido al castellano como *Dentro, alrededor y otras reflexiones. Sobre la fotografía documental*). En junio de ese mismo año, publicó su reseña del libro de fotografías *Nicaragua*, de Susan Meiselas. Este fue también un momento crucial biográficamente, ya que marcó el regreso de Rosler a Nueva York después de más de una década en California y Canadá.



Vista de exposición

La solidaridad de Rosler con las luchas democráticas latinoamericanas de los años setenta es un elemento esencial para entender la politización de su trabajo. Los movimientos revolucionarios se convirtieron en el reverso de la moneda del neoliberalismo en los ochenta. Del mismo modo, la "reinención" crítica de la fotografía documental y la reacción contra los primeros síntomas de la ola de regresión política formaban parte de la misma agenda ideológica y estética. Retrospectivamente, 1981 representó el fin de la potencialidad, la apertura y la experimentación de los años setenta (producto de las políticas públicas progresistas posteriores a 1968 en todo el mundo) y el comienzo efectivo de la era Thatcher-Reagan, que determinó todo el panorama político y cultural de las décadas posteriores.



Vista de exposición. "Washington DC series", 1981. 78 diapositivas en color. Ed. 6+ 2 AP



Vista de exposición

Pero, además de su sentido histórico, esta exposición plantea importantes cuestiones a tener en cuenta hoy en día. Al adentrarnos en la era de Trump, las imágenes de 1981 adquieren un significado actual y se convierten en miembros activos de una conversación entre la artista, la época en la que las imágenes fueron tomadas y el pensamiento de los espectadores contemporáneos. Aún más que antes, consumimos el mundo a través de imágenes, y cualquier respuesta a ellas está enraizada en nuestro conocimiento social del mundo. Es decir, si nos rodeamos de imágenes que enfatizan la estética y la forma de una sociedad neoliberal sobre su dimensión política, también alimentarán una sensibilidad imperialista y conformista en todos los aspectos de la vida cultural. En este sentido, 1981 (el año en que el futuro comenzó) nos ofrece una arqueología del presente.

Las obras que forman parte de esta exposición no se han visto hasta ahora, a excepción de las fotografías de Cuba que se mostraron en 2012 en la galería Mitchell-Innes & Nash de Nueva York y en la galería Raffaella Cortese de Milán.



Vista de exposición.



Exhibition view. "Mexico DF series", 1981. 20 color photographs. 23 x 30 cm. Ed. 6+2 AP

*1981 (the year the future began)*, an exhibition of photographs taken by Martha Rosler in 1981 at a key moment in the neo-avantgarde politicization of her work.

Taking a micro-historiographical approach, the show presents three distinct photographic series from that year — each reflecting a different facet of the Latin American liberation struggles that were counterpoint to the region's early encounter with neoliberalism. In January of 1981, Rosler travelled to Cuba as part of a group of artists and intellectuals (many of them friends) organized by Ana Mendieta and Lucy Lippard. Then, in late April, she spoke at the panel on "photography as struggle" at the second Coloquio Latinoamericano de Fotografía in Mexico City, after which she joined in the May Day demonstration in the center of the city. A couple of days later, on May 3, she marched to the steps of the Pentagon in Washington D.C. as part of the largest anti-war demonstration in a decade, opposing U.S. intervention in El Salvador.



In addition to her photographic work, Rosler's writing from this period contributed decisively to a paradigm shift in documentary discourse that was, in many respects, tied to the democratic struggles in Latin America. In 1981 as well, she published *3 Works*, a book that compiled some of her key works from the 1970s including *The Bowery* in two inadequate descriptive systems and *The Restoration of High Culture in Chile*, alongside her seminal 1981 essay "In, Around and Afterthoughts... On Documentary Photography."

Contact sheets by Esther Parada, II Coloquio Latinoamericano de Fotografía, April, Mexico DF, 1981





Detail of the original materials displayed inside the exhibition vitrines.

In June of that same year, she published her review of Susan Meiselas' photobook Nicaragua. This was also a crucial moment biographically, as it marked Rosler's return to New York after more than a decade in California and Canada. Many of these texts, and others, will be available to view in the exhibition. Several of her videoworks that center on Latin American political themes and events will be screened, including Watchwords of the 80s, a performance about the new regime of neoliberalism and its effects on the region.

Rosler's solidarity with the Latin American democratic struggles of the 1970s is essential for understanding the politicization of her work. The revolutionary movements became the opposite side of the coin of 1980s neoliberalism. Similarly, the critical "reinvention" of documentary photography and the reaction against the first symptoms of the regressive political wave were part of the same ideological and aesthetic agenda. In hindsight, 1981 represented the end of the potentiality, openness, and experimentation of the 1970s (a product of post-1968 progressive public policies worldwide), and the effective beginning of the Thatcher-Reagan era, which determined the entire political and cultural landscape of subsequent decades.



But, simultaneously to its historical edge, this exhibition raises important questions for today. As we enter the Trump era, the images from 1981 join the current moment of meaning and become active members of a conversation between the artist, the period of time in which they were produced, and the minds of contemporary viewers. Even more so than before, we consume the world through images, and any response to them is rooted in our social knowledge of the world. That is to say, if we surround ourselves with images that emphasize the aesthetics and form of a neoliberal society over their political dimension, they will also breed an imperialist and conformist sensibility across all aspects of cultural life. In this respect, 1981 (the year the future began) offers us an archeology of the present.

The works presented in this exhibition have remained unpublished until now, with the exception of the Cuba photographs, which were exhibited in 2012 at Mitchell-Innes & Nash gallery in New York and Galleria Raffaella Cortese in Milan



"Mexico DF series", 1981. 20 Color photographs. 23 x 30 cm. Ed. 6+2 AP



"Mexico DF series", 1981. 20 Color photographs. 23 x 30 cm. Ed. 6+2 AP



Scanned documents inside vitrines available for public consultation



## EXHIBITION SERIES

### Cuba series, 1981



**Manicure, Hair Salon "Ella", Trinidad, from the Cuba series, 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE

20,3 × 61 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Hotel Havana, from the Cuba series, 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE

20,3 × 61 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Soviet sailors at el Morro, from the Cuba series, 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE

20,3 × 61 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP





**Guerrilleritos de Escambray Kindergarden, Trinidad, from the Cuba series, 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE  
20,3 × 61 cm  
Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Hairdressers, Trinidad, from the Cuba series, 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE  
20,3 × 61 cm  
Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Small stores, from the Cuba series, 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE  
20,3 × 61 cm  
Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Revolutionary signs, from the Cuba series, 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE

20,3 × 61 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Street scenes, from the Cuba series, 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE

20,3 × 61 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Cars, from the Cuba series, 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE

20,3 x 61 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP





**Guerrilleros, from the Cuba series 1981**

Fotografía B/N gelatino-bromuro de plata impresión LE

20,3 × 61 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



## May Day Mexico DF series, 1981



Untitled (May Day México DF series n.31), 1981

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



Untitled (May Day México DF series n.1'), 1981

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.10'), 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n. 7, 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



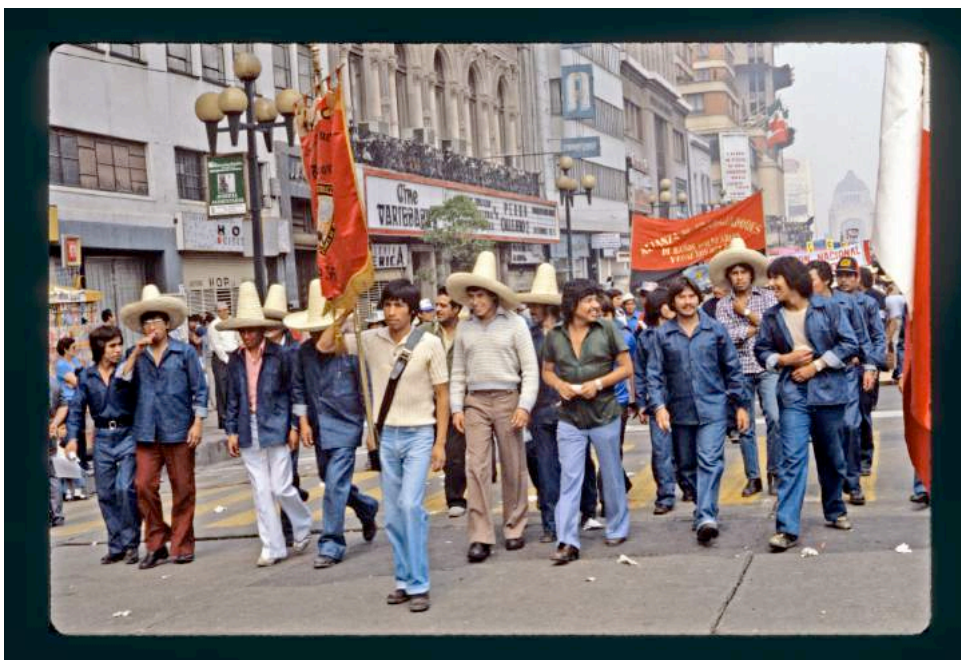


**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.15'), 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.17), 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.22b'redo), 1981**

Color photograph

23 × 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.25, 1981**

Color photograph

23 × 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP





**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.37, 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.30b), 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.28, 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.9), 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



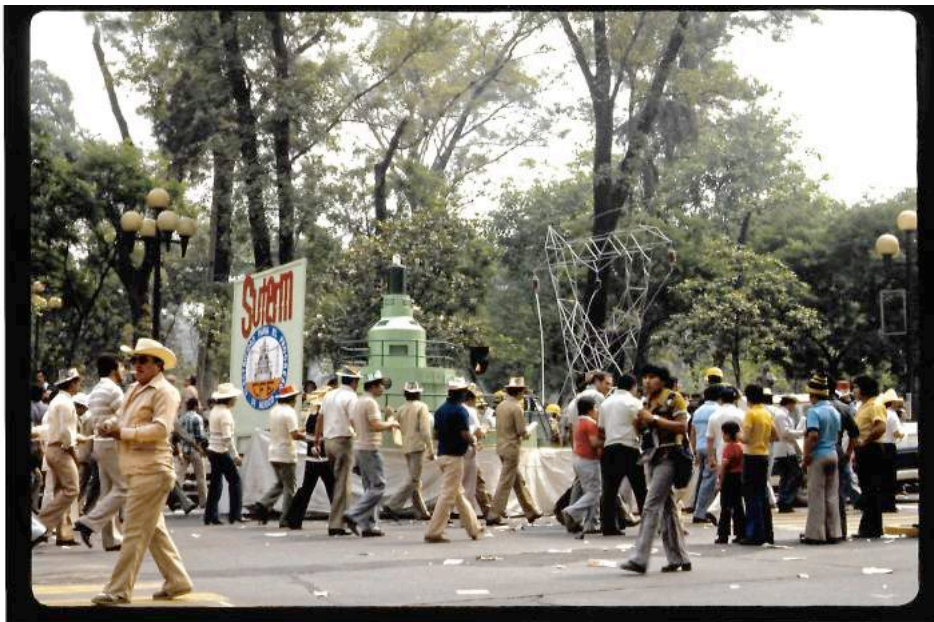


**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.6, 1981**

Color photograph

23 × 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.xxA, 1981**

Color photograph

23 × 30 cm

Ed 6 +2AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.21, 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.xx C, 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



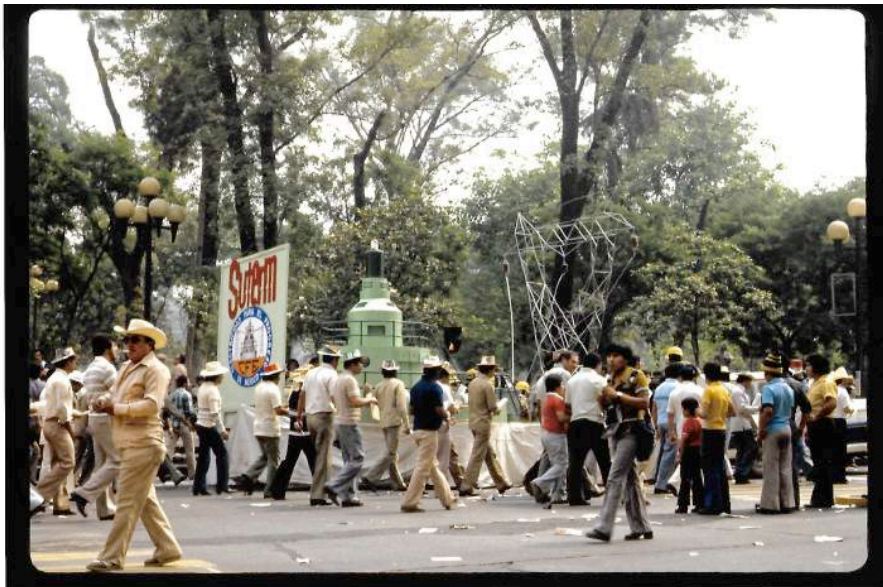


**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.xxD, 1981**

Color photograph

23 × 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP

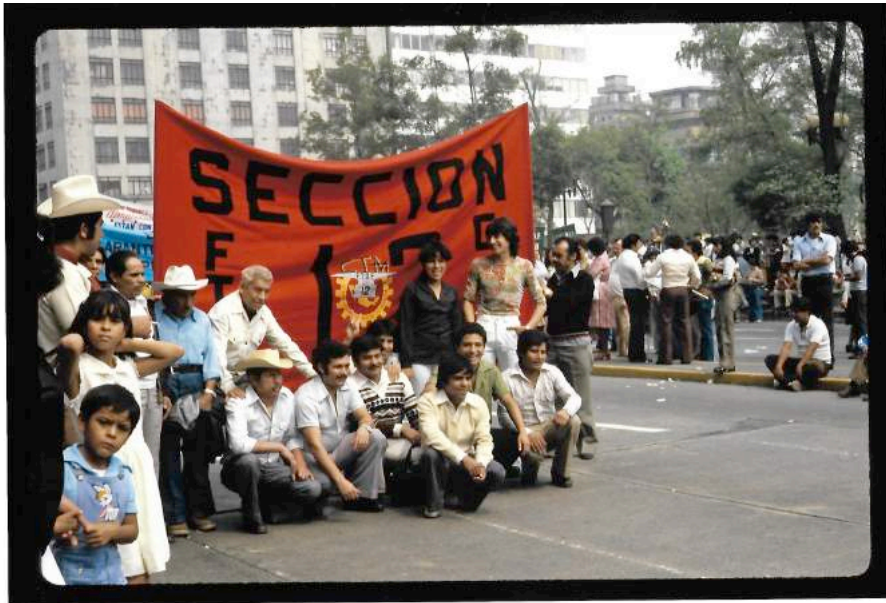


**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.xxB, 1981**

Color photograph

23 × 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.xxE), 1981**

Color photograph

23 × 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n.xxF), 1981**

Color photograph

23 × 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP





**Untitled (May Day México DF series n. xxG, 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Untitled (May Day México DF series n. 15, 1981**

Color photograph

23 x 30 cm

Ed 6 + 2 AP



**Washington DC series, 1981 (Selection)**



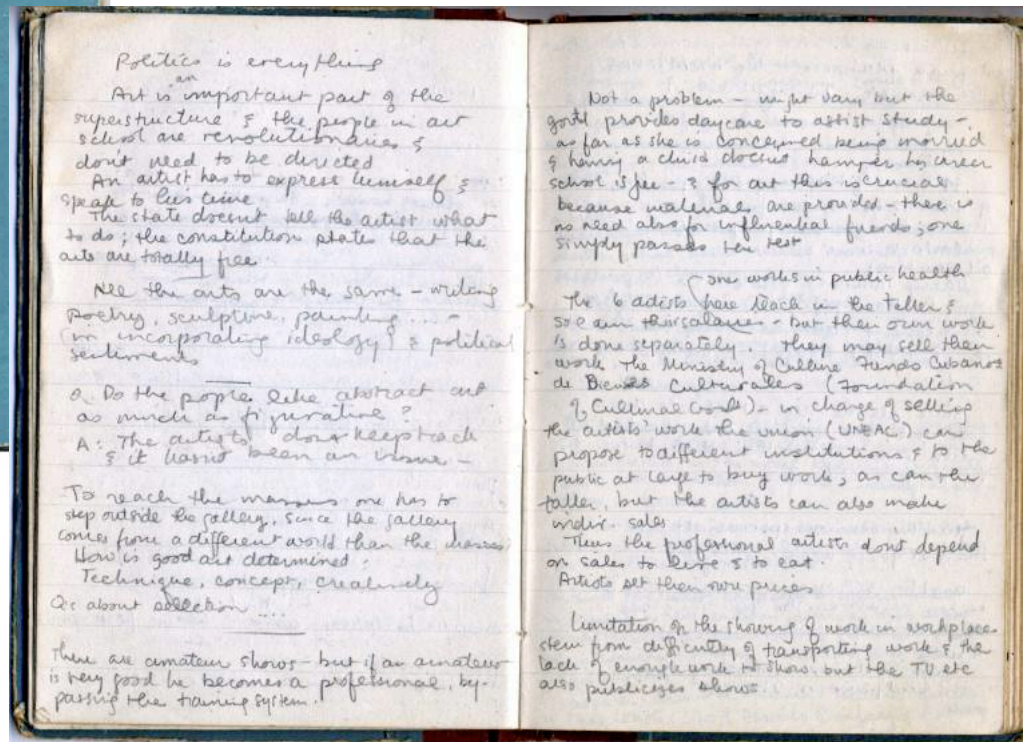
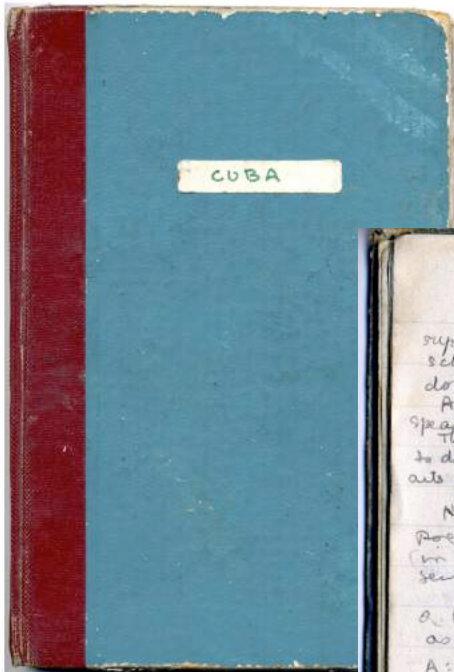








## 2. Cuba Notebook + Photos by Martha Rosler (1981)













# 4. AFTERIMAGE (magazine) – November 1981 “Notes on Latin American Photography”, by Esther Parada



## NOTES ON LATIN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY

BY ESTHER PARADA

Imagine an SPI conference held in a workshop overlooking New York City with photographers, U.S. and other Latin American photographers, and a group of Latin American photographers. The workshop was held in a room at the University of California at Berkeley, California, in the fall of 1981. The workshop was held in a room at the University of California at Berkeley, California, in the fall of 1981. The workshop was held in a room at the University of California at Berkeley, California, in the fall of 1981.

23 individuals, many of whom took their own commercial photos on their own work, but mostly concentrate on an artistic cooperative in the U.S. members say a monthly journal of about \$10.00. The project has also been a regular activity from the National Association of Mexican Photographers. The project has also been a regular activity from the National Association of Mexican Photographers. The project has also been a regular activity from the National Association of Mexican Photographers.

Photographic books and the artist's own work are also included in the collection and documentation of contemporary Latin American photography. The project has also been a regular activity from the National Association of Mexican Photographers. The project has also been a regular activity from the National Association of Mexican Photographers. The project has also been a regular activity from the National Association of Mexican Photographers.

representations from Chile were political while those from Mexico and Uruguay. On the first floor of the Palacio de Bellas Artes was a separate individual exhibition for "Latin America and the World" which presented a collection of photographs and video works by artists from Brazil, Argentina, and Cuba as well as West Germany, Australia, England, and the U.S. Both the photographer and the photographer's work were included in the exhibition.

Further Exhibitions Representing both the strong interest in Latin American photography and the desire to discover the cultural roots of various photographic traditions were three shows by Latin American photographers. An exhibition of 90 portraits by Renaldo Garcia, housed in a separate gallery at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, revealed the broad diversity of Mexican society while the Garcia studio in the city of Guanajuato between 1987 and 1991. The work of two self-taught Latin American photographers was on view in the main section of Mexico City at the modernistic Galería de Arte Contemporáneo.

Workshops and Special Presentations The same 300 registrants from Latin America, Europe, and the U.S. study of their photographic experiences in "Trunks on Labyrinthine (L)", in collaboration with the 27 panels from several countries, created a vibrant environment for both the formal and informal exchange of ideas and information. The workshops, held in three parallel sessions before and after the panels, were attended by 200 people. Drawing upon the specialties of panels and an excellent Mexican photographer and artist, the workshop focused everything from technical skills to conceptual development.

ESTHER PARADA, who has her workshop in Mexico, is in a room before a photograph at the University of California at Berkeley, and the workshop of the National Association of Mexican Photographers.

Top left: Luciana Siles, Mexico; Luis Siles, Mexico; Top right: Carlos Rosler, Mexico; Top right: Carlos Rosler, Mexico; Top right: Carlos Rosler, Mexico.

Top right: Carlos Rosler, Mexico; Top right: Carlos Rosler, Mexico; Top right: Carlos Rosler, Mexico.

Top right: Carlos Rosler, Mexico; Top right: Carlos Rosler, Mexico; Top right: Carlos Rosler, Mexico.



5. In these times (magazine) – June 17-30, 1981  
 “A Revolution in Living Color: The Photojournalism of Susan Meiselas” by Martha Rosler

Rosler, page 20

ists expressed confusion about their usefulness. Many said they were pacifists, but they were shaky about their relation to the struggles they photographed. One suggested that as in Method acting, one should adopt a cause and force oneself to take on its values, in order to obtain powerful and passionate images. Other photographers expressed frustration that images of war didn't end war. Cornell Capa, founder of New York's International Center of Photography—as well as brother of the great leftist war photographer Robert Capa, founder of Magnum, who died stepping on a landmine in Indochina in 1954—complained that war used to be blamed on “lack of communication.” Yet since the '30s there has been an inundating amount of information about the horror of war and there are now more —ars than ever.

The term “documentary” itself did not appear until the '30s,



*Dying children rescued from a bombed house.*

graphed. His point was not the framing of a spectacle, it was the obsessive need to create and to re-create the one telling image, the one that would finally do the work. He expressed embarrassment at Le Carré's introduction. He said he was captive to his editor, who had sat on the book for a year until he found a big name to write. In comparison Meiselas seems lucky to have escaped with no introduction, even though the book cries out for an analysis of Nicaraguan reality.

What the correspondents in conference could not face squarely was the possibility of the meaninglessness of their work or worse, its translation to sentimentality or sports photography. One panelist suggested that photojournalists had to write more of the copy themselves. But most of the panelists rejected this option, as they had others. Why? Because it might damage their saleability or head them toward despair? Was it

isolated in the frame, looking off, moving in diverse directions, or joined in an unfathomable project. The impression of posturing is intensified by the design of the book. The most damaging element of design is the placing of the photos all together in a single section, without captions or text. The captions, some markedly inadequate, appear at the back of the book, accompanying small black-and-white reproductions—just as in an art catalogue—that run alongside the text. Images without the verbal anchoring of what they show can nudge the viewer away from reading out of images toward reading into them. They convert reality into metaphor, and generalize the particular.

The text consists almost solely of quotations from participants, moving testimony about atrocities, battles, victories. There is a wonderfully ironic telegram lampooning Somoza's self-puffery

garet Bourke-White, Marguerite Higgins—is so glibly available. I see it as counterpoint to her refusal in her photographs to probe the psyches of the victims of misery, avoiding the conversion of grief into spectacle, a standard trick of most war photography and much human-interest reportage. Nor does she suggest, as they often do, that war is like a

the photos to War is Hell and Man's Inhumanity.

In the '80s cynicism and the cult of decadence are far more acceptable in the art world than the image of compulsive empathizing on which McCullin's reputation has been built. Le Carré injects a suggestion of a modish chaing after violence in lieu of meaning: “I expect that McCul-

a time of social combat over the control of meaning. After that era, in which documentary in the U.S. was anchored above all by the gigantic Photographic Section of Roosevelt's Farm Security Administration, documentary as an expression of ideological commitment declined. By the '60s, documentary was regarded as a bore. Photojournalism, in the service not only of reportage but also for “human

in his captive press, poems, documents and a final chronology. But the list of encyclopedic statistics fails to mention anything about the country's economic base (except the people's impoverishment), which is symptomatic of the book. Just as the photos, in avoiding “revolutionary” poses, do not stress collectivity and united purpose, the text omits all mention of political convictions. Even the

natural calamity.

Just how spare Meiselas' book is in relation to the orgies of blood, fire, pain and photographic heroism that form the backbone of war-photo books can be gauged by comparison with another just-published book, Don McCullin's *Hearts of Darkness* (Knopf, \$12.95). The book of black-and-white, gritty, grainy photos, mostly classically composed images of war combatants

lin has committed suicide through his camera many times, only to lower the viewfinder and discover himself once again, sane and intact, and obliged to continue “a normal life”—perhaps it is...possible to feel nostalgia for physical suffering as a form of human nobility from which our good luck frequently withholds us.”

How does one read such an introduction in conjunction with

really even an option for most of them?

Meiselas, in *American Photographer*, provided a modern rationale for photojournalism—that her photos, appearing almost immediately in American magazines, were quickly seen in Nicaragua and—presumably—served to reinvigorate the rebel cause. Excellent. But it is when one sends one's photos outside the circle of the committed that

WARS AND METAPHORS

*This article was originally published in a small “alternative” newspaper, and it functioned as a book review of Susan Meiselas's book Nicaragua. The publication of Meiselas's book was significant: a high-budget, high-profile photo book, put out by the important publisher Pantheon Books, about a leftist revolution in the Third World—just the area of the world that we in the United States considered our fiefdom—at the start of the “Reagan revolution” and the historic swing to the right in the United States. The present version of my short article substantially restores the original text, which reflects my concern with the appearance and context of war images and their effects on the reception of those images by various viewing publics. It restores my criticism of publishers that the newspaper was reluctant to print, which led to editing that appeared to lay too much responsibility for the book's format, and my estimate of its likely reception, at Meiselas's feet. In the intervening years I have gotten to know Susan Meiselas, and my admiration for her commitment, skill, and resourcefulness, which I had already felt at the time of this consideration of her work, has grown. It is interesting to consider whether the shock caused by seeing war photos in color is no longer*

This essay was originally published under the title “A Revolution in Living Color: The Photojournalism of Susan Meiselas,” *In These Times* (Chicago), June 17–30, 1981.

DECOYS AND DISRUPTIONS: SELECTED WRITINGS, 1975–2001

*quite such an important issue, since color images of all photojournalistic subjects are now the norm. These remarks are not, however, meant to defuse the questions that I put forward about aspects of war photography, questions to which I have returned several times in my thinking and writing.*

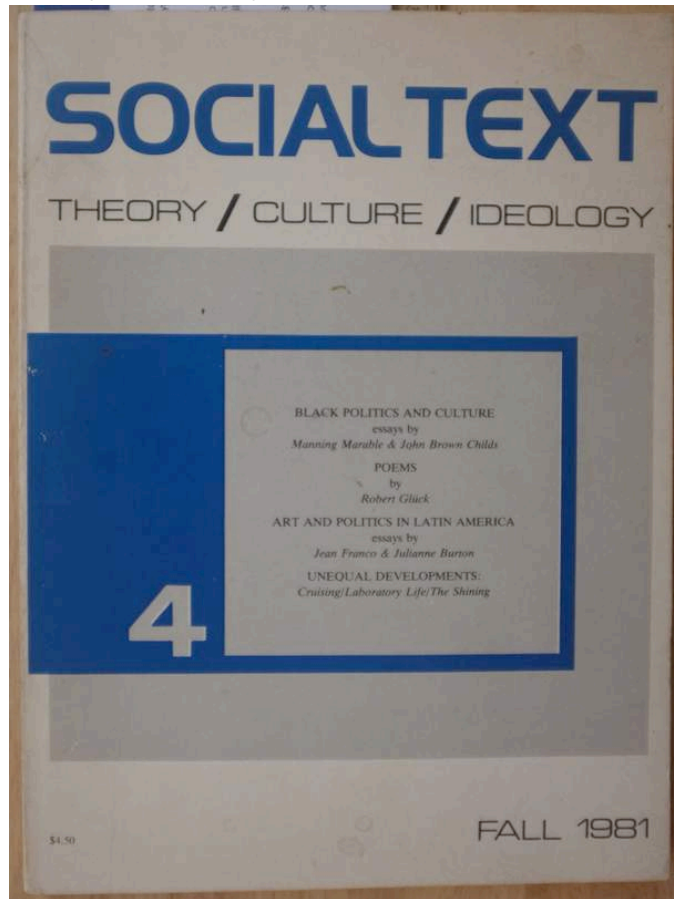
Once there was a brutal dictator in a small banana republic in steamy Central America who so abused his people, grabbing most of the wealth, stifling initiative, and causing misery, that waves of discontent spread throughout the entire population until finally peasants, lawyers, housewives, businessmen, and even priests and nuns rose up in outrage. Despite incredible atrocities, they eventually succeeded in driving out the beast and his minions, and they looked forward to living in peace forever after.

It would be easy to garner this fairy-tale impression of the Nicaraguan revolution from photojournalist Susan Meiselas's book *Nicaragua*. Meiselas's book is one of the very few journalistic works that are sympathetic to a popular struggle. But the book bears evidence of contradictory aims and approaches to the laying out of meaning, contradictions whose collision damages the book's ability to inform and to mobilize opinion. The claims to truth of documentary photography, at least for the general public, rely on the principles of realism to convince us of their accuracy. Meiselas, a member of the important news-photo agency Magnum, provides many images that are affecting and convincing. Unfortunately, the design, organization, and possibly the overall conception of the book, which were presumably intended to deepen their appeal to the photo-book audience—essentially an art audience—mar the book's reportorial work.

The movement from photojournalism to art photography travels a well-worn path, but it is a difficult one to negotiate if specific information is not to fall by the wayside. It is especially difficult when the situation is not only recent but still at issue, for as “art” takes center stage, “news” is pushed to the margins. Furthermore, there are disturbing qualities in Meiselas's photographic style that, while grounded in historical trends within photography, nevertheless have an antirealist effect.

6. Social Text (magazine)

“Seeing, Being, Being Seen: Portrait of Teresa, or Contradictions of Sexual Politics in Contemporary Cuba” by Julianne Burton



Seeing, Being, Being Seen: PORTRAIT OF TERESA, OR Contradictions of Sexual Politics in Contemporary Cuba

JULIANNE BURTON

The social presence of a woman is different in kind from that of a man. . . . Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of a woman in herself is male; the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.

—John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

ON PORTRAITURE IN WESTERN ART

These reflections initiate a terse and polemical essay on the female nude in Western oil painting. Berger's general thesis of the acquisitive impulse of Western art, its lust for appropriation, is sustained by a two-pronged argument: the implicit assertion that the female form is the most desirable of all possessions, and the explicit analysis of the conventions of Western painting as subordinate to the needs and desires of a constant but forever omitted protagonist—the owner/spectator, invariably male. The bold assurance of Berger's polemic is only strengthened by his admission that "Among the hundreds of thousands of nudes which make up the tradition there are perhaps a hundred . . . exceptions" whose transcendence of the norm can be explained by the fact that the painter's subject is also the "object" of his affections—the woman (or a woman) he loves. In such cases, the painter's personal vision of the particular woman he is painting is so strong that it "makes no allowance for the spectator . . . [who is] forced to recognize himself for the

JULIANNE BURTON, who teaches Latin American literature and film at the University of California-Santa Cruz, has published widely on Latin American cinema here and abroad.

I gratefully acknowledge the comments and suggestions of the following people: B. Ruby Rich, Peter W. Rose, Josefina Ludmer, Janey Place, and Lorraine Kahn. A shorter version of this essay appears in *Film Quarterly*.

outsider he is."<sup>1</sup> The distinction is between portrait as "sight" and portrait as "experience."

Modern cinema has perpetuated the impulse towards the cataloging of enviable possessions and the concomitant iconization of the female. The history of the medium is laced with films whose ostensible impulse is the portrayal of "real" or fictional women, whatever the "hidden agenda" concealed behind the heroines' skirts. One thinks of Ophüls' opulent *Lola Montes* and von Sternberg's vindictive remake of "Carmen," *The Devil is a Woman*; of Buñuel's disturbing incarnations of skewed bourgeois morality—*Susana*, *Viridiana*, *Tristana*—or of recent efforts like the feeble *Coal Miner's Daughter* or Fassbinder's magnificent *Marriage of Maria Braun*. Cuban cinema, though barely two decades old, can lay claim to one monumental three-part example of this "woman-centered" genre: Humberto Solas' extraordinary trilogy, *Lucia*, released in 1969.

In one sense, Pastor Vega's recent *Portrait of Teresa* (1979), the most important film to emerge from Cuba in recent years, can be viewed as a sequel to Part III of *Lucia* in its resolute, even courageous depiction of the strains and contradictions of personal life in proletarian Cuba nearly two decades after the third *Lucia* acquired literacy and, with it, a sense of her own autonomy. Though Vega's film meshes with established cinematic tradition on the island and in the world at large, the explicit intentionality of the title commands closer attention.<sup>2</sup> Pastor Vega has been making documentaries since 1961.<sup>3</sup> *Portrait of Teresa* is his first feature-length film. Its director's documentary formation would lead one to conclude that he does not take a word like "portrait" lightly. The word implies a passive (or at least stationary) subject, a certain possessiveness of vision, an interpretation as well as an appropriation. It presupposes a portraitist and simultaneously implicates an undefined spectator.<sup>4</sup>

In one sense, to grasp the import of *Portrait of Teresa* is to examine precisely what kind of portrait it constitutes. (This inquiry takes on an added dimension in light of the fact that the subject of director Vega's "portrait" (Daisy Granados as Teresa) is, off-screen, his wife—and the mother of the couple's three sons, who play themselves in the film.) We are dealing with a film first and only secondarily with a film which identifies itself as a portrait. Any fictional film combines a whole complex of elements to generate meaning: the screenplay, locus of action and verbal discourse, with particular structuring characteristics of its own: shooting style, which determines how we see what we are shown; editing techniques, which structure both verbal and visual information; characterization and acting. More fluid than a depiction in poetry or prose, a static photograph or oil painting, a film "portrait" is after all a dynamized assembly of scenes and events in which the nominal subject is not always present or, if present, is not always the primary focus.

<sup>1</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 45–64.

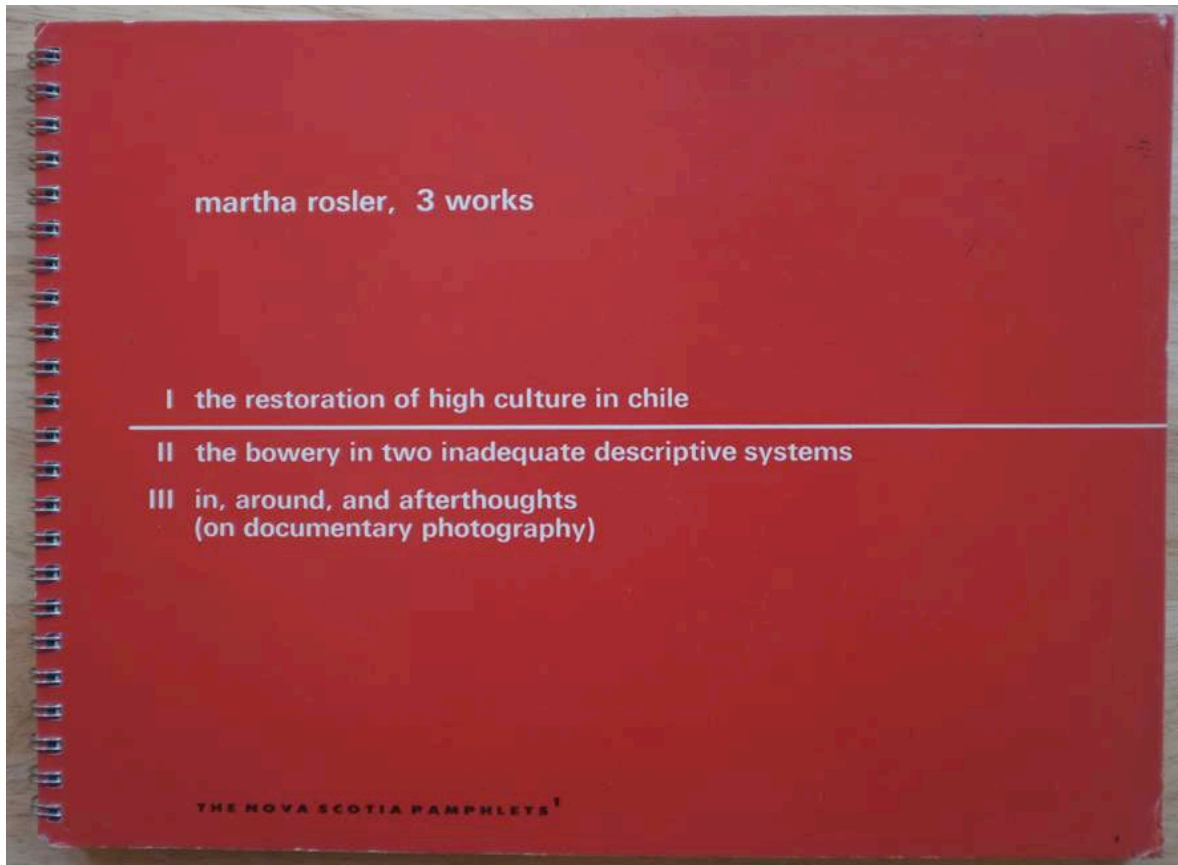
<sup>2</sup> The word "portrait" is extremely rare in film titles. A survey of several reference works turned up only three: *Portrait of Jennie*, *Portrait of Dorian Grey* (from the novel of the same name), and *Portrait of Maria* (an English translation of the Mexican title *Maria Candelaria*).

<sup>3</sup> Among the most important: *Men of the Cane Fields* (1965), *The Song of the Tourist* (1967), *Viva la Republica* (1972), and *Panama: The Fifth Frontier* (1974).

<sup>4</sup> After completing this essay, I obtained a copy of the original screen play while on a research trip to Cuba. I was surprised, and gratified, to see that the image on the cover (*Teresa*) is the only Cuban filmstrip I have seen with an illustration) was a reproduction of *Tropical Gypsy*, a famous portrait of a woman by the Cuban painter Victor Manuel, known for his portraits. The cover bears the film's title along with a subtitle: The Women of Victor Manuel.



7. "Martha Rosler, 3 works: I the restoration of high culture in chile / II the bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems / III in, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography), published by The Press of The Nova Scotia Pamphlets. Editor: Benjamin B. Buchloh



## afterword: a history

This book grew out of an invitation, in 1979, by Benjamin Buchloh, then editor of the NSCAD Press, to help open a series of short publications. Buchloh wanted to publish the photo/text work *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, which he had seen me present in slide form to the photo department at NSCAD, as well as *The Restoration of High Culture in Chile*, which I had presented at the same lecture. Revisiting the book more than 25 years after its initial publication is an odd experience; the first time around, you don't have to check the rearview mirror. I offer here some remarks about the works themselves, considering each in turn. Because of the reception of *The Bowery* and the accompanying essay, "in, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)," I devote more space to a consideration of these works.

In December of 1974, I was living in New York's East Village.<sup>1</sup> I walked down the Bowery virtually every day. New York City in 1974 was suffering a crippling fiscal crisis; the great Port of New York was shutting down, small businesses were closing or moving away, and the mostly white middle class had fled the city in large numbers. All this drove down the city's tax receipts, and services and infrastructure were not being maintained. The Bowery, at the neglected eastern edge of Chinatown and Little Italy in Lower Manhattan, was extremely decrepit, although the permanent twilight cast by the overhead transit line, the Third Avenue El, had cleared when the line was removed about twenty years earlier. The Bowery was the locale of transients and drunks (and, more recently, a few drug takers), almost exclusively male, along with the cheap bars and single-room occupancy hotels, called SROs, that served them, as well as restaurant supply stores and a cluster of fancy lamp and chandelier suppliers at the street's northern end, where it hooked into Third Avenue. I got the idea to do a photo documentary about the Bowery, but I wanted to incor-

porate a critique of documentary practices. (As my essay suggests, the area's transients, on the street at any hour, were an ever-present, highly symbolic photographic subject for tourists, art students, and nascent documentarians.)<sup>2</sup> I took the photos in a couple of days, and I assembled the lexical text, relying on library and informal research, in New York and also back in California, where I edited and printed the whole work about six months later. At that time, a significant part—but by no means all—of my work was intended to bypass art world means of exhibition and dissemination; as a result, much of it took the form of postcard works and videotapes also circulated by post. *The Bowery*, however, was intended from the start to hang on the same walls as other photographic works, and from the mid-1970s on, it was shown in museums and noncommercial galleries in California and elsewhere, and I regularly presented it in talks.

In *The Bowery*, language, in the form of photos of typewritten words and phrases, appears alongside images with equal presence, and in this context, is meant to exercise a subversive force. By the late 1960s, language per se was no longer rigorously excluded from art, as it had been for some time under high modernism. Linguistic theories had become central to artistic debates, but only as photography became of interest to artistic elites and "vanguards"—for a host of reasons—did the relation of language to the photographic image begin to be seriously considered. There had been few works, if any, in which

1. A native New Yorker, I was in the midst of a decade of living and studying in San Diego county, with a few breaks of varying length back in New York; this one lasted eight or nine months.

2. The men on the street repeatedly expressed indignation at being photographed, and on one occasion I had to flee a pursuer who imagined I was photographing him.

**Índex documentos para consultar en la *tablet***

<b>ID</b>	<b>Carpeta / Folder</b>	<b>Contiene / Contains</b>
1	afterimage_march_1985	AFTERIMAGE (magazine) – March 1985 "Reflections on Latin American Photography"
2	cuba_notebook_and_pictures	Cuba Notebook + Photos by Martha Rosler (1981)
3	afterimage_summer_1982	AFTERIMAGE (magazine) – Summer 1982 "Theses on defunding" by Martha Rosler
4	afterimage_october_1981	AFTERIMAGE (magazine) – October 1981 "Interview with Martha Rosler" by Martha Gever
5	afterimage_noviembre_1981	AFTERIMAGE (magazine) – November 1981 "Notes on Latin American Photography", by Esther Parada
6	in_these_times_chicago_meiselas_1981	In these times (magazine) – June 17-30, 1981 "A Revolution in Living Color: The Photojournalism of Susan Meiselas" by Martha Rosler
7	social_text_1981	Social Text (magazine) "Seeing, Being, Being Seen: Portrait of Teresa, or Contradictions of Sexual Politics in Contemporary Cuba" by Julianne Burton
8	3_works	"Martha Rosler, 3 works: I the restoration of high culture in chile / II the bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems / III in, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography), published by The Press of The Nova Scotia Pamphlets. Editor: Benjamin B. Buchloh
9	coloquio_latinomaericano_de_fotografia	Documentation from the II Coloquio Latinoamericano de Fotografía
10	wedge	Wedge (magazine) – Fall 1982
11	joaquin_blez	"Retratos de los años 20 a 40 en Cuba" by Joaquin Blez + "Disparos de una cámara" Fotografías de los años cincuenta en Cuba by Constantino Arias
12	the_nation_february_1981	The Nation (magazine), February, 14, 1981
13	the_nation_march_1981	"El Salvador, the Roots of intervention", The Nation (magazine), March, 1981
14	the_nation_january_1984	"Special Issue: Central America", The Nation (magazine), January, 1984
15	a_decade_of_cuban_documentary_film_1982	"A decade of Cuban Documentary Film. Young filmmakers foundation, new York cooperation with the Cuban film institute, Havana, cuba (1972-1982)".
16	Economic_situation_mexico_1975	"Review of the economic situation of Mexico", Banco Nacional de México S.A. Volume LI, number 591, February 1975
17	nacla_abril_may_1986	nacla, report on the Americas (magazine), April/May 1986 "The Real War, Low Intensity Conflict in Central America"
18	nacla_enemy_of_convenience	nacla, report on the Americas (magazine), number 3 "Enemy of convenience, The United States vs. Cuba"
19	gallery_jun_1982	Gallery (magazine), June 1982 "Our man in El Salvador"
20	tiempo_abril_1981	TIEMPO (magazine), 27 de Abril de 1981 "Ser indocumentado en los EE UU"
21	service_a_trilogy_on_colonization_1978	Martha Rosler: "Service, A trilogy on colonization", Printed Matter, NY, 1978
22	socialist_review_n59	Socialist Review: "Recreating Socialism: Nicaragua, Poland and Building Classless Societies" n59
23	upfront_december_january_1981	"Upfront" (magazine), January 1981
24	fem_num_17	fem (magazine), volumen V No.17 "Alaide Foppa: El feminismo y la izquierda"
25	sobre_la_fotografia_cubana_marucha	Maria Eugenia Haya (Marucha): "Sobre la fotografía cubana" Revolución y cultura (magazine), Mayo 1980
26	community_murals	"Community Mural", Fall 1981
27	aperture	Letters between Martha Rosler and the editors of Aperture (magazine)
28	unomasuno	Adriana Malvido: "Homenaje a Alaide Foppa en el Coloquio Fotográfico" unomasuno (newspaper), April 26, 1981
29	american_photographer	"Letter from Mexico City", by Katya Mandok American Photographer, Nov, 1980
30	lleter_sara_facio	"Letter from Sara Facio to Pedro Meyer", 29 abril, 1981
31	lletter_esther_parada	"Letter from Esther Parada to Martha Rosler, 8/17/1981
32	esther_parada_coloquio	Esther Parada, text about The Coloquio Latinoamericano de Fotografía
33	rosler_la_fotografia_como_instrumento_de_lucha	Martha Rosler: "La fotografía como instrumento de lucha"



34	rosler_list_of_themes_mexico	Martha Rosler: list of themes to do at Mexico city
35	rosler_cuba_foto_slideshow	Martha Rosler: "Cuba series (1981), slideshow"

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