

May 4, 2017

Media only: Laura Baptiste (202) 633-8494; baptistel@si.edu
Media website: americanart.si.edu/pr
Media preview: [Thursday, May 11](#); 11 a.m.

Fact Sheet

“Down These Mean Streets: Community and Place in Urban Photography”

Exhibition

“Down These Mean Streets: Community and Place in Urban Photography”

May 12 – Aug. 6

Where

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Eighth and F streets N.W.

Description

America’s urban streets have long inspired documentary photographers. “Down These Mean Streets: Community and Place in Urban Photography” explores the work of 10 photographers—[Manuel Acevedo](#), [Oscar Castillo](#), [Frank Espada](#), [Anthony Hernandez](#), [Perla de Leon](#), [Hiram Maristany](#), [Ruben Ochoa](#), [John Valadez](#), [Winston Vargas](#) and [Camilo José Vergara](#)—who were driven to document and reflect on the transformation of American cities beginning in the 1950s. The title of the exhibition is drawn from Piri Thomas’ classic memoir *Down These Mean Streets* (1967), where the author narrates his upbringing in New York City’s El Barrio. Like Thomas, these photographers turn a critical eye toward neighborhoods that exist on the margins of major cities such as New York and Los Angeles. The exhibition is drawn entirely from the museum’s collection and showcases many new acquisitions by Latino artists. It offers a chance to see how these photographers responded to the urban crisis in the communities where they lived and worked. The exhibition is organized by E. Carmen Ramos, deputy chief curator and curator of Latino art.

Opening Program – Poetry Reading

Friday, May 12, at 6:30 p.m., award-winning poets Martín Espada, Naomi Ayala and Sami Miranda read poems inspired by photographs featured in the exhibition. Information about other exhibition-related public programs is online at americanart.si.edu/calendar.

Credit

The Latino Initiatives Pool of the Smithsonian Latino Center provided generous support for the new acquisitions featured in this exhibition. The Bernie Stadiem Endowment Fund supports the installation and programs.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is located at Eighth and F streets N.W., above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Museum hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free. Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000. Follow the museum on [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Tumblr](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#), [Pinterest](#), iTunes U and [ArtBabble](#). Website: americanart.si.edu.

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