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**Modernist Photography in Mexico**

Modernist photography in Mexico, as in other countries in Latin America, has had several facets: at points it has been a tool in creating an idealised image of the country, at others a key resource for discourses of nationalism, and finally an art form. **Manuel Álvarez Bravo** and the generation of artists including Nacho López, and Hector García which gathered around him and were the founders of modernist photography in Mexico. A concern with social issues together with formal ideals are key aspects of Álvarez Bravo’s work. The legacy of photojournalism is also important, as is the influence of foreign modernists such as **Edward Weston** and **Tina Modotti**. Nationalism, another central aspect of modernist art manifestations in the region, is prominent. Both in the *porfiriato* period (the years of government of Porfírio Díaz) and during the revolutionary and post revolutionary years, photography was an important tool both of political propaganda and movements of resistance, as manifested in the socially critical work of Nacho López and Héctor García. The influence of López, García, and Álvarez Bravo, as well as Modotti and Weston have had a long lasting impact on Mexican photography until today.

In the 1910s documentary photography, which for many decades had constructed an idealistic image of Díaz’s government, became an instrument of opposition registering the shortcomings of this period. The end of the *porfiriato* period and the subsequent revolutionary years were extensively documented by Mexican and foreign photographers alike. Aside from propagandistic images, documentary photography, which revealed the violence of this conflict, can be considered a precursor to the war photography that developed later in Europe.

The contact between the Mexican muralists and leading photographers, both Mexicans and foreign, deeply influenced modern Mexican photography and led to its focus on social and political questions. The post-revolutionary period with its promises of a new social, economic, and cultural regime attracted important foreign photographers to Mexico, among them Edward Weston and his young Italian apprentice Tina Modotti. They brought a new approach to photography with aesthetic concerns embedded in pictorial canons. Weston’s straight photography with abstract veins greatly influenced the production in Mexico, as did the social photography of Modotti, who found in the country the inspiration to develop a personal style. These precursors opened the way for photo-artists like **Manuel Álvarez Bravo** and **Lola Álvarez Bravo,** who took notes not only from photojournalism, but also European avant-garde movements such as **Surrealism** and **Constructivism**. Their social preoccupations and their photojournalistic production were matched by aesthetic and graphic concerns as the 1930s and 1940s saw the apse of the illustrated magazines. While the production during these early decades was marked by a caustic humor and heavy political critique, the 1950s saw an institutionalization of these spaces and their clear affiliations with specific ideologies. Nacho López and Héctor García were the heirs of the scathing photojournalistic style of post-revolutionary Mexico and carried its premises well into the 1970s.

**References and Further Reading:**

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