



# Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity (e-Duke books scholarly collection.)

*John Mraz*

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In *Looking for Mexico*, a leading historian of visual culture, John Mraz, provides a panoramic view of Mexico's modern visual culture from the U.S. invasion of 1847 to the present. Along the way, he illuminates the powerful role of photographs, films, illustrated magazines, and image-filled history books in the construction of national identity, showing how Mexicans have both made themselves and been made with the webs of significance spun by modern media. Central to Mraz's book is photography, which was distributed widely throughout Mexico in the form of *cartes-de-visite*, postcards, and illustrated magazines. Mraz analyzes the work of a broad range of photographers, including Guillermo Kahlo, Winfield Scott, Hugo Brehme, Agustín Víctor Casasola, Tina Modotti, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Héctor García, Pedro Meyer, and the New Photojournalists. He also examines representations of Mexico's past in the country's influential picture histories: popular, large-format, multivolume series replete with thousands of photographs and an assortment of texts.

Turning to film, Mraz compares portrayals of the Mexican Revolution by Fernando de Fuentes to the later movies of Emilio Fernández and Gabriel Figueroa. He considers major stars of Golden Age cinema as gender archetypes for *mexicanidad*, juxtaposing the *charros* (hacienda cowboys) embodied by Pedro Infante, Pedro Armendáriz, and Jorge Negrete with the effacing women: the mother, Indian, and shrew as played by Sara García, Dolores del Río, and María Félix. Mraz also analyzes the leading comedians of the Mexican screen, representations of the 1968 student revolt, and depictions of Frida Kahlo in films made by Paul Leduc and Julie Taymor. Filled with more than fifty illustrations, *Looking for Mexico* is an exuberant plunge into Mexico's national identity, its visual culture, and the connections between the two.

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