

The New York Times: ‘ A Century of Latin American Photography, in Paris’, by Sarah Moroz, February 6th, 2012

A Century of Latin American Photography, in Paris

By SARAH MOROZ



Barbara Brändli, Sistema Nervioso, 1975 — Caracas

Sifting through the archives of 19 Latin American countries is a daunting task. Yet a committee of artists and scholars did just that, in order to remedy the critical lack of knowledge about Latin American photography. The outcome of this extensive research is [FOTO/GRÁFICA](#), an exhibition at [Le Bal](#) in Paris (through April 8 at 6 Impasse de la Défense; 33-1-44-70-75-56).

The exhibition surveys a century of Latin American history through photography books, spotlighting forgotten works as well as those that never made it beyond limited circles. The director of Le Bal, Diane Dufour, described the complex task of unearthing the books without systematic cultural records: each was as much a material get as a historical discovery. The findings were then narrowed down according to various criteria, including image quality, printing quality, layout.

The result is a dense assortment of rare books, montages and vintage prints published between 1921 and 2012. The walls brim with images, forming a mosaic-mélange. Six overarching themes — like “history and propaganda” and “urban photography” — contextualize the work. Enrique Bostelmann’s “America, un viaje a través de la injusticia” (1970) looks at social hardships via candid black-and-white portraits of peasants. Eduardo Terrazas’s “Sin saber que existías y sin poderte explicar” (1975) turns mundane commercial objects (buttons, corsets, pasta) into compelling graphics. Photography is also partnered with text, notably in Daniel Vittel’s

deconstructed/reconstructed photographs flanking text by the Chilean poet Nicanor Parra like a Surrealist flipbook.