

Visita Kennedy, Avenida 20 Noviembre, Héctor García

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Héctor García
Mexican, Mexico City,
1962
Gelatin silver print
8 x 9 7/8 in.
98.XM.147.2

A motorcade carrying President John F. Kennedy through Mexico City was a newsworthy event of social and political significance and thus a natural subject for the photojournalist Héctor García. In this image, García captured the festive mood of a tickertape parade along Avenida 20 Noviembre during Kennedy's 1962 visit to Mexico. Kennedy made this trip to promote the Alliance for Progress, a plan for developing the economies of Latin American nations and to prevent the spread of communism in Latin America.



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Although the scene appears jubilant, Mexico's government had imprisoned many political dissidents during Kennedy's visit to prevent protests. Mexico's president had thousands of anti-communist activists line the parade route to cheer Kennedy's arrival. García's interest in events of political significance arose from his desire to portray social injustice and the plight of the urban poor. In this case, he shows their disenfranchisement and exclusion from the political process. García has spent much of his life working as a photojournalist for Mexican and international publications, making documentary images with an eye for social content.

About the Artist

Héctor García (Mexican, b. 1923)

"What I've done practically all my life is to be a witness and to make graphic testimonies of the movements and struggles of the social classes in Mexico. This continues to be the most important motive I have to do photography." —Héctor García

Héctor García's interest in photography grew out of his sense of social consciousness. Born and raised in an impoverished district of Mexico City, García first began taking pictures in the 1930s to illustrate protests by working-class people in which he was a participant. In an effort to inform

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others of this personal and political struggle, he organized a newspaper and used his photographs of student marches and related social events as illustrations.

García then spent time traveling around northern Mexico and the eastern United States. He returned to Mexico in 1946 and began formally studying filmmaking and documentary photography. Social criticism continued to characterize his images. After working as a photojournalist for Mexican and international publications, he became involved with filmmaking and has since earned prestigious awards for his various endeavors in cinematography.

Questions for Teaching

Using as many details as possible, describe what you see in this image. (This image is rich in details. It shows President John F. Kennedy being driven down a street in a motorcade. Escorts ride in front of Kennedy on motorcycles, and at least one car continues the motorcade behind Kennedy's vehicle. The street is bordered by crowds of people, who appear to be celebrating, and by tall buildings behind them. More people can be seen in the windows of the building, throwing confetti down into the street below. Flags carried by the crowd form a row across the center of the image.)

What reactions do you think García wanted to evoke with this image? (In this image García captures the jubilant spirit of the parade, as well as the hopefulness associated with Kennedy's presidency. Smiling, Kennedy himself gazes up at the celebrants. His expression seems to reflect the feelings of all of the participants in the joyous parade. It is also interesting to consider this image from the point of view of the political dissidents who were imprisoned during Kennedy's visit. Since they were excluded from participating in marches, their political viewpoints are not expressed in the image. Thus, the jubilant atmosphere only captures the emotions of the wealthy and politically powerful.)

This image expresses many strong formal qualities. Which of the elements and principles of art are most strongly represented here? (*Shape* and *repetition* are strongly represented in this image. The repetition of triangular-shaped flags divides the image in half. The top half of the image is occupied by the geometric architectural shapes of the buildings, and the bottom half by Kennedy and his motorcade. Shape and repetition are also evident in the top half of the image, in the rectangular windows of the neighboring buildings.)