

and depopulation would, according to Meza, "help us to recapture the source of our identity and personal history."

The images which Fernando Meza has produced in the following pages show the decline of rural communities and the subtle devastation produced by mechanized cultivation in northern Mexico. This was once an area rich in the culture of family farms. The hallmarks of the resulting desolation are silence, emptiness, rust, and a fine powder of dust which covers the unirrigated landscape. This is a desolation where even the time of sorrow is in danger of being forgotten. It is the devastation of industrialized agriculture, to be seen as well in the fields of Iowa, Kansas, and California. Of course, it exists as well across the border of the Rio Bravo del Norte in southern Texas.

These are the images that must be preserved when no one remains in the border country to weep or remember. They are the images offered to us by Fernando Meza to enable us to understand the human cost of modernization and mechanization. They begin with an old man gingerly walking with his cane across the sleepers of a railroad bridge. Undoubtedly, the railroad runs no more, but we are invited to walk back across to a fertile but desolate landscape of furrows made by huge air conditioned tractors with patches of rusting windmills, farm machinery, country stores, and homes long ago abandoned to progress. The selection ends with the abrupt U. S. Customs station in Pharr, Texas, a butterfly decorated symbol of the U. S.-Mexico border-as-wall.

40 AÑOS DESPUÉS. To the photographer this stark but elegant ruin is a study in sadness. The cotton exchange store of his memory was a place where cotton farmers no doubt sat and talked, their trucks parked around the building and their children waiting quietly

and listening to the talk of older men. The parking area is overgrown now with trees and shrubs, most of the roof is long gone, and no voices have been heard here for many years. The new agricultural machines have plowed virtually to the old front entrance, and the drivers of the modern tractors take no notice of this old community gathering place.

PARCELA DE LA DESOLACIÓN INDUSTRIAL. Row after row of shadowed, endless furrows greet the viewer here. A land of vast sameness has replaced the small farms which existed in the area only a few decades before. The border country here is fertile but barren, devoid of human presence.

MAÍZ CORPORATIVO. The deterioration of houses and communities is masked here by the lush green sameness of bioengineered corn in immaculate industrial rows. Millions of genetically identical plants are carefully tended by massive machines, while the machinery and the abandoned trucks of the old family farm system rust nearby. A bountiful harvest is ensured, in a land free of insect pests and human beings.

SED-BLUES. The parched landscape of unirrigated land in northern Mexico, this "blues visual" includes an anonymous witness. The stark contrasts of the fissures in the soil are heightened in the black and white image and a delicate touch is offered by the addition of a small twig-in color. It is the artist's touch of hyper-reality.

CIELO ABIERTO. A Mexican Stonehenge. Tall thin concrete pillars stand against the sky. The abandonment here is complete, and much of the original structure has been carried off-perhaps to be recycled for ever larger sheds, housing the modern industrial machines which till the irrigated fields of the border country. Mute against the sky, this ruin is already architectural antiquity.