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Focus on Mexico: the Nahua civilization.

Words and photographs: Mara Sánchez Renero

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The Nahuatl word *tlapializtli* refers to the act of keeping or preserving something. This concept reminds us that the Nahua civilization possessed both a cultural and a spiritual legacy; as the bearers of this heritage, they had to persevere in order to strengthen the most important elements of their existence.



In the wayward Mexico of today, where sociopolitical instability has prompted society to lose contact with its roots, heritage, and territory, **Veracruz** is one of many places where Mexican citizens face injustice on a daily basis. In hopes of bringing viewers' eyes and attention to its reality, I have chosen to situate myself and my project in this part of Mexico.



In the Nahuatl language, *iluikak* means “in the sky.” The Zongolica mountain range in Veracruz is characterized by its high altitude, and clouds are an essential part of its imaginary. The Nahua community living in the sierra is primarily dedicated to agriculture and the practice of religious customs, in which ancestral traditions that keep the connected to nature remain an important part of their particular identity.



In settings constructed from the shadows, geography, and states of concealment, the intention was to photograph the sierra and its inhabitants, using different light source: create a point of clarity and focus within an uncertain environment. Mara work with light to trace and depict a certain symbology, one that produces a new way of perceiv character.



iluikak is an attempt to breach the conventions of an assumed identity. It is only at the limits of both the evident and the concealed—in isolating men and women from their everyday contexts and instead portraying them within the space of their imaginations, the space of their mythical existence—that everyone can witness the dissolution of constructed identity and thus confront the true uncertainty of **human nature**.



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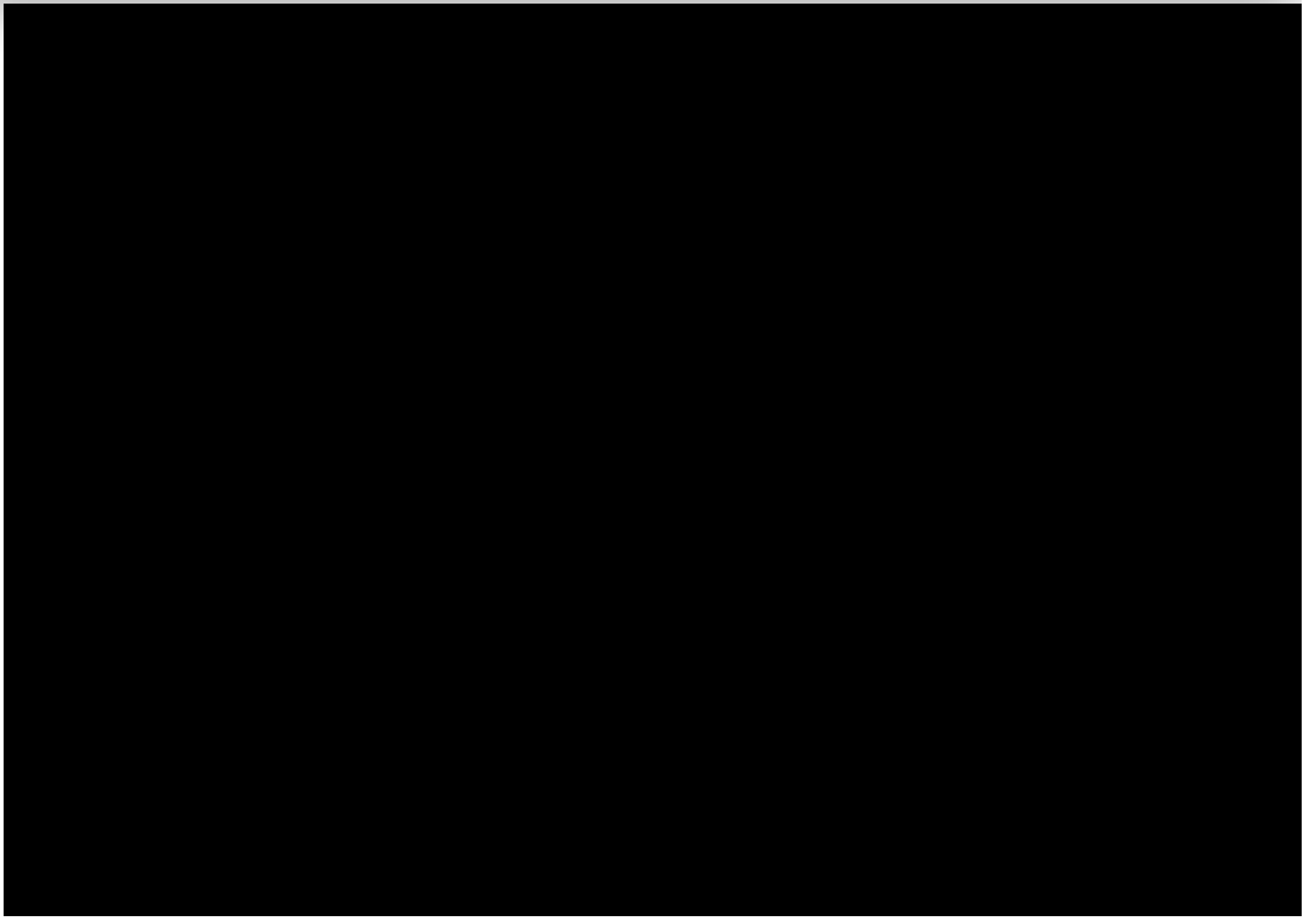
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**About the author:**

Mara Sánchez Renero (Mexico) studied photography in Barcelona, Spain. Her work has been rewarded and exhibited in: Spain, France, Switzerland, India, Cuba, Haiti, Panama, Argentina, and Mexico. She received the 1st place of the POY Latam 2015 and the SAIF photographer revelation award, at the Voies Off festival in Arles, France. Currently, she has received the grant from Sistema Nacional de Creadores de México (SNCA 2018-2020). She has participated in different fairs: Basel Photo (2017), Zon Foto (2016, 2017, 2018) Material Fair (2017,2019) and San Francisco Photo (2018). She currently lives and works in México.

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