



## Hugo Brehme's Mexico

*A solo exhibition with one of the first influential Modern photographers working in Mexico during the early 20th Century.*

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hugo Brehme" with "MEXICO D.F." written below it.



Hugo Brehme, *Popocatepetl, Mexico, c. 1920*, 11 x 15", gelatin silver print.

### **Opening Weekend:**

Friday, November 27 & Saturday, November 28, 2020

Public hours: 11-5pm with Covid-safe guidelines and capacity.

*Exhibition is on view November 27, 2020 – January 9, 2021*

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Obscura Gallery is excited to debut a solo exhibition by Hugo Brehme, one of the earliest Modern photographers working in Mexico in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This photographic exhibition will include photographs and postcards focused on iconic Mexican subjects including scenic landscapes, colonial architecture, and the everyday life of indigenous peoples. Complementing the work of Hugo Brehme, we will also have a small selection of work by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, a prominent Modern Mexican photographer heavily influenced by Brehme, as well as Mexican photographer Manuel Carrillo who resonated his predecessor in the beauty and authenticity of photographing his culture in the mid to later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



Hugo Brehme, *Tepotzotlan, Mexico*, c. 1920, 13.25 x 10.25", gelatin silver print.

Hugo Brehme was born in Eisenach, Germany in 1882. In his twenties, he developed an artistic eye trained by his photographic studies in Erfert, Germany which he completed in 1902. He then opened his own studio and made many expeditions to Africa with his photographic equipment. After making an expedition to Mexico in 1906, he arrived again in 1908 with his newly wedded wife, bringing along his photographic equipment with him.



Hugo Brehme, *Taxco, Mexico*, c. 1920's, 13.25 x 10.25", gelatin silver print.

Brehme established a photographic studio, "Fotografía Artística Hugo Brehme," in Mexico City as early as 1910 where he sold cameras, books, and postcards and led his business to survive, even during the Mexican Revolution. Recognition of Brehme as one of Mexico's outstanding photographers came primarily through the thousands of small black and white photographs he printed as postcards which he took while roaming Mexico for nearly 40 years, sustaining Brehme's studio financially throughout his long career. At that time, postcards were the 2<sup>nd</sup> most popular hobby next to stamp collecting and generated a wide interest. He experimented with Leica 35 mm slide film when it first came out in the 1920's but he mostly only used color in his photographs by hand coloring with paints and ink. Brehme's son Arno, born in 1914, eventually worked in his Father's studio as a photographer and printer, and many of the hand colored prints of Brehme's were tinted by Arno. Most of Brehme's larger black and white prints were direct contact prints from the negatives, which he created while traveling around Mexico with his hired guides and mules to haul his 5x7 and 8x10" camera equipment.



Hugo Brehme (possibly attributed to Arno Brehme), *El Parícutin, Mexico, 1943*, 6.25 x 4.75", Hand colored gelatin silver print.

Hugo Brehme passionately photographed the people and culture of Mexico, and with that same passion also photographed the landscape as he was an avid hiker and nature connoisseur. Many of his prints contrast the natural landscape with Mexican plants such as agave and other cacti, as well as other elements of nature such as animals and volcanoes. His training in Germany as a technical photographer gave him the ability to create beautiful negatives and prints, and he executed an elegance in his work both in composition and tonal quality. He attributed his style to the influence of the Romanticism movement specifically in artists such as Casper David Friedrich, a 19th-century German Romantic landscape painter who was considered the most important German artist of his generation.



Hugo Brehme, *Popocatepetl, Mexico, c. 1920*, 10.25 x 13.25", Hand colored gelatin silver print.



Hugo Brehme, *Pico de Orizaba, Mexico, c. 1920*, 12.75 x 17.5", Hand colored gelatin silver print.



Hugo Brehme, *Amecameca, Mexico, c. 1910-20*, 13 x 10.25", Hand colored gelatin silver print.

Brehme's early photographs were documentary in style, and included views of the Mexican Revolution that have served as source material for various 20th century Mexican artists. Brehme is considered one of the founders of Mexican Pictorialist and Modernist photography and went on to influence photographers and cinematographers as well, among the many, one being the well-known Modernist Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo. The two met in 1923 and Bravo bought his first camera from Brehme in 1924, and looked up to Brehme as a mentor. It was in Brehme's second studio that Manuel Alvarez Bravo worked and learned the fundamentals of photography, including making the postcards that sustained Brehme's studio financially. Brehme's grandson has spoken of the influence he had on 20<sup>th</sup> Century cinematographers Gabriel Figaroa, the Mexican cinematographer who worked both in Mexican and Hollywood cinema, as well as John Houston who was an American film director, screenwriter, actor, and visual artist.



Manuel Alvarez Bravo, *Sand and Small Pines (Arena y Pinitos), Mexico, c.1920's*, Printed 1977, 6.57 x 9.48", gelatin silver print.



Manuel Alvarez Bravo, *Cruce de Chalma, Mexico, 1942*, 9.25 x 6.5", gelatin silver print.



Hugo Brehme, *Churubusco, Mexico, c. 1920*, 9.25 x 13.25", gelatin silver print.



Manuel Carrillo, *Untitled*, c. 1960's, 9.5 x 3.25", gelatin silver print



Manuel Carrillo, *Untitled*, c. 1960-70's, 9.5 x 3.25", gelatin silver print

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Hugo Brehme, *Laso de Chapala, Taxco, Mexico*, 13.25 x 10.5", gelatin silver print

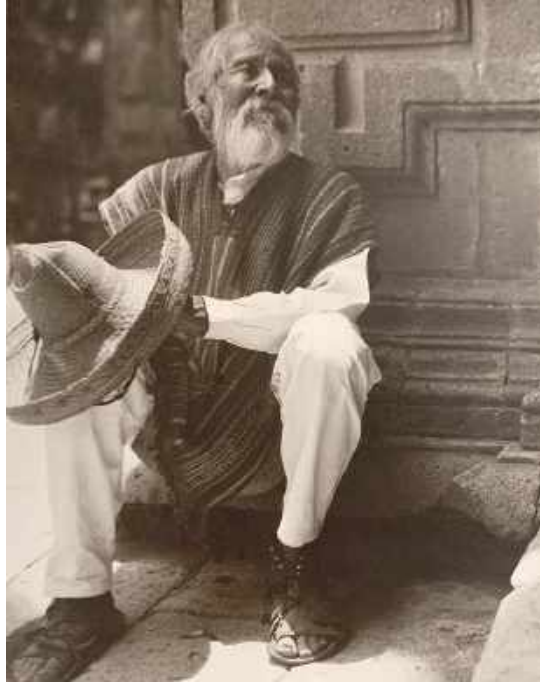
After the Mexican Revolution, Brehme turned to pictorialism, making impressionistic views of the Mexican landscape and inhabitants. These photographs, taken as he wandered with cumbersome equipment through remote, often mountainous regions, were highly acclaimed when published in his collection *México Pintoresco* (1923). He photographed traditional rural Mexico, scenic landscapes, railways, modern monuments and archeological sites, many of which were used for tourist guides and magazines, and he produced a large number of photos postcards which were very popular amongst collectors at that time which was a similar type of hobby to modern day stamp collecting. Brehme continued to publish photographs in magazines such as *National Geographic* and *Mapa*, and in various books about Mexican culture and geography. He became a Mexican citizen shortly before his death in 1954.



Hugo Brehme, *Popocatepetl, Mexico*, c.1920, 13.24 x 10.25", gelatin silver print.

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Hugo Brehme, *Viegito de Taxco, Mexico, c.1910*, 13 x 9", gelatin silver print.



Hugo Brehme, *Pescado de Acapulco, Mexico, c.1920's*, 6.25 x 4.75", gelatin silver print.



Hugo Brehme, *Cuernavaca, Mexico, c.1910*, 13.25 x 10.5", gelatin silver print.

In 2003, Brehme's photo collection in the Fototeca Nacional in Pachuca/Hidalgo (Mexico) was included into the UNESCO program "Memory of the World." In 2012, The Wittliff Collections at Texas State University held an exhibition of 120 photographs which were donated by Susan Toomey Frost in 2009. The Southwestern & Mexican Photography Book Series with UT Press published the catalogue of the exhibition, *Timeless Mexico: The Photographs of Hugo Brehme*. Other books including the photographs of Hugo Brehme include: *Hugo Brehme: Los prototipos mexicanistas*. Special Issue, *Alquimia*, no. 16 (2002–2003); *Hugo Brehme and the Mexican Revolution* (German); *Picturesque Mexico*; and *Una Nacion Persistente-Hugo Brehme, Fotografias*.



Hugo Brehme, *Taxco, Parroquia, Mexico, c.1920's*, 13.25 x 10.5", gelatin silver print.

### **THE GALLERY LOCATION AND HOURS**

Obscura Gallery is located in the Santa Fe downtown historic district two blocks east of the revitalized Downtown Railyard district. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is advisable to confirm gallery hours by checking the website.

Parking is limited. Additional parking is available Monday – Friday from 8:00am – 9:00pm at the State Capitol Parking Facility municipal garage located at 485 Galisteo Street and on weekends metered parking always available on Galisteo street next to the Parking Facility.

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**For more information and high resolution images please contact:**

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