



Photopoetics at Tlatelolco: Afterimages of Mexico, 1968 (Border Hispanisms)

Samuel Steinberg

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In the months leading up to the 1968 Olympic games in Mexico City, students took to the streets, calling for greater democratization and decrying crackdowns on political resistance by the ruling PRI party. During a mass meeting held at the Plaza of the Three Cultures in the Tlatelolco neighborhood, paramilitary forces opened fire on the gathering. The death toll from the massacre remains a contested number, ranging from an official count in the dozens to estimates in the hundreds by journalists and scholars. Rereading the legacy of this tragedy through diverse artistic-political interventions across the decades, *Photopoetics at Tlatelolco* explores the state's dual repression—both the massacre's crushing effects on the movement and the manipulation of cultural discourse and political thought in the aftermath.

Examining artifacts ranging from documentary photography and testimony to poetry, essays, chronicles, cinema, literary texts, video, and performance, Samuel Steinberg considers the broad photographic and photopoetic nature of modern witnessing as well as the specific elements of light (gunfire, flares, camera flashes) that ultimately defined the massacre. Steinberg also demonstrates the ways in which the labels of “massacre” and “sacrifice” inform contemporary perceptions of the state's blatant and violent repression of unrest. With implications for similar processes throughout the rest of Latin America from the 1960s to the present day, *Photopoetics at Tlatelolco* provides a powerful new model for understanding the intersection of political history and cultural memory.

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