

Capturing curves one flash at a time!



While growing up, Shirley Miranda-Rodriguez always wanted to be an artist. She often experimented with different media, while being highly active in community organizing during mid to late 1990's. She fell in love with photography and every aspect that evolves around the trade. The concept of drawing with light and pausing time, behind the lens became her true passion.

I first came across Shirley's work by an email highlighting her exhibit entitled, "LatiNatural". Where she photographed nearly 120 Latinas who were born and raised in the U.S. This exhibit accents the great form, art, culture and savor of the day-to-day Mija. From her eyes to ours LatiNatural's

art signifies power, pride and for goodness sake, SELF-ESTEEM! (Which all we Mijas need.) "I learned I could use my gift for making people feel comfortable in front of the camera with my desire to convey a message and with that create art that could create change." said Shirley.

Shirley feels there is something amazing about being able to capture a particular moment and photography is key in accomplishing that. "Photography allows me to explain without words. It brings to life the art I visualize, but could never draw and the poems that I haven't found the words to properly express." said Shirley. Many of her collections ultimately focus on; in her words, "challenging perception" as a result of how people feel around themselves. Another collection that is what I classify as a "toned down, colorful version" of "LatiNatural" is Shirley's "Celestial - *A visual exploration of the body as a celestial entity.*" is a series of abstract landscapes from women's bodies. "One of the most beautiful comments I ever heard from someone who admired the collection is that it was able to successfully take what we see as imperfections in the human body and instead create something elegant and divine that uplifts women by showing a somewhat spiritual aspect to their sexuality." said Shirley. If you didn't believe Mijas had curves, then Celestial will prove you wrong a million times over! This particular collection is as curvy as my hand writing when I was three years old. You can see what I mean by going to <http://www.somosarte.com/portfolio/2.html>.

There was one Latina that inspired Shirley, "I remember when I was around 14 years old and I first saw Patricia Velasquez on the cover of an American magazine. It impacted me so much to see a Latina who had my skin color in such a prominent place. While growing up, Latinas who were seen as beautiful in the public eye were few and even less of them looked like me or like my friends. I believe that when there isn't a place for you, you need to make it. With my art, I want to make a place for us where we aren't simply seen as sex objects, but respected for the beauty, complexity and diversity we contribute to the world." Amongst Patricia being an inspiration her 15 month old son is her true inspiration. She worked a good part of LatiNatural while she was five months pregnant with him.

Shirley is currently the co-founder and partner of **Somos Arte**, a small imaging firm based in New York City, with services ranging from web & print design, art, photography, special event coordination to consultations. The firm was started four years ago to help others bring their ideas to life in a creative way. Her assignments vary from coordinating a gallery exhibit for an artist, laying out a book for an author or designing a website for festivals. Shirley is currently looking for models for a few projects that she has in mind.

And now Mijas the two golden questions:

Shirley, tell us one mistake that you wouldn't want anyone in the world to recreate.

“I have learned with time that collaborations are wonderful. I used to try to do every aspect of a shoot myself and now work with a fabulous team. In life we need to realize that we don’t have to do it all alone.”

Tell us some words of wisdom for any Mijas’ that would like to follow in your footsteps.

“There is something so magical about conceiving an idea and having the opportunity to bring it to life. Think about how in your heart you see the world and how you would want to deliver it to your own children. We can’t change everything we would want to, but it’s worth it to try to add one beautiful aspect at a time.”

I came up with three, one word, words while viewing Shirley’s collections, unique, empowering, and imaginative. Yes, some of her work may pause a few hearts from beating, but it will only be for a few seconds. Does her work pump me up with so much self-esteem that I will want the world to see me naked? Well I guess you will have to check the news for that story, huh? Ha.

For more information on **Somos Arte** please visit: www.somosarte.com

Written by: Roberta M. Rosa