

An ongoing Diary

By **Pedro Meyer**
Day 23



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This was a day of looking out of windows and at destiny.

First it was the airplane window as we are looking out towards the Iztacihuatl and the Popocatepetl en route to New York, the two large looming volcanoes next to Mexico City, of which one, the Popocatepetl, known in popular jargon as "El Popo", has been in eruption off and on for the past years, causing havoc among the inhabitants living close by. Not too long ago ashes from this volcano's eruptions landed all over Mexico City.

What a wonderful landscape. Looking out the window, it all looks so placid and sedate, when in fact it can be quite devastating especially in these times of global warming.

Looking out of the window I thought about the fragility of it all, the airplane from which I was shooting the image, held up in the air by speed and aerodynamics, but which could go wrong at any minute, and the volcano, ready to erupt and create havoc for hundreds of thousands of people in just a few minutes of activity. We are always at the mercy of powers beyond our personal control with personal destiny being so much part of where you are at any given moment in time.



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The next image taken looking out the window is that of the taxi as we crossed the Lincoln Tunnel which took us from the airport in Newark, New Jersey, towards Manhattan.

In the past when I wanted to create images such as this one, it was a matter of luck. You would take many images, hoping to have captured something interesting visually. There is no way you can actually see what you are doing when using film based cameras, so hope was a great part of the equation.

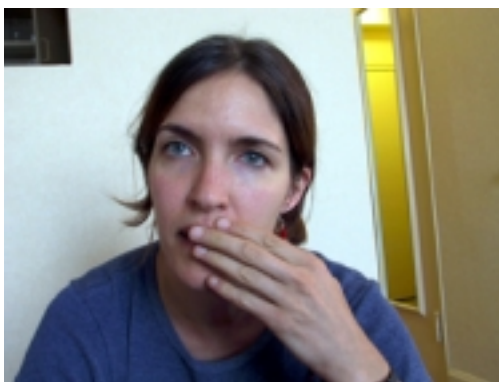
Today, with digital cameras, you can obviously not see either at the moment of taking the picture, but instead of having to wait days to get the needed feedback, it happens right then and there. Therefore you can fine tune, and adjust everything to get so much closer to your intended effect. While sitting there in the taxi, I would take a picture, look at the image just made, and continue with all the adjustments until the aperture, speed, and my movement (or lack thereof) might deliver the desired results.



The following window is from our hotel room, overlooking the Empire State Building. Those dirt marks on the glass of the window, apparently deliver to us the sensation of precisely that; you are looking out a window. I could have easily removed those stains in Photoshop, and that is the interesting part of digital photography as we now have to make choices about such issues. In the past such marks were just there, and that would be the end of it. Now when you can delete or leave them, it starts to become an interesting as an issue of choice and not just the limitations of the medium.

The first time I saw the Empire State building was right after the war, in 1948. The flight we took from Mexico City was in a propeller driven plane. In those days, one would dress up to go on a plane. My mother would wear a very elegant hat with a beaded net veil which hovered in front of her face, even I had to wear a tie and I was twelve. For years I kept the little bar of soap from American Airlines with the double AA, which for some reason impressed me very much.

We met up in New York with some cousins, and for the occasion I was given something quite unique at the time, a Nylon shirt. Nylon was a special commodity during the war years, so when clothing made out of Nylon became available that was the thing to have. It was in the summer, like it is right now, and very hot, and if you are wearing a Nylon shirt, especially those that were made then, which did not "breathe", you were actually sitting inside of a green house. I still remember sitting in restaurants with my nylon shirt, a tie, and with sweat rolling down my chest as if I was on some weight reduction program, but Oh did I feel elegant ! I wouldn't have traded what was going on, at that time, for anything in the world. I thought I was the "coolest" cat in town (no pun intended). I would wash my shirt each day and have it ready to wear in less than an hour, something quite magical, that Dupont Nylon stuff really made one feel "modern".



Trisha my wife and Julio, went off to buy some juices for Julio at a near by store, as luck would have it, as they were buying these things, someone in store overheard Trisha call Julio, and that someone turned out to be Julie, who had been working with us in ZoneZero in Mexico as a translator. She had left about a year and half ago, to come to live in New York to dance. Today in New York she is earning her livelihood also as a translator while dedicating her time to her passion which is dancing. What was so moving for all of us, was the odds of actually having this encounter happen.

If you think about the mathematical probabilities of this taking place, it is beyond imagination. Julie had never entered that store before, she had left the office because she was a bit hungry outside of her

normal schedule. On the other hand Trisha and Julio had all sorts of other options as to where and when to go and buy juice as we had just arrived from Mexico half an hour earlier. This rendezvous was about destiny, we just had to meet again. This brings me full circle to those thoughts I had earlier in the day about one's fortune in relation to nature, things that are beyond one's control. Certainly this encounter was very close to such matters of luck. Whoever organized this, did it well. Thank you! We should now go and buy some lottery tickets, don't you think?.