

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **LEO MATIZ**

## **Mythmakers**

Curated by James Cavello

**EXHIBITION DATES:**  
May 28 – August 1, 2026

**OPENING RECEPTION:**  
Thursday, May 28 from 6:00–8:00PM

**Westwood Gallery NYC** is pleased to present an exhibition dedicated to the celebrated Colombian photographer Leo Matiz, one of the foremost visual chroniclers of twentieth-century Latin American culture. Curated by James Cavello, the exhibition explores two defining aspects of Matiz's practice: his psychologically nuanced portraiture and his use of photography as a creative instrument connected to muralism, cinema, and modern art. In 2001, Westwood Gallery NYC introduced Matiz to American audiences with the landmark exhibition *Leo Matiz: The Third Eye*.

Born in Aracataca, the hometown later associated with Gabriel García Márquez, Matiz began his career as a caricaturist and illustrator before turning to photography in the late 1930s. After relocating to Mexico City in 1940, he became deeply embedded in the artistic and intellectual circles shaping post-revolutionary Mexico. During the 1940s and 1950s, Matiz photographed many of the era's leading cultural figures, including Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, Octavio Paz, Rufino Tamayo, María Félix, Agustín Lara, and Dolores del Río.

The exhibition features Matiz's intimate portraits of Frida Kahlo, produced through his close friendship with Kahlo and Rivera. Unlike formal publicity photographs, these images depict Kahlo in reflective moments within the Blue House in Coyoacán and its surrounding gardens. Through dramatic light, subtle composition, and emotional sensitivity, Matiz captured Kahlo's vulnerability, resilience, and individuality in ways that continue to shape her visual mythology. Several of these photographs were first exhibited in the United States at Gallery NYC in 2001 and have since gained international recognition. Additional images were rediscovered decades later by the Leo Matiz Foundation.

Also on view are photographs related to David Alfaro Siqueiros's mural project *Cuauhtémoc Against the Myth*. Siqueiros used several of Matiz's photographs as visual references for the mural's compositions, reflecting the close relationship between photography and muralism in twentieth-century Mexico. The collaboration also revealed photography's evolving role as a creative tool within large-scale public art. Although Matiz's dramatic visual language strongly complemented Siqueiros's political vision, disputes surrounding attribution and the uncredited use of the photographs ultimately fractured their relationship and forced Matiz to leave Mexico. Today, the collaboration remains historically significant for the questions it raised about authorship and the role of photography in modern art.

Known for his dramatic black-and-white compositions, cinematic use of light and shadow, and monumental perspectives, Matiz developed a visual language shaped by social realism, muralism, and urban modernity. His photographs of workers and Indigenous communities transformed everyday subjects into emotionally resonant images that conveyed the dignity, resilience, and political vitality of modern Latin America.

Matiz later achieved international recognition through collaborations with publications including LIFE, for which he documented the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, as well as Harper’s Magazine and Reader’s Digest. His work is now held in major institutional and private collections throughout Latin America, the United States, and Europe. Recent museum presentations, including current exhibitions featuring his work at Museum of Modern Art, have further established Matiz as a central figure in the history of modern photography.

Following his death in 1998, Matiz underwent a major international rediscovery, with museums and curators repositioning him as a pivotal figure in twentieth-century Latin American photography. His portraits of Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and other cultural figures—as well as his deeply human portrayals of anonymous subjects—have become central to exhibitions exploring identity, modernism, and visual culture. His photographs are maintained by the Leo Matiz Foundation, which manages archives, negatives, and exhibitions dedicated to preserving the photographer's legacy.

For press inquiries, images, or additional information, please contact Westwood Gallery NYC.  
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