

ARTFORUM

Enrique Metinides

ANTON KERN GALLERY

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Untitled, Empleado de Telefonos de Mexico electrocutado en el km, 13 de la carretera Mexico-Toluca (Untitled, An Employee of Telefonos de Mexico Electrocuted at the 13-km mark on the Mexico-Toluca Highway), 1971, silver gelatin print, 20 x 24".

In their focus on traumatic events, sensationalist images amplify the mimetic quality of photography, depicting the pain of others with a shock-inducing, exploitative specificity. Sensation manages to shed its usual association with the brash and unseemly, however, in the work of the Mexican newspaper photographer Enrique Metinides, whose five-decade career is presented here in a selection of carefully composed images of crisis and destruction. Focusing on train wrecks, car accidents, and high-rise suicides, Metinides's photographs represent the muted moments of postcatastrophe rather than the more heated points of literal combustion. In *Untitled, Empleado de Telefonos de Mexico electrocutado en el km, 13 de la carretera Mexico-Toluca* (Untitled, An Employee of Telefonos de Mexico Electrocuted at the 13-km mark on the Mexico-Toluca Highway), 1971, an electrocuted phone-company technician lies splayed in the lap of tangled power lines as if part of a modern-day pietà, while in *Untitled, Primer plano de mujer rubia arrollada e impactada contra un poste, en avenida Chapultepec, Ciudad de Mexico* (Untitled, First Image of a Blond Woman Rolled and Impacted Against a Post, Avenue Chapultepec, Mexico City), 1979, a blond car-crash victim, glamorous as a Hollywood starlet, stares blindly into the distance, her hand lifelessly hugging a fallen post. In their emphasis on stark diagonal lines, Metinides's formally meticulous photos owe less to the aesthetics of point-and-shoot and much more to a Constructivist such as Rodchenko. Rather than suggesting an unreserved idealization of machinery as an instrument of progress, however, Metinides offers a more complex stance—commenting on the deadly intersection between man and machine even while using his own mechanical contraption to capture the effects of that lethal encounter.

—Naomi Fry