

THE DANCE OF THE PASCOLEROS  
SEMANA SANTA IN THE SIERRA TARAHUMARA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD SPEEDY



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The Tarahumara are the largest traditional, indigenous, tribal culture in North America, and their homeland in northern Mexico has come to bear their name, the Sierra Tarahumara. For centuries they have avoided contact with outsiders who would reshape their culture, "civilize" their uncommon view of the world they live in also known as Las Barrancas del Cobre. The Copper Canyon.

The Tarahumara originally inhabited the desertous flatlands and highlands of central Chihuahua, but as Europeans arrived in the early 1600's in search of silver and gold things began to change. As the Spanish forced them into slave labor for their mines and threatened their traditional way of living they began their withdrawal south and west into the remote and protective terrain of the twenty or so deep canyons collectively known as the Copper Canyon. Christianity was originally brought to their door in the 1600's by Jesuit missionaries and since that time they have brewed their own mysterious mixture of the bible and their original more naturist, animistic tribal beliefs.

The week of Semana Santa, Holy Week, or Easter starts with Palm Sunday and ends the following Saturday morning. It is the most important religious celebration of the year for the Tarahumara. In this and other religious observations they have adopted the pageantry of Catholicism as embroidery to decorate and enliven their own ancestral tribal beliefs. The festival framework is Roman Catholic, but the cosmology is in large part their own. Ancient Tarahumara rites in supplication for a new season of fertile prosperity have evolved into what is today Semana Santa, a vividly dramatic time of dance, drumming, processions, drinking of tesquino and finally the killing of the Judas effigy on Holy Saturday morning.

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Richard Speedy's photographs of Semana Santa were taken during numerous visits to the village of Norogachi in the upper Sierra Tarahumara and the remote tribal area of Nararachi, also in the high sierra. Both are among the last of the truly traditional ceremonial centers of Tarahumara culture.

The celebration begins in earnest on Holy Thursday as hundreds of traditional Tarahumara men, women and children arrive from all directions, streaming down hillsides and across arroyos on foot and horseback from their distant ranchos in the high sierra. Photographing non-stop, day and night, Mr. Speedy's images take us into the blazing heart of the Tarahumara Semana Santa - through processions, blessings, night drumming and dancing around great bonfires, into the all night, sacred "Painting of the Pascoleros" and finally to the ritualistic killing of the Judas effigy early Saturday morning. His photographs provide a rare, intimate and artistic impression of this ancient traditional celebration for those of us who will never have the opportunity to witness it first hand. Additionally, this photographic work takes on increasing relevance as the celebration of these age old traditions recedes into the history of our rapidly changing world.



























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## SHOW SPECS~

- ~ Traveling show. Securely crated for transport.
- ~ A core show has been created which consists of 36 black and white prints.  
26 - 9x12 with 17x22 8-ply matte. 10 - 13.5x18 with 21x26 8-ply matte
- ~ No two exhibition spaces are the same. Often shows are customized to fit a particular space.
- ~ Requires approximately 96 linear feet hung in one row.
- ~ 36 individual labels. 2 – 30x40 info/illust.panels and 2 - 21x26 text panels available on disc.
- ~ Tarahumara artifacts are available if space permits. Masks, musical instruments, pottery, textiles, etc. Pieces are not mounted or framed.
- ~ Slide show of 116 images with minimal text available in Power Point format.
- ~ A 15 minute documentary “Semana Santa in the Sierra Tarahumara” is in the works. Available approximately 6/1/12.



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### Venue Fulfillment~

- ~ Shipping paid by venue.
- ~ Insurance, in transit and length of show, covered by venue.
- ~ Installation responsibility of venue.
- ~ Publicity/advertising is the responsibility of venue. Richard Speedy Studio will do all in their power to get the word out.
- ~ Security requirements: Moderate.
- ~ Exhibition Fee: \$5000.00.
- ~ Musuem/Gallery Talk Fee: \$500.00 plus travel.

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### Museum/Gallery Talk ~

Powerpoint presentation of 110 images taken by Richard Speedy during numerous visits to the Sierra Tarahumara for Semana Santa. His talk will cover background and history of the Tarahumara and their homeland including discussion of present day life of the Tarahumara and the challenges they now face as the outside world brings more pressure to bare on their traditional world. Focus will be on the hours and days of Semana Santa leading up to the killing of the Judsa effigy on Saturday morning and how the Tarahumara spiritual viewpoint has evolved since the Spanish first made contact in the late 16th century. Presentation is 45 minutes in length plus time for questions.

Fee: \$500.00 plus travel.

## Bio

Richard Speedy grew up in Princeton, New Jersey where he attended elementary and high school. After finishing his college studies at Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara in 1972 he moved to New York City where he worked as an assistant to many of the best advertising photographers shooting everything from fashion, to still-life, to automobiles. During this period he also worked on several personal projects including a series of photographs of the New Jersey Pine Barrens which was supported by two fellowships from the NJ Council on the Arts. This project culminated in several shows, one of which was reviewed favorably by David Shirey in the Sunday New York Times. In that review Mr. Shirey stated:

“Were we to visit the Pine Barrens we might not see the same things Richard Speedy saw. Most of us do not have his poetic vision or his instantaneous grasping of the beautiful in nature, or his fantasy ... as in one photograph of mushrooms with their long stalks and umbrella caps amidst a blur of plants, they are creatures of another world.”

In 1980 he founded Richard Speedy Studio and for the next 22 years he devoted his time and energy to running a 5,000 square foot studio with a staff of 6-8 people. The studio produced many award winning images for ad campaigns, annual reports and catalogues for clients such as Sony, J&J, Bennetton and Mobil.

In 2002 he decided it was time to pursue the more personal goals he had been putting off for years and closed the studio. Recent projects have included landscapes of the Southwest, “Flora – Studio Still Life Project”, “Passage – Landscape In Motion”, “Remains – Biodiversity In Decline” and an in depth photographic portrait of the Rarámuri people of the Sierra Tarahumara in Chihuahua, México.

He divides his time between Hopewell, New Jersey and Alamos, Sonora, México.

## RESUME

### Exhibitions

- ~October 2011 – June 2012  
“Dancing Under the Moon” Photographs by Richard Speedy  
New Mexico State University Museum  
Las Cruces, New Mexico
- ~November 2011 – January 2012  
Photographs from the Sierra Tarahumara by Richard Speedy  
Arts Council of Princeton  
Princeton, NJ
- ~September – December 2009  
Center For the Arts, University of Sonora  
Hermosillo, Sonora, México
- ~November 2008 – January 2009  
Sonoran Cultural Institute  
Alamos, Sonora, México

## RESUME (Cont.)

### Exhibitions

~June – August 2008

Richard speedy Photographer – Photographs from Mexico's Sierra Tarahumara  
Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary  
Jackson Hole, Wyoming

~May - July 2003

Phillips Mill Photographic Exhibition -- Lambertville, NJ  
Sponsored by Epson  
Juror: Katherine ware

~April – June 2003

Trenton City Museum  
Trenton, NJ

~May – July 2002

Phillips Mill Photographic Exhibition -- Lambertville, NJ  
Juror: Jeff Hurwitz

## RESUME (Cont.)

### Exhibitions

~February – April 2002

Illuminance: 2002 -- Exhibition of Photographic Works

Buddy Holly Center, Lubbock, Texas

Juror: Judy Dater

~October – December 2000

American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP)

“Best In Show”

Juror: Nancy Ori

~September – November 1998

Morpeth Gallery

Princeton NJ

~January – March 1990

The Art of Aids Awareness – Bands to Beat Aids Campaign

Photographs by Richard Speedy

The Gallery at Bristol Myers Squibb – World Headquarters

Princeton NJ

## RESUME (Cont.)

### Exhibitions

~December 1981 – March 1982

New Jersey Pine Barrens – The Photography of Richard Speedy  
The Gallery at Bristol Myers Squibb – World Headquarters  
Princeton, NJ

~May – August 1980

New Jersey State Museum, Trenton NJ  
New Jersey Artists, Juried Show

~October 1978

Annual Photography Exhibition  
Princeton University -- Princeton, NJ  
Juror: Naomi Savage

~February 1975

New Jersey Photographers  
Rutgers University Gallery -- New Brunswick, NJ  
Juror: Peter C. Bunnell

## RESUME (Cont.)

### Permanent Collections

- ~Wittliff Collections  
Southwestern & Mexican Photography Collection  
Texas State University, San Marcos
- ~New Mexico State University Museum  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

### Fellowships

- ~1974  
New Jersey State Council On the Arts  
Artists Fellowship
- ~1978  
New Jersey State Council On the Arts  
Artists Fellowship



## RESUME (Cont.)

### In Print

~Sunday New York Times --  
December 28, 1981  
Review by David L. Shirey  
New Jersey Pine Barrens – The Photography of Richard Speedy  
Bristol Myers Squibb Gallery

~Texas Monthly Magazine  
May, 1999  
“Let’s Get Lost – Crossing Mexico’s Copper Canyon”  
Text by Joe Nick Patoski  
Photographs by Richard Speedy

~Cowboys and Indians Magazine  
March 2008  
“Dancing under the Moon -- The Photography of Richard Speedy”

~US 1 Central New Jersey  
October 26, 2011  
Review  
“Dancing Under the Moon – With a Camera”  
By Ilene Dube

## Current Shows

University Museum  
New Mexico State University

### DANCING UNDER THE MOON

A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY  
THROUGH THE MEXICAN SIERRA TARAHUMARA



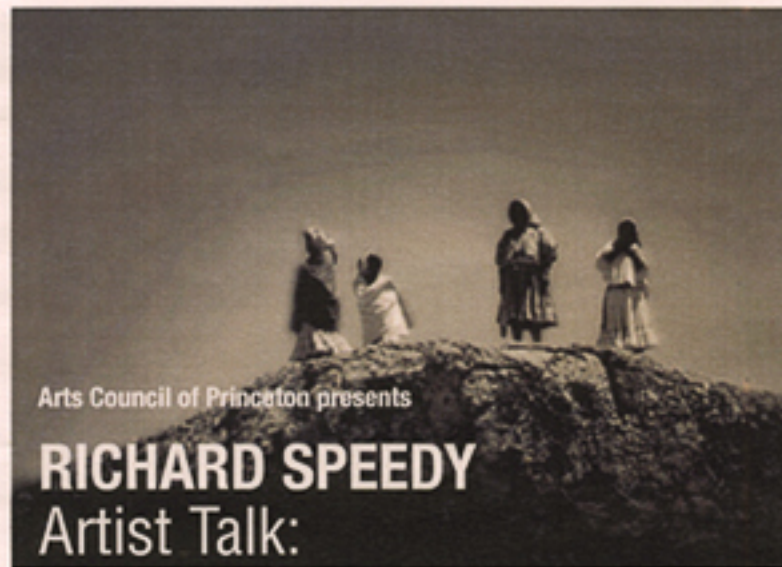
PHOTOGRAPHS  
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RICHARD SPEEDY

UNIVERSITY MUSEUM  
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

OPENING RECEPTION THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 15TH 2011, 6 - 8 PM

[www.richardspeedyphotographer.com](http://www.richardspeedyphotographer.com)

Arts Council of Princeton  
Princeton, New Jersey



Arts Council of Princeton presents

## RICHARD SPEEDY Artist Talk:

### *Dancing Under the Moon A Photographic Journey Through the Mexican Sierra Tarahumara*

Join us for a special slide talk with photographer Richard Speedy. On numerous expeditions Speedy has traveled by foot and horseback to explore and photograph the many layered world that exists in southwestern Chihuahua. This artist talk is in coordination with the exhibition *El Día de los Muertos* and the Princeton ArtWalk on November 3, from 5-8 pm.

**Thursday, Nov 3, 7:30** | Solley Theater | free



**ARTS COUNCIL OF  
PRINCETON** Paul Robeson Center for the Arts  
102 Witherspoon Street Princeton, NJ

[artscouncilofprinceton.org](http://artscouncilofprinceton.org) | 609.924.8777

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