

Press Release

The Harvey Milk Center is pleased to present the solo exhibition **A Fearless Eye – The Photography of Barbara Ramos**.

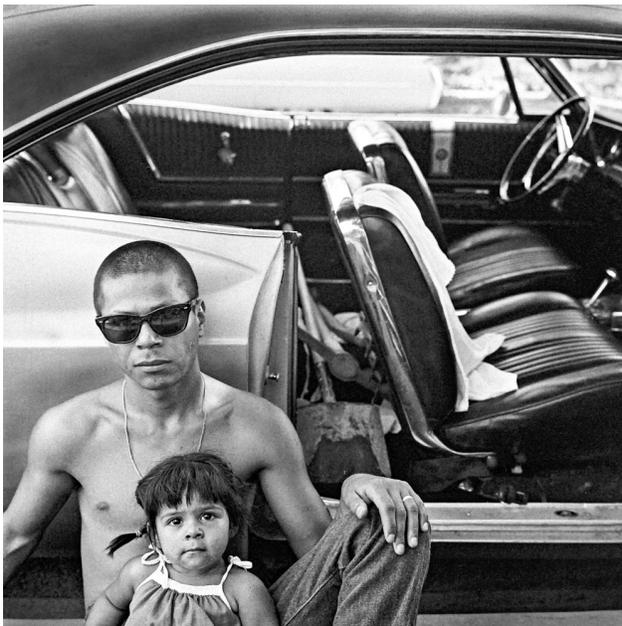
Opening reception: Friday, March 6, 5-8 pm

Exhibit Dates: March 6 – May 16, 2026

Artist talk and book signing – Saturday, March 21 at 2 pm in the Harvey Milk Photo Center gallery. Discussion will be led by Makeda Best, Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs at the [Oakland Museum of California \(OMCA\)](#). [RSVP here.](#)

Curated by: Melissa Castro Keesor and Katherine Akey Lee

Media Contact: Melissa Castro Keesor, Director, melissa.keesor@sfgov.org 415-361-3174



Father and Daughter and Car
San Francisco, California
1970's
C print from Digitized Analog Film Negative

For photographer [Barbara Ramos](#), making images demanded complete presence—a state of heightened awareness she found incompatible with the competing demands of work and motherhood. “For me it was impossible to raise children, earn a living and to be totally present to take photographs,” she reflects. So, she chose family and work, storing away negatives that her own loved ones had never seen.

These photographs—taken in the early-to-mid 1970s in Los Angeles and San Francisco—remained in boxes for nearly fifty years until the pandemic’s enforced stillness brought Ramos back to her archive.



Popcorn and Cotton Candy
San Francisco, California
1970's
C print from Digitized Analog Film Negative

Drawn to photography for “the immediacy of its image making results,” Ramos spent her twenties exploring unfamiliar territories with her camera. After moving to San Francisco in 1969 to study at the Art Institute, she photographed the surreal sprawl of the San Fernando Valley where she’d grown up and the shifting street life of her adopted city. “I think I was somewhat fearless when I took these images,” she notes, and that quality registers in the work: an openness to strangeness, a willingness to approach unknown environments and their inhabitants without predetermined ideas.



Buy a Car & Make a Friend
Los Angeles, California
1970's
Ink Jet print from Digitized Analog Film Negative

What emerges is a document of California in flux—not mythologized landscapes but in-between spaces, overlooked communities, ordinary moments charged with subtle tension or unexpected beauty. Gas stations and street corners, anonymous figures and chance encounters, building an archive that quietly counters more familiar narratives of the era. These images exist in a curious temporal double exposure: vintage photographs from a specific historical moment, but also newly born objects, printed for the first time from recently digitized negatives. In returning to this work, Ramos has not simply excavated the past but actively brought it into the present, resuming a conversation with photography that was interrupted but never truly abandoned.



Three Men on MUNI, North Beach
San Francisco, California
1970's
C print from Digitized Analog Film Negative

About the Artist

Barbara Ramos is a photographer whose recently rediscovered archive of 1970s street photography captures California during a transformative era. Originally from New York, Ramos moved to the San Fernando Valley as a child and discovered photography while studying painting in college. She relocated to San Francisco in 1969 to attend the San Francisco Art Institute, where she spent the early-to-mid 1970s photographing the surreal edges of suburban Los Angeles and the evolving streets of San Francisco.

For decades, Ramos set aside her artistic practice to focus on work and raising two children. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted her to digitize her negatives—many never printed or exhibited—bringing this body of work into public view for the first time. Ramos has since returned to active photography practice, navigating the transition from analog to digital while continuing to explore the act of seeing with renewed intensity.

Artist Talk and Book Signing

Saturday, March 21 at 2 pm in the Harvey Milk Photo Center gallery.

Makeda Best, Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs at the [Oakland Museum of California \(OMCA\)](#), will facilitate a discussion with Barbara Ramos. After the discussion, Barbara Ramos will be available to sign copies of her monograph afterwards.

About the Harvey Milk Photo Center

Serving the San Francisco community since 1940, the Harvey Milk Photo Center operates the oldest and largest community wet darkroom in the United States. Members also have access to large format printers, film scanning equipment and a full feature digital lab with Adobe software. The Center's educational program now exceeds 200 classes, workshops, and lectures annually, conducted by working professionals in both fine arts and commercial photography.

Scholarships are available for anyone living in San Francisco wishing to take our classes.

All exhibitions, lectures, special events and memberships are available to the public.

The Harvey Milk Photo Center is a part of the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department. Since 1954, the Center has resided at 50 Scott Street, in the lower level of the Harvey Milk Center for the Arts building at Duboce Park.



Man Smoking in Lobby
San Francisco, California
1970's
C print from Digitized Analog Film Negative



Men Kissing at Peace Rally
San Francisco, California
1970's
C print from Digitized Analog Film Negative



Window Dresser, Macy's Union Square
San Francisco, California
1970's
C print from Digitized Analog Film Negative