

LA FLAQUITA † SKINNY
GIRL † LA MADRINA † THE
GODMOTHER † LA HUESUDA
† BONY LADY † LA NIÑA
BLANCA † WHITE GIRL †
SEÑORA DE LAS SOMBRAS
† LADY OF THE SHADOWS
† LA DAMA PODEROSA †
LA NIÑA BONITA † PRETTY
GIRL † POWERFUL LADY †
LA PELONA † BALD LADY
† SANTÍSIMA MUERTE †
MOST HOLY DEATH †
LA HERMANA BLANCA
† THE WHITE SISTER

ANGUS FRASER

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SANTA MUERTE

Lady of Death!
Skeletal spirit,
Powerful and strong,
Indispensable in time of danger,
I invoke you sure of your kindness.
I pray to God almighty.
Grant me all I ask of you,
That he who cast damage or evil eye on me
Forever repent for the rest of his life.
And that it be returned upon him right away.
For those that in love cheat on me,
I ask that they return to me.
And if they ignore Your strange voice,
May they feel the power of Your scythe.
In sport and in business,
I name You my lawyer,
As the best and any who might come against me.
Make them lose. O, Lady of Death!
My angel of protection.
Amen.













SANTA MUERTE ANGUS FRASER

Para mis hijos

##TROLLEY##



Introduction

Angus Fraser

The origins of Santa Muerte – a religion/cult that has been denounced as satanic by the Mexican Catholic Church – can be dated back hundreds of years. It was developed through a syncretism between indigenous Mesoamerican and Spanish Catholic beliefs and practices. Only in the last decade however has it become more predominant in Mexican society, where many commentators have noted its rise with the killing and violence associated with the war between rival drug cartels and the Mexican Government.

Since 2011, I visited Mexico several times to research, interview and document the devotees of this cult, as well as record the shrines and altars they visit. I made contact with many individuals who originally built and manage the shrines, and who by default, are now considered to be guardians and spiritual leaders of the faith. They gave me access and permission to photograph not only in their places of worship but also in their private homes and in prisons, where Santa Muerte has a very strong following amongst the Mexican penitentiary system.

My photographic practice is based on researching into the relationship between photography and death, and how photography can interpret and represent death; to understand how another culture can embrace and accept death with such certainty, compared to an accepted Western perspective. During the course of the past four years that I worked on the project, I developed strong connections and gained a high level of trust with the main protagonists of Santa Muerte. I was accepted by the cult's following and given unlimited access into a world that is considered macabre, illegal and even satanic by the mass media.

Admittedly, along the way I encountered individuals who lived up to the Santa Muerte stereotype that the US and European media have created. But on the whole the hospitality, kindness and warmth I was shown contradicted all the negative perceptions I had read, seen and heard. My aim is to tell their side of the story and in part my own.













La Santa Muerte – The Skeletal Queen of Mexico

Eva Aridjis

La Santa Muerte, which can mean both *Saint Death* and *Holy Death*, is a contemporary Mexican folk saint. She resembles the grim reaper and is usually depicted wearing a robe, with a scythe in one hand and a globe (the earth) in the other. Sometimes she has an owl at her feet, and sometimes she carries a balance of scales, symbolising justice. La Santa Muerte is said to dole out justice because she is the great equaliser who takes everyone and does not discriminate. She takes the rich and the poor, the good and the bad, the young and the old, for La Santa Muerte is death.

It is said there are 10–12 million people who currently worship La Santa Muerte as a saint. These devotees are mostly Mexican, yet the cult of La Santa Muerte is no longer limited to Mexico. Her followers can be found all over the United States, Canada, Central America, and wherever Mexican immigrant communities exist. And in these countries there are increasing numbers of non-Mexicans worshipping her as well, after discovering what her devotees say are her miraculous powers.

People ask La Santa Muerte for all sorts of favours. Some ask her for help in finding love or employment, or with curing their ill or drug-addicted loved ones. Others ask her to bring them money, or to drive away an enemy. Indeed, La Santa Muerte is said to provide her followers with life, death and everything in between. Her devotees lovingly refer to her as *La Niña Blanca* (The White Girl), *La Flaca* (The Skinny One) and *La Santísima* (The Very Holy One).

How did this image of a skeleton come to have so many millions of worshippers in Mexico and other parts of the world? Her popularity in her home country is presently only rivaled by that of the Virgin of Guadalupe – Mexico’s Indian version of the Virgin Mary – and by Jesus. The answer is not a simple one, as La Santa

Muerte’s origins are as mysterious as death itself.

Some of her followers claim she has existed since pre-Columbian times, through the figures of Coatlicue (the Aztec goddess of fertility, life, death and rebirth) and Mictecacihuatl (the Queen of Mictlán, the underworld). Others claim the cult of La Santa Muerte was born from a syncretism of pagan pre-Hispanic cultures and Catholicism, brought to Mexico by the Spaniards in the early 16th century. Still others claim the cult started in Mexico in the 1960s, when people in the state of Hidalgo started to worship the figure of a skeletal saint in a local church. Lastly, some believe that the cult of La Santa Muerte started in the 1990s, after an economic crisis led to the Mexican peso declining sharply in value. The country was thrown into violent turmoil due to drug cartels battling both each other and the military (leading to more than a hundred thousand deaths), while countless communities and families were destabilised when nearly five million Mexicans crossed over into the United States in search of work. It is no coincidence that, as Mexico’s economic and security problems have steadily worsened over the past 20 years, the popularity of La Santa Muerte has steadily increased. In a country that has become incredibly dangerous for residents of urban and rural areas alike, thanks to cartel violence and gang culture (brought to Mexico by immigrants returning home after spending time in the United States), Mexicans need a saint to whom they can turn for protection. Anthropologists and theologians may see the popularity of La Santa Muerte as a manifestation of a country in crisis, but to her followers she offers the solution to this crisis.

La Santa Muerte is said to be the patron saint of criminals and low lifes, or at least

that is how she is depicted by the Mexican government, the Catholic Church and the wealthy elite. And while it is true that most criminals in Mexico worship her, it is by no means true that everyone who worships her is a criminal. One of the main things people ask of La Santa Muerte is to protect them from herself, or to give them a painless death if she must take them. Hence many of her devotees are individuals who are in imminent danger of dying, either because they are old or sick, or because of their lifestyle or profession (drug addicts, alcoholics, criminals, gang members, prison guards, prostitutes and policemen). La Santa Muerte also has a considerable gay and transsexual following, for it is said she embraces all of her devotees and does not demand virtuous behaviour from her faithful in the way the Catholic Church does.

While the Catholic Church considers homosexuals, prostitutes and criminals to be sinners, La Santa Muerte does not ask them to change or repent. And while the Catholic Church calls the cult of Saint Death pagan and Satanic, all of La Santa Muerte's followers consider themselves Catholics. As can be seen in Angus Fraser's photographs of small altars that have been erected for La Santa Muerte on neighborhood streets, La Niña Blanca often shares an altar or niche with more traditional religious figures such as Jesus, the Virgin of Guadalupe or Saint Jude Thaddeus and they seem to coexist peacefully in the hearts and minds of many of her followers. The Catholic Church is worried that an increasing number of Mexicans are turning away from the church to worship La Santa Muerte, as many devotees ultimately choose her over the church when faced with the church's staunch rejection of her.

Similarly, the government and the wealthy elite in Mexico feel threatened by

the popularity of this cult. Followers of La Santa Muerte are often marginalised and disenfranchised people, but their belief in her provides them with confidence and a community to which they can belong. La Santa Muerte empowers her followers and challenges the pre-existing structures of Mexican society, structures that are often class-based, patriarchal and conservative by nature. The government attempts to suppress her worship by linking the cult to illegality and sin, and in 2009 the army bulldozed through dozens of Santa Muerte shrines which had been erected on the Mexican side of the United States-Mexico border, leading to protests and marches in Mexico City during which devotees complained that they were victims of religious oppression.

The connection between La Santa Muerte and her followers is a direct one. There is no middleman or institutionalised hierarchy such as exists in the Catholic Church, there is no pope, there are no bishops, cardinals, nor priests. Since the cult of La Santa Muerte is not recognised by the Mexican government as an official religion, devotees must worship her at home or at hundreds of public altars that have been erected all over the country (usually just outside a devotee's home). Her followers ask for her help in all parts of their lives, and there are no rules governing how often one must pray to her, or offer her gifts (she is said to be partial to tequila, cigarettes, candy and fruit). But while La Santa Muerte is known for granting favours and even making miracles for those who are loyal to her, she is reputed to be a jealous and vengeful saint. She wants to be the centre of attention, and not merely one of a group of saints perched on the mantelpiece. It is also said that she does not take kindly to broken promises, so if a devotee promises her something in



exchange for a favour – such as putting up an altar for her, or being tattooed with her image – and the devotee does not make good on the promise, La Santa Muerte will punish that individual.

Representations of La Santa Muerte are as varied as those who worship her. She can be found as a life-sized statue at a public altar, as a medium-sized figurine sitting on a shelf in a home, or even as a one-inch amulet for keeping in a pocket or wallet. Her image can be found on posters, necklaces, stickers and T-shirts, on ashtrays and mugs, or drawn in colourful tattoos and paintings. Her devotees may dress their figurines of her as a bride in white, a lady in black, an Apache Indian, or a little girl in pink. Sometimes a figurine of La Santa Muerte will have no hair, at other times she wears a blonde wig or is a curly-haired brunette. Devotees change the clothes, wigs and jewellery on their Santa Muertes regularly, depending on the time of year (Halloween, Christmas and Easter are preferred holidays), or based on their moods and personal preferences. There are tailors who make a living from creating these outfits for other people's Santa Muertes, although if a devotee cannot afford to dress his or her Santa Muerte, or simply chooses not to, that is also acceptable.

Most working-class neighbourhoods in Mexico City and its environs now have at least one public altar devoted to La Santa Muerte, for a large percentage of the residents of these neighbourhoods tend to be devotees. It only takes one particularly devout individual to set up an altar outside his or her home, and that person will be referred to as the “guardian” or “godmother/godfather” of the altar, and can live off the donations left at their altar while enjoying a higher status in their community. At all these public altars

a large celebration in honour of La Santa Muerte is held at least one day each month, and hundreds of worshippers may come to take part in group prayer and hear an ad hoc “rosario” (mass) offered to La Santa Muerte by the guardian of the altar or an associate. Entire families attend these masses together, as do couples, groups of friends, and countless individuals. Mariachis sing to La Santa Muerte, and dancers perform pre-Hispanic dances to please her. These entertainers have usually been hired by a devotee wishing to give La Santa Muerte thanks for a favour granted. The worshippers at these masses will bring their figurines from home so they can be blessed at the public altar and listen to the “rosario”.

Currently three altars in the Mexico City area are considered to be the most important ones, and Angus Fraser has photographed them in exquisite detail. The first one, called the Templo Santa Muerte Internacional (The International Santa Muerte Temple), is located in the gritty outskirts of Mexico City in Tultitlán, Estado de México (State of Mexico). A young man named Jonathan Legaria Vargas erected it as a show of his devotion to La Santa Muerte, and the altar's main claim to fame is its towering 75 foot-tall statue of her. In 2008, Legaria Vargas was killed when his car was sprayed with more than 150 bullets by unknown assailants. His mother Enriqueta Vargas, who did not believe in La Santa Muerte at the time, took up the reins to become the new guardian of the altar after La Santa Muerte “helped her track down her son's killers” (as she says). She now offers wedding and baptism services at the altar on Sundays, and has made her son Jonathan, also known as *Comandante Pantera* and *Godfather Endoque*, the first saint to be canonised by La Santa Muerte.

An hour north in Pachuca, Hidalgo, Oscar Pelcastre – known as *El Obispo Negro* (The Black Bishop) – presides over an altar called La Catedral de la Santa Muerte (The Santa Muerte Cathedral). Pelcastre built this sanctuary in 2009 in honour of La Santa Muerte, although she shares it with a large altar dedicated to the Devil. Pelcastre refers to the two deities as *The White Girl* and *The Black Boy*, and claims that all people are both good and bad. He has been arrested several times for his involvement in local disputes between political parties, and is an outspoken supporter of the current ruling party (the PRI), arguing that La Santa Muerte also favours the PRI. In January 2015, half a kilo of gold jewellery – along with coins, dollar bills and watches – were stolen from his Santa Muerte and Devil altars by thieves who smashed the glass boxes encasing the figures.

In Mexico City itself, the most important altar dedicated to La Santa Muerte is found on Alfarería Street in the Tepito neighbourhood. This altar, erected in 2001 by a quesadilla vendor named Enriqueta Romero-Romero, is said to be the first public Santa Muerte altar in Mexico. Rosarios are held here on the first day of each month, and within hours the empty street will be teeming with hundreds of people carrying their Santa Muerte figurines. Enriqueta usually hires a friend or neighbour to conduct the mass, and her husband Ray does a brisk business in their shop selling figurines, candles, necklaces, and other Santa Muerte paraphernalia. Unlike many of the guardians at other altars, Enriqueta Romero-Romero has thus far been able to steer clear of legal problems and controversies. A man named David Romo, who for many years ran a rival shrine that was also located in Tepito, was arrested in 2011 for money laundering and kidnapping and sentenced to 66 years in prison. This

allowed Enriqueta Romero-Romero's shrine to keep its place as the main altar in Mexico City, and she is the “guardian” or “godmother” of La Santa Muerte who has enjoyed the most media attention in the past 15 years.

It can be said that La Santa Muerte is the patron saint of modern day Mexico, and Angus Fraser's stunning photographs introduce us to some of her followers and to the principal altars in all their rawness and beauty. While the powers that be would happily continue exporting the image of a safe and folkloric country to the outside world – a Mexico free of kidnapping, extortion and drug traffickers, a Mexico whose churchgoers are free from sin, a Mexico where the working class is contented and wants for nothing – the cult of La Santa Muerte allows us to glimpse one of the real faces of Mexican society today.



Monday

*Santa Muerte, I ask you
That at the start of the week
You bless my family,
My home and my work.
Protect me of all evil.
So shall it be,
Amen.*



Tuesday

*White girl,
I kneel before you
And lovingly ask
That you give me health.
Distance any illness so that I may
Continue forward.
I ask you with all of my heart.
Amen.*



Wednesday

*This day that now begins I won't
Ask for anything of you.
But I will thank you for the
Protection you give not only
To me but also to my loved ones.
Keep covering us with your cloak.
Amen.*



Thursday

*Today, before leaving,
I ask that you open
All possible doors so that I
May live peacefully,
I don't ask for riches,
Only that you give
Me the necessary in order
To live without worries.
My faith is entrusted in you.
Amen.*



Friday

*White Sister,
I ask that by way of the owl,
That is your companion,
You give me wisdom
So that I may guide my children,
And that they should always,
Act as good people.
In you I trust.
Amen.*



Saturday

Thank you my Skinny one
For letting me see the light
Of a new day,
As thanks I promise to think of you.
I offer you this prayer...
(Prayer of your choice)
So that my requests
Can be heard,
Thank you for everything
You bestow upon me.
My trust is yours,
Amen.



Sunday

*Thank you Santisima Muerte
For being close to me
The seven days of the week.
Thanks for giving me protection
And distancing from me
And my home,
Any evil that is around us.
My devotion is yours forever,
Amen.*





TEMPLO SANTA MUERTE INTERNACIONAL

*Enriqueta Vargas – La Madrina
Tultitlán, Estado de México*



























LA CATEDRAL DE LA SANTA MUERTE

Oscar Pelcastre – El Padrino
Pachuca, Estado de Hidalgo









Handwritten notes on a small piece of paper, partially obscured by other items.

Small handwritten note with a red dot at the top.

Da. Carmelina Garielo
OSCAR FURELLANO
Santísima Madre oraciones
librenos de todo peligro
masdad donos trabajo suerte
en todo lo que emprendamos Te
lo pedimos de todo corazón
amablemente
Adehale



OSCAR FURELLANO
Santísima Madre
librenos de todo
peligro

Handwritten notes on a spiral-bound notebook page.



Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, partially obscured by other items.

Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, partially obscured by other items.

Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, tied with a blue string.

Handwritten notes on a piece of yellow paper, tied with a blue string.

Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, partially obscured by other items.



Handwritten notes on a small piece of paper.



Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, partially obscured by other items.



Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, partially obscured by other items.

Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, partially obscured by other items.

Handwritten notes on a small piece of paper.

Handwritten notes on a long, narrow strip of paper.









* GRACIAS *
NINA BLANCA *
* DE *
TODO CORAZÓN
PANIADERIA MI CUPITA











TE JURIDICO AUSTRIA-MONZALVO Y ASOCS. AV. GUANAJUATO No. 397

AUTO ELECTRICA "OMANA"















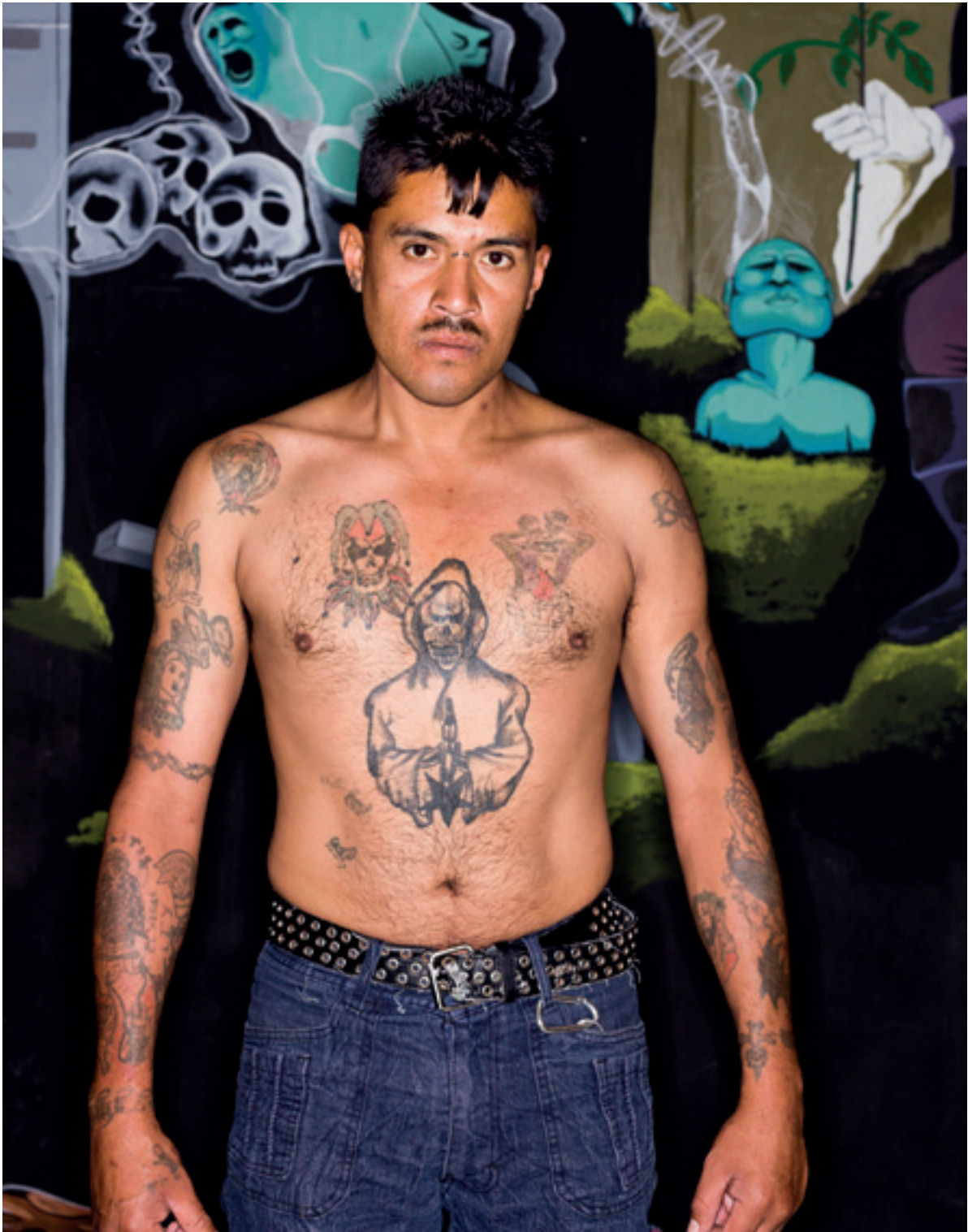




















LA CALLE DE ALFARERÍA, NÚMERO 12

Enriqueta Romero-Romero – La Madrina
El barrio de Tepito, México, D.F.

SE LES INVITA AL 12 ANIVERSARIO DE LA
QUE SE LLEVÓ A CABO EL DÍA
31 DE OCTUBRE
DEL 2013 A LAS
15:00 DE LA TARDE

SANTÍSIMA
MUERTE

INVITAMOS A LOS ROSARIOS
DE ESTA DÍA, UNO DE CADA MES A
LAS 5:00 p.m. ALTARETA No. 12
ENTRE MINEROS Y PANADEROS
COL. MORELOS



























A DIA 1ro. DE CADA MES

VELADORA
\$25

GRACIAS POR TENER
LOS FLETTING
de Sherrin













DEPARTAMENTOS

Veladoras

















†

COMPENDIUM OF SANTA MUERTE

Here you will find prayers, rituals, seminaries and primordial rules for the cult of the White Sister. Find solutions to your family problems, enjoy protection from your enemies, avoid theft, protect your children, make your business grow; all of this and more by way of the prayer and devotion to The White Lady. Learn about the principal incantations with which you can approach and ask for anything from advice, to the betterment of your health and economy, or the protection of your business.

Symbology of Santa Muerte

The Scythe

As a weapon, it is used symbolically to cancel out the bad energies emitted by your enemies, in this way you will also be free from the bad influences that lead you to realise evil things. Furthermore, the scythe being an instrument of cultivation is a symbol of the harvesting of new hope, for which it also brings us prosperity.

The World

Represents holding the world in a physical way (material). Having the world in one's hand indicates power on any level, with it we are assured success in any endeavour we undertake. In general terms, it helps us with confidence, leadership, success, achievements, and independence.

The Scales

Its most common form is with two hanging and equal plates; symmetrically they have an assimilated significance up to a certain point: it tells us that justice is impartial. However, if the plates are not in symmetry, this unleashes auto-destructive forces and punishment, since the balance has been upset. In this way we can establish that if the Santa Muerte always has in her possession the symmetrical scales, there will be inner peace in our being.

The Hourglass

The hourglass is a symbol of investment and the reactions between the superior and inferior worlds. For this reason it's linked to the ideas of perpetual motion inherent in magical and divine beings. The hourglass governs the time that passes in our lives, but that shouldn't mean we live in a state of hurry, but fully and without complications.

The Owl

This bird is associated with wisdom; it helps us overcome our day-to-day cultural expectations in order to act wisely; it is worth mentioning that one of the owl's functions is as Santa Muerte's messenger, making it very useful, by way of the owl, for asking it a favour.

The Lamp or Lantern

Is the symbol of intelligence and of the spirit; the light that radiates makes us see the way clearly and helps us with decisions we make throughout life. While life exists, the flame emitted from the lamp will never end, it will always give us company when we find ourselves in dark times, with the great power it has, it will lead us out of ignorance, taking us always toward the truth.

The Power of Colour

Gold

Our golden Santa Muerte will attract money, success and will help us open roads economically speaking.

White

This miraculous white image in its altar represents the total purification of all our wishes. It attracts peace and harmony.

Red

This is the primary colour for whatever ritual is associated with the sentimental, with love, passion and desire; it will also help bring complete harmony within our relationships and emotional stability that we have so long searched for.

Purple

This colour of statuette will help bring health and will reject all sickness be it natural or provoked.

Blue

This colour has been closely linked to understanding and concentration, which is why it is recommended to have it at home in order to help the student or office worker who requires concentration.

Green

This colour represents justice. Usually used for a legal nature, this colour is very important for legal offices as the holiness is respected by the legal authorities. It is also linked to equality of gender and sexual orientation.

Black

It is true that with this colour we can invoke negative energies, but the positive side of this colour is that it will also help us in our rituals, so that all the toxic and scheming people are distanced from our path.

You will need:

- † Water and salt
- † Oil of roses
- † Essence of/ or rue leaves
- † Rose petals or red carnations
- † Incense burner with incense, myrrh, and whole benzoin
- † A vessel in which to bathe the statuette
- † Honey

Because the Santa Muerte is a powerful entity not belonging to the Catholic calendar, we do not consecrate her by being blessed by seven churches, as that is another form of consecration.

Procedure:

This ritual is very effective on Saturdays, due to the fact that it is a day of great energy for performing spiritual work (but we must also remember that Tuesdays and Fridays are also very positive for any ritual whatsoever); as anything related to Santería can carry its own negativity, we must cleanse “everything” with water and salt.

The water used to wash the elements is removed and replaced with fresh water, and to it are added the rose petals, the essence of/ or rue leaves, the oil of roses and a small amount of honey.

Once this has been completed, the altar area should be ready, where our Santa will be enthroned; we light a candle for the white altar and also a candle in order to welcome her, we light the incense burner with charcoal and the mix of myrrh and incense and benzoin.

We must fumigate the whole house, especially the altar space (it might be necessary to add more incense, myrrh and benzoin).

We bathe our Santa Muerte in the vessel with the above-mentioned ingredients, we elevate our minds and ask our entity that she arrive in that moment and enter her image, so that whenever we call her she can enter the statuette.

While we bathe our statuette we say:

Santa Muerte, I call upon you so that you come to this place, you take this image (statuette) of plaster and you give it life... save our Santa Muerte.

We take the image out of the vessel, we dry it and always with the incense burner we go through the whole house, we show it and present it, then we take it back to the altar and we say to it that that is where we will pay homage and where we will protect her and we say again “Save our Santa Muerte”.

Our place of meditation and the altar have to always be energetically clean and free of filth or earth.

On many occasions we ask ourselves, “Why does the image come with accessories, is it simply for decoration or does it symbolise something special?”

Its most well known attributes are the scythe, the owl, the scales and the globe (earth); others that are less visible, but not less important are the lantern and the hourglass. These accessories possess a special significance, which if used correctly, will give us a better response from the Santa Muerte.

The cult of the Santa Muerte has been extended in such a way in Mexico, that those who profess it have decided to not hide their fervour anymore and have built altars in the streets so that any that need Her help can invoke it. For its devotees, the Señora, how she is called affectionately, is able to manifest herself corporeally or imprint her images in diverse places. In books and magazines where Her cult is promoted, they narrate the miraculous interventions that have occurred; in which the Santa Muerte has freed them of several dangers and has helped them resolve complicated situations.

Many people owe their achievements and resolution of conflict to Her, so much so that they feel the need to adore her with altars and offerings.

FOR THE HOME

- † 1 image of the Santa Muerte in off-white or bone colour
- † 1 glass with water
- † 1 image of Christ or of the Cross
- † 1 pack of cigarettes
- † 1 Peace and Union votive candle
- † 3 red apples (ripe and juicy)
- † A small amount of honey
- † 1 flower vase
- † 4 red carnations
- † 1 glass containing rum, tequila or sherry (to taste)
- † 1 piece of whole wheat bread
- † 1 bunch of mini bananas
- † 1 new ashtray

Procedure:

Look for an appropriate place in which to place your altar; this could preferably be in the entrance to your home or in one of the rooms.

Install the shelf or mantelpiece and on it place the tablecloth, in the centre place the Santa Muerte. Beside her place the glass

with water and behind the glass place the cross or the image of Christ. Beside of the glass of water you must place the glass of wine (or other spirit) and the three apples.

After, begin distributing upon the altar the bread, the bananas, honey and cigarettes, it is recommended that two of the latter be lit, one for yourself and the other for your Santa, which should be left to one side in the ashtray, being careful of course. At the end of the ritual, put the cigarette out.

Proceed to install the vase with flowers at one side of the Santa Muerte. Right away you should light the votive candle and pray one Our Father and the prayer that comes included on the votive candle. Once this step is completed, make your petition strongly.

FOR PLACES OF BUSINESS

- † 1 image of Santa Muerte (gold)
- † 1 shelf (up to each person's taste)
- † 1 glass with water
- † 1 piece of whole wheat bread
- † 1 cigar
- † 7 coins
- † 1 bill of low denomination
- † 1 coconut
- † 3 red apples
- † 1 votive candle for businesses
- † 1 box of incense of myrrh in cones
- † 1 earthenware plate
- † 1 medium-sized wooden cross
- † 1 yellow tablecloth

Procedure:

Look for an appropriate place in which to hang your shelf, this could be at the entrance to your business or close to the place where you store or keep money. After placing the tablecloth on the shelf, proceed to place the Santa Muerte in the centre of this.

In front of the Santa place the glass of water, to one side of this place the bread

and coconut. On the earthenware plate, place the cross, the coins and the bill. To one side of the plate with the several items place the three apples.

Later, light the cigar, pull the smoke from this and apply it to your Santa (from three to four times is sufficient). Once you have finished this step, the cigar should be left on top of the apples (extinguished).

Proceed to light the two incense cones and leave them to burn on one side of your Santa. Light your votive candle, preferably with wooden matches and pray three *Our Fathers*, the prayer included on the candle and make your petition with faith and firmness. Your candle must remain lit while you are working.

The fruits, the bread and the water should be replaced as necessary. If you would like you can place flowers as needed.

FOR LEGAL OFFICES

- † 1 green Santa Muerte image
- † 1 green tablecloth
- † 1 set of scales
- † 1 coconut
- † 1 justice candle
- † A small amount of sugarcane
- † 6 red carnations
- † 1 cigar
- † 1 dark beer
- † 1 white plate
- † 8 breath mints
- † 12 coins
- † 1 magnet stone
- † 1 alum stone
- † 1 small earthenware plate

Procedure:

Look for a safe place to place your altar. Place your shelf in this space and the tablecloth on top, in the middle of this place your Santa Muerte. In front of your Santa place the beer, the coconut, the sugarcane molasses (on the

earthenware plate). To one side of the Santa Muerte you should place the flowers and on the other side place the white plate with the stones, the coins, and the mints. The scales are placed in either one of the Santa's hands and the following is spoken:

*That the roads may open politically,
legally, administratively and in work.
So be it.*

After that light the candle and pray the prayer printed on upon it. Remember to recite your petitions with faith and firmness. The molasses, coconut and beer should be replaced each week and the flowers as necessary.

FOR THE BEAUTY SALON

- † 1 off-white or bone-coloured image of the *Santa Muerte*
- † 1 yellow tablecloth
- † 1 shelf (up to each person's taste)
- † 1 pack of cigarettes
- † 1 glass of brandy
- † Small amount of honey
- † 1 red apple
- † 1 golden apple
- † 1 pouch of powdered cinnamon
- † 1 Laburnum votive candle
- † 7 coins
- † 3 red roses
- † 1 flower vase
- † 1 box of sandalwood incense

Procedure:

Look for a safe place in which to place your altar, fix the shelf to the wall, place the tablecloth and in the middle place your image of the Santa Muerte.

To one side of the Santa place the flower vase with the roses, and in front of that place the incense cones. After that the apples are placed and sprinkled with the cinnamon.

To one side of these is placed the glass of brandy and the honey.

Light two cigarettes, one for yourself and one is left for the Santa Muerte, when finished this one must be extinguished. Proceed to light the votive candle, pray the oration that is printed on the side and one *Our Father*; once this has been done, place the 7 coins to one side of the candle.

When the candle has run out, remove the coins and place them in your coin purse or wallet, and spend them as soon as possible. The apples, the flowers and the brandy should be replaced as often as necessary.

FOR MECHANICAL GARAGES

- † 1 image of the Santa Muerte
- † 1 shelf (up to each person's taste)
- † 9 small tools (miniature)
- † 1 bunch of mini bananas
- † 1 chocolate
- † 1 cigar
- † 6 white carnations
- † 1 box of copal incense sticks
- † 1 glass of red wine
- † 1 glass of water
- † 1 prosperity votive candle
- † 3 of your own coins
- † 1 earthenware plate
- † 1 medium alum stone
- † 1 box of storax incense
- † 1 yellow tablecloth
- † 1 ashtray

Procedure:

The image of the Santa Muerte that you're going to place on the altar is up to each person's choosing or according to the necessities of the location.

Look for an appropriate place for the altar. Place the shelf once you have chosen a spot and spread the tablecloth on it and place the image. In front of the Santa Muerte place the earthenware plate and on this place

the tools, the alum stone, the coins and the chocolate. To one side of the plate place the glass of water and the glass of wine.

The cigar must then be lit, smoking it repeatedly and applying the smoke to the Santa Muerte so that it is absorbed, what is left of the cigar should be left in the ashtray to one side of the glasses (water and wine), being careful to not let it fall.

After this, light your candle and pray the oration that is included on the side; once finished the oration, make your petition with much faith and firmness; you should always visualise your business with much success and prosperity. The candle should always remain lit while working; when you close your business the candle should be extinguished. With your candle light two incense sticks, one of copal and one of storax.

To one side of the Santa Muerte place the two carnations as well as the bananas. Change the altar items as deemed necessary.

FOR GROCERY STORES

- † 1 bone coloured or gold Santa Muerte image
- † 1 shelf
- † 1 yellow tablecloth
- † 1 success and fortune candle
- † 1 glass of water
- † 1 pack of cigarettes
- † 1 cross or figure of Christ
- † A small amount of honey
- † 1 glass of brandy
- † 3 red roses
- † 1 magnet stone
- † 3 needles
- † 1 ashtray
- † 1 box of jasmine incense

Procedure:

Look for a place for your altar. Place your shelf and on it your tablecloth, in the

middle of this place your Santa Muerte image. In front of the image you should place the ashtray and inside it the magnet, the needles and the cross or image of Christ.

To one side of the Santa Muerte place the roses in a vase and to one side the honey and brandy. Light the incense sticks and leave them to burn to one side of the image. Light the two cigarettes, one for yourself and one for your Santa; leave the cigarette in an ashtray, taking care that it doesn't fall. Later, light the candle and pray the prayer that is found printed on the side.

Remember when doing this that you should always visualise your business with success and economic prosperity. Change the items you're using for your Santa Muerte altar as needed.

FOR THE RESTAURANT

- † 1 gold Santa Muerte image
- † 1 white tablecloth
- † 1 glass of water
- † 1 shelf (up to each person's taste)
- † 1 pack of cigarettes
- † 1 piece of bread
- † 1 quick money candle
- † 1 white flower vase
- † 6 white carnations
- † 1 white plate
- † 12 of your own coins of different denominations
- † 1 spoonful of honey
- † 1 ashtray

Procedure:

Place the tablecloth on the shelf and in the middle of it your Santa Muerte. In front of Her place the glass of water and repeat:

May prosperity and success come to this business. That there never lack money for all involved in this business. So be it.

To one side of the water place the coins and the bread. Next to the Santa Muerte place the vase with the carnations in it and place the honey on the white plate. Light the cigarettes, one for you and the other for your Santa Muerte, this latter one should be left in the ashtray to one side of Her, taking care that it won't fall. Light the candle on the altar and pray two Our Fathers and the prayer included on the candle. Remember that the candle need only stay lit while you're working, once the business is closed the candle should be extinguished.

Altars for different circumstances

AGAINST MISFORTUNE

- † 1 golden candle of fortune
- † 1 gold Santa Muerte image
- † 1 glass of brandy
- † 2 cigarettes
- † 6 white carnations
- † 1 black amber stone
- † Golden thread (as required)
- † 1 bank note/bill
- † 12 coins of small denomination
- † 1 length of stick
"I can do more than you"
- † 1 glass of sugarcane
- † 1 shelf
- † Small handful of toasted maize
- † 1 jar of essence of success
- † 1 yellow tablecloth

Procedure:

Look for an appropriate place in which to set your altar. Next, install the shelf and place the tablecloth on it. Perfectly clean your Santa with *essence of success* and place it in the middle of the shelf. Place the candle in front, while you recite the following oration:

Oh miraculous Santisima Muerte, I come prostrate before you to ask and beg of you that you cover this house with your saintly hand so that misfortune and curse, envy and hate, shall never pass through the door; welcome you are, oh Lady of mine, I give you all of my trust, my thoughts and my deeds on this, your altar, and in your honour I present this light and money so that my people and I are never lacking, thank you Señora for the favours received. So be it.

Thereafter proceed to place the brandy, the carnations and molasses as desired. Then extend or unfold the bill and place the black amber upon it, as well as the coins and piece of stick.

Wrap this together and tie with the golden thread; while you are doing this concentrate and ask that things go well for you in any situation, that you may not be burdened by anything and that any doors may open for you that have been or will be in the future.

After, proceed to place the aforementioned wrapped objects on a plate together with the toasted maize. Lastly, light both the cigarettes, one for yourself and the other placed (unlit) on the Santa Muerte (on hands or otherwise).

FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

If you're developing in the spiritual medium and you want the Santisima Muerte to be your guide, you should place Her an altar in order to realize your development or to undertake your healings or simply to leave your deeds and works that you want to realise. Here we will instruct you on how to install your altar to this miraculous image.

- † 1 colour image of the Santa Muerte
- † 1 health, money and love candle
- † 1 essence of the Santa Muerte
- † 1 shelf
- † 1 white tablecloth
- † 3 white roses
- † 3 red carnations
- † 1 glass of water
(this must never be left out)
- † 1 cigar
- † 1 piece of chocolate
- † Sugarcane molasses
- † 3 red apples
- † 1 Maguey cactus spike (leaf)
- † 1 piece of "open roads" and "destrancadera" stick
- † 1 magnet stone
- † 1 black amber stone
- † 1 handfull of 12 different seeds
- † 1 earthenware plate

- † 3 needles
- † 1 glass of tequila
- † 12 coins and 1 bill
- † 1 pair of scissors
- † 1 used key

Procedure:

Assign a special place for the altar. Install the shelf here. On top of the shelf place the tablecloth.

Clean your Santa Muerte with the essence. After that place it in the middle of the shelf. Light the candle and take it in your hands as you recite the following:

Oh Lady of mine, welcome to your home, prostrate before you I come with my faith and spiritual firmness, so that you may guide me toward the path of clairvoyance and that you grant me the power to help my fellow beings, I ask you Señora that you protect me from whatever adversity, sickness, whether natural or provoked, and misfortune.

FOR WORKS OR PROJECTS

- † 1 parafin “looking for work” candle
- † 1 white Santa Muerte image
- † 1 glass of sherry
- † 1 earthenware plate
- † 1 white tablecloth
- † 1 cigar
- † 1 shelf
- † 6 red carnations
- † 1 piece of “destrancadera” stick
- † 3 candies
- † 1 bank note/bill
- † 3 coins
- † 1 meter of ribbon
- † 1 handful of sunflower seeds
- † 1 used key (that is no longer of use)
- † 1 piece of brown paper
- † 1 jar of Santa Muerte lotion

Procedure:

Look for an adequate space for your altar and install your shelf there. On the shelf place the tablecloth, and on it the Santa Muerte image in the middle of the shelf. Clean your image with the lotion, place the candle in front of the Santa Muerte, light it and recite the following oration:

Oh Santísima Muerte, bless this candle so that it may light my way, that the projects I undertake be granted without any difficulty and prostrate I come to you so that you fulfill my needs. That the eyes of men see me with good will and that their trust is placed in me. Thank you Señora for the favours received.

Afterward, write on the brown piece of paper your full name and that of the person who can help you find work, your future boss or the name of the company you wish to work for.

Then place the coins on the piece of paper, the piece of stick, the key and the bill; wrap it all up and tie it with the ribbon. Then place a few of the sunflower seeds on the earthenware plate and on top of this place the wrapped package. Light the cigar and leave it to one side of the Santa Muerte.

When you have been granted your wish, place a small offering; it could be a candle of the same, a cigar, a bottle of wine or your favourite flowers. You must leave the wrapped package there for some time. If a family member has a similar problem with work, undertake the same project you did for yourself. With regard to the maintenance of the altar, this depends on you, as you must always keep it clean and always full of light and in this way you will see positive results.

FOR THE STUDENT

- † 1 wisdom candle
- † 1 blue Santa Muerte image
- † 1 glass of red wine
- † 1 glass of water
- † 1 earthenware plate
- † 1 cup of coffee
- † 3 white roses
- † 3 golden delicious apples
- † coloured candies
- † 1 magnet stone
- † 3 needles
- † 1 white tablecloth
- † 1 shelf
- † 1 piece of “vencedor” stick.
- † 1 jar of Santa Muerte essence
- † 2 pieces of paper (1 white and 1 brown)

Procedure:

Place the shelf in a place where it will hold firm and place on it the tablecloth. Clean your Santa Muerte with the essence. Then place it in the middle of the shelf.

In front of your Santa Muerte place your candle and recite the oration that is printed on the side of it (if you happen to have a problem with a certain subject in school, a teacher, counselor or a fellow student). It is recommended you write the name of the person (or persons) or problem you’re having on the piece of brown paper. Place this under the candle; do this the necessary amount of times. Then place the glass of wine, the glass of water, the cup of coffee, the white roses, the candies and the apples, one by one (the placement is up to your personal judgment). Write your complete name and the name of your school on the piece of white paper. This you must then place on the earthenware plate. On top you will place the magnet, the needles and the piece of stick. This plate must always be on the altar beside the Santa Muerte, as this will serve to overcome any obstacle no matter how difficult it may seem.

The maintenance of this altar depends on you, but it is recommended that you always keep it in good conditions. Light the candle.

FOR TRAVELLERS

- † 1 shelf to each person’s taste
- † 1 white Santa Muerte candle
- † 1 white tablecloth
- † 1 bone-coloured Santa Muerte
- † 1 glass of tequila
- † 1 white plate
- † 1 piece of bread (bun)
- † 1 red apple
- † 5 white carnations
- † 12 coins
- † 1 glass of water
- † 1 Santa Muerte lotion

Procedure:

Search for an appropriate place for your altar and install your shelf. Then place the tablecloth on top. Remember that this altar should not include any other religious images. Proceed to place your Santa Muerte in the middle of the altar. Clean your image with the Santa Muerte lotion. In front of her you should place and light the candle and recite the following prayer:

Oh my Señora, by your divine powers and infinite power I ask you that you liberate me of all spiritual and material dangers of (say the name of whichever person you wish) so that I always arrive safe and sound to your altar, as we admire your power and for this we ask you never leave us. So be it.

Thereafter place little by little all of the ingredients, except the bread and coins, as these must be placed on the white plate. Replace all of the ingredients as many times as is necessary, the glass of water should be replaced no less than once a week.

FOR ALCOHOLISM

- † 1 bone-coloured Santa Muerte image
- † 1 white tablecloth
- † 1 glass of wine
(the ill person's preferred kind)
- † 1 flower vase
- † 1 Santa Muerte oration or stamp.
- † 1 meter of purple ribbon
- † 1 white rose candle
- † 1 black (ink) pen
- † 1 dozen flowers (whichever you prefer)

Procedure:

Look for an adequate place for your altar. Place the tablecloth on it and then the Santa Muerte image.

Write the ill person's name 3 times on the oration or stamp, and then roll it up with the ribbon so that the paper is completely covered.

Then introduce the oration, already wrapped, into the glass of wine and place it beside your Santa Muerte.

Light the candle, recite the oration that is printed on the side and repeat three times the name of the ill person. Then make your petition to the Santa Muerte and ask that they be distanced from this vice (*say the name of the ill person*) or what you wish for most for this person and let the candle burn down to the end.

Place the flower vase on the altar along with the flowers you have chosen. You should change the wine along with the paper once a week and repeat the procedure. The wine should be disposed of down the drain and the oration (still wrapped) buried in a plant pot so that the vice is buried little by little.

The Ten Commandments of the Santa Muerte

Thou shalt worship Death with all due respect.

Thou shalt not use her name in vain.

Thou shalt worship her on her days of feast.

Thou shalt honour all of your brethren of the same faith.

Thou shalt not harm anyone.

Thou shalt not commit acts that harm our religion of worshipping Death.

Thou shalt not abuse thy spiritual knowledge.

Thou shalt not give false testimony with respect to her.

Thou shalt not have thoughts that bring thee to profit from her.

Thou shalt not desire other people's riches.

The Bar-Tur Photobook Award

The Photographers' Gallery and philanthropist Amnon Bar-Tur are delighted to be collaborating on the Bar Tur Photobook Award. Recognising the invaluable role publishing can play in establishing the careers of emerging photographers, the Award is open to all recent UK graduates and is judged by a rotating jury of visual arts professionals.

In this inaugural year, we are honoured to have had the opportunity to work with winning photographer Angus Fraser (b.1975, UK) and London-based Trolley Books on Santa Muerte – an in-depth, conceptually sustained and visually accomplished documentary project about the cult of Santa Muerte (Holy Death) in Mexico.

We are immensely grateful to Amnon and Armon Bar-Tur and their family for their support and enthusiasm in making this Award possible. We are also grateful to Hannah Watson at Trolley Books, selected as this year's publishing partner, for her collaboration, expertise and insight, book designer Victoria Forrest for her distinguished design talents, and to Anna Dannemann, curator, The Photographers' Gallery for her contribution to all stages in the realisation of this project. Finally, we are naturally indebted to Angus Fraser for producing such a compelling project that has translated so dynamically into the publication you find here.

This Award was established in memory of the late Ann Lesley Bar-Tur (1947–1984) painter, sculptor and mother.

Brett Rogers OBE
Director
The Photographers' Gallery

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Angus Fraser

Angus Fraser began his photographic career in the London advertising scene. In 2010, he completed his MA in Photography to focus on more research driven projects. He has exhibited internationally and won awards in venues such as: Arles Photography Festival, France; Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK; National Portrait Gallery's Photography Award, London, UK; International Photography Awards, New York, USA and Center, Santa Fe Awards, New Mexico, USA. He now resides in Whitstable, Kent. He likes rock pools, travelling and eating shellfish.
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Eva Aridjis

Eva Aridjis is a Mexican filmmaker. Her award winning documentary *La Santa Muerte* (2007) explores the origins of the cult and takes us on a tour of the altars, prisons and neighbourhoods in Mexico City where some of the skeleton saint's most devoted followers can be found.

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