

# The New York Times

## Seeing Things | Pedro Guerrero's Modern Times

By [BROOKE HODGE](#)

March 29, 2012



Self Portrait of Guerrero in his Manhattan studio, 1950. *Pedro Guerrero*, courtesy of *Edward Cella Art + Architecture*

During a career that has spanned more than seven decades, the photographer Pedro Guerrero has worked with many of the 20th century's great architects. He is best known, however, for photographing the buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright. Guerrero first met Wright in 1939, when he "cold-called" the architect looking for work. The photographer, spry and feisty at 94 years old, described their first meeting when I spoke to him by phone last week from his home in Florence, Ariz. "My father, who was a sign painter, had done some work for Mr. Wright and encouraged me to meet him," Guerrero recalled. "Since we didn't have a telephone, I left a note for him at the paint store requesting a meeting. He agreed, and I took off across the desert to meet him at his camp in the foothills. I had seen a picture of him in Time magazine as well as photos of Fallingwater, but I didn't put two and two together until we met. When he greeted me, I rather audaciously introduced myself as 'Pedro Guerrero, the photographer.' I showed him my samples and he offered me some work. It was my first job!" The rest, as they say, is history.

A new exhibition, “Pedro E. Guerrero: Photographs of Modern Life,” on view at the [Woodbury University Hollywood Gallery](#) from April 5-25, is the first extensive presentation on the West Coast of Guerrero’s life and work. “We thought this was the right time for an exhibition of Pedro’s work,” said Emily Bills, who, with Anthony Fontenot, organized the exhibition for the university’s Julius Shulman Institute. “We decided to show work that represents different aspects of his career, from modern architecture, to portraits of designers, to color spreads of interiors he shot for lifestyle magazines.” Guerrero moved to Los Angeles from his native Arizona in 1937 to join his brother at Art Center School (now [Art Center College of Design](#)). “There were very few opportunities for me as a Mexican in Arizona,” Guerrero said, “so I decided to try my hand at art. The art classes were full, so I signed up for photography. It was the first time I’d thought about photography and I fell in love with it!”

After school, Guerrero lived for many years in New Canaan, Conn., since “Julius Shulman had it all wrapped up in Los Angeles,” he said, referring to the renowned photographer of California Modernist architecture. On the East Coast, Guerrero photographed buildings by Eero Saarinen, Marcel Breuer, Edward Durrell Stone and Philip Johnson, and artworks by Louise Nevelson and Alexander Calder, but he always remained loyal to Wright. “Mr. Wright gave me my first job,” the photographer explained, “and I didn’t want him to call and say come and bring your cameras and then have to say that I was busy working for Breuer.” Guerrero also noted that the exhibition of his work gave him the opportunity to rediscover images that he hadn’t looked at in over 50 years. He’ll be at the opening to answer questions and, no doubt, tell a story or two about his epic career.