

OBSCURA GALLERY

Collect & Preserve

AND SO WE MOVED TO PETACA

An exhibition of photographs by Lynn Adler documenting life in the tiny village of Petaca, New Mexico, in the early 1970s.



LYNN ADLER, *Luella At Sundown*, 1971, 5 x 7.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 7.

Friday, May 29, 2026
Book Signing: 4pm
Artist Reception: 5-7pm

Exhibition is on view May 8 through June 6, 2026

Obscura Gallery is thrilled to present an exhibition and book signing for *And So We Moved To Petaca: Portrait of a New Mexico Community*, with photographs by Lynn Adler and curated by Bill Shapiro. The exhibition and recent book publication (University of New Mexico Press, 2026) is a sublime photographic chronicle of the efforts of several counterculture families to adopt a traditional Nuevomexicano life in the tiny village of Petaca, New Mexico, in the early 1970s. The book signing starts at 4pm on Friday May 29, 2026 with an artist reception to follow from 5-7pm. The exhibition is on view May 8 through June 6, 2026.

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LYNN ADLER, *Outside the Bar*, 1972, 5.5 x 7.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 7.

In the early 1970s, history tells us, there weren't many women photographers and fewer still who were recognized for using their camera to make ethnographic studies. Lynn Adler was a self-taught photographer using an old 35 mm camera her mother had left to her. But her instinct for seeing the collision of cultures, along with her savant's eye for constructing beautiful frames, allowed her to capture a moment both rare and spectacular in a tiny village in Northern New Mexico called Petaca.



LYNN ADLER, *Marty and Gloria's adobe home*, 5 x 7.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 7.



LYNN ADLER, *Theodoro's beans*, 1973, 5.75 x 6", archival pigment ink print, edition of 7.

At the time, Petaca was home to about fifty very traditional Hispano families with roots in the area going back well over a hundred years. The town had no schools, no hospital, no stoplights; it had one church, one bar, one dry-goods store, and a single gas pump. Spanish was nearly everyone's first language, and the only real employment had been a mineral mill, shut down in the 1950s. Most families got by as subsistence farmers. These families were joined by people who had left San Francisco and New York City, seeking a more rooted life. It was while visiting friends who'd moved to Petaca that Lynn Adler made these photographs between 1970 and 1974.



LYNN ADLER, *1951 Plymouth Concord*, 1971, 4.5 x 9.75", archival pigment ink print, edition of 7.

Lynn's intimately sized black-and-white photographs show her Anglo friends deep in the hard work of homesteading and raising families; they show the local people tending the crops and looking after their animals; and they show when members of both groups came together.

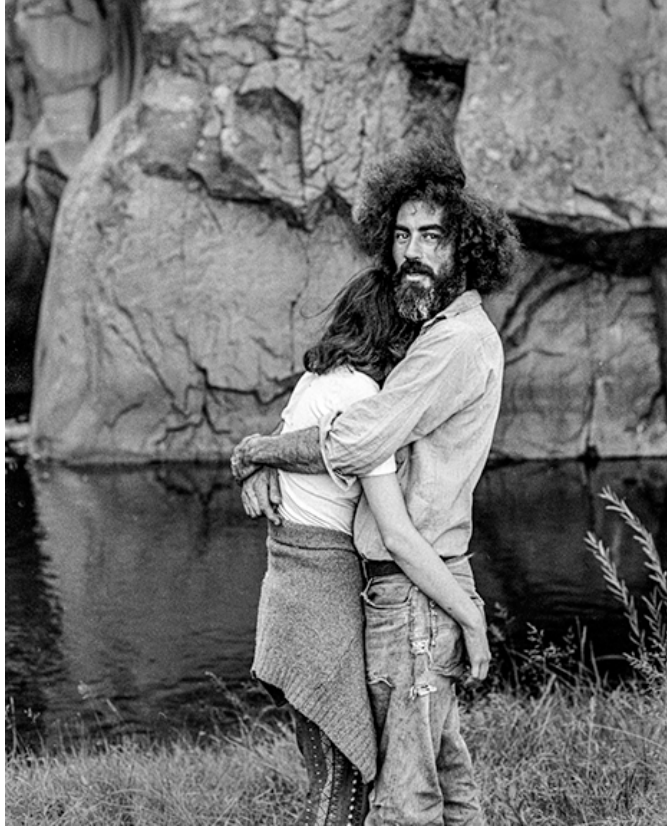


LYNN ADLER, *The road to Petaca*, 1971, 4.5 x 10", archival pigment ink print, edition of 7.

It has been half a century since Adler last looked through her viewfinder at Petaca. The children who ran through her pictures are now deep into middle age, and the older people are gone. If not for these photographs, this fleeting moment would have been lost to time, and this story of community and conflict would never have been seen.



LYNN ADLER, *Working the land*, 1972, 5 x 7.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 7.



LYNN ADLER, *Solace in the canyon*, 1973, 5.5 x 7.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 7.

Documentary photographer and filmmaker Lynn Adler is a founder of Optic Nerve, a San Francisco-based film and photography collective, and Ideas in Motion. She has made community-based documentaries and videos around the world and acted as producer and archivist for many PBS films on NOVA, American Experience, POV, and American Masters. Her work has also appeared on HBO. While much of her career centered around film, her still photography has remained a constant over the decades.

Bill Shapiro is a former editor in chief of *LIFE* magazine and the founder of BluePhoto.co.