

The photographer who learned to see without colors



Mario Manzano photographs nature without ever having seen green or blue. This retired Tec professor has decided to pursue his passion behind the camera

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Mario Manzano

Mario Manzano has spent his life **photographing landscapes** composed of **colors he has never** been able to **see**.

He is **color blind: he cannot distinguish very well between greens and blues**. For him, a green traffic light is a white light that says “go,” and a red flower, when it grows among leaves, can disappear from his sight.

For years, he believed that this different way of seeing was a disadvantage, but now it has become his hallmark as a photographer, **a vision that does not depend on color but rather on light and shadow**.

Mario can see things that almost no one else perceives. He sees how the light rests on a dry leaf or how a shadow stretches across the sand.

Although he has been taking photos all his life, he only decided to devote himself fully to photography at the age of 65, after having **retired recently as a [Tecnológico de Monterrey](#) professor.**

Mario Manzano's technique is fine art photography of nature in black and white. / Photo: Mario Manzano



A look that does not depend on color

While contemporary nature photography pursues the perfect blue sky or the most intense red, **Mario works in black and white.**

“I’ve never seen the famous green; I see white”.

As a child, he would go to the fabric store for red or gray thread and always come back with the wrong one.

In the countryside, the flowers were lost among the foliage. **At school, he couldn't follow the color codes in the botany books.**

That was until a teacher in high school put a name to what was happening to him.

"She said to me, 'Come on, Mario, we're going to run some tests on you.' She took out a book with circles filled with lots of little colored dots, and I had to tell her what number I saw inside each circle".

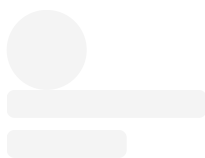
"I believe that the first photos I took weren't with a camera but with my eyes" - Mario Manzano

She told him the test results immediately: ***"You're color blind. It's a congenital condition, and you have to adapt because you're going to live with it".***

"She never told me I had a problem. That helped me not feel traumatized".

However, he thought it was a **disadvantage** for a long time, until one day, while taking photographs, he realized that it could be an advantage.

"Mycongenital condition hid certain colors from me, and that helped me not get so distracted when taking a photo. That's when I began to see that I could add value to that disadvantage and turn it into an advantage, into an opportunity".



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When photography ceased being a hobby

For years, **photography was a quiet passion in his life**. He always took a camera with him on field trips with his students. He always documented the landscape.

But everything changed in 2023. That year, the Tec offered him the opportunity to put together an exhibition.

“Mario Adrián Flores supported me in putting together an exhibition. They financed me, and he put the communications team at my disposal”.

Mario Adrián Flores is the current Vice President of the Monterrey campus.

Mario went through the entire process: curation, selection, installation, and dialogue with students.

The exhibition was called **Resilient Nature** and was first inaugurated at the **Conference Center on Monterrey campus** during the **Sustenta** student conference, before being moved to the library.

Something unexpected happened there.

“That exhibition refreshed me. It injected me with something I already had but didn’t realize”.

For the first time, he saw himself as an artist. That’s where the idea of devoting himself to photography after retirement was born.

“Life doesn’t end when you retire. You retire from work, not from life” - Mario Manzano

This photograph tells the story of a place without water, of a poplar tree that refuses to die, is alive, and sustains life (birds’ nests). It’s one of Mario’s favorites. / Photo: Mario Manzano



You don’t retire from life

devote himself seriously to photography.

*"Life doesn't end when you retire. **You retire from work, not from life.** The worst thing you can do when you retire is to do nothing. If there's something you're passionate about, do it".*

Then he began to see how **photography could be a way of life.**

"If I was going to devote myself to it, then it had to be profitable".

He began to promote his photography. His pieces were selling, there were people willing to pay for them, and he started his photography project.

To get his project off the ground, he hired young people from the Tec, specialists in business, marketing, and networking: *"pure Tec talent."*

They are helping him to **build his social media networks**, as well as produce short videos and content where he continues to teach. He is also **working on his website with them.**

"My congenital condition hid certain colors from me, and that helped me not get so distracted when taking a photo" - Mario Manzano

"Although Instagram is for promotion, the website is like, 'Come to my house, visit me, sit down, walk around the house, take a tour of the collections. Do any of them interest you? Well, click here, and you can buy it'".

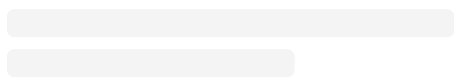
Furthermore, his work now lives outside his networks. He has a collection called *Murmurs of Nature* in **a gallery in Santiago, Nuevo León.** *"It's the first time I've worked like this, selling my photos through someone else".*

And he wants more. ***"I want to make a book about each exhibition** so that they aren't forgotten, so that something remains in our hands".*

He's preparing workshops, courses, field trips, and *masterclasses.* *"I'm already putting together a couple of workshops, one online and one in person".*



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The Tec as a place of transformation

When he arrived at Tecnológico de Monterrey in Monterrey, Mario was already a trained academic who came from public universities. He did not know that another reset awaited him there.

*“Being at the Tec was more than a **privilege** for me; it was a blessing. I discovered a whole new world”.*

He learned something there he had never been taught before: how to manage **and finance himself as a researcher**.

“I learned how to manage projects, prepare proposals, and administer resources. I didn’t learn that in school; I learned it at the Tec”.

“I devoted my life to studying nature, then another half-life to teaching it” -Mario Manzano

He was a researcher at the Center for Environmental Quality and later a **founding professor of the Engineering for Sustainable Development program**.

“Creating a degree program from scratch and designing the programs and courses was a fabulous experience”.

He also participated in the **master’s** and **doctoral** programs in Environmental Systems. He supervised theses and trained female scientists, to mention just a few of his achievements.

“Four of my doctoral students, all of them women, are now highly successful professionals. The greatest satisfaction a teacher can have is seeing his students achieve such great success”.

Mario has made new friends through his photography, including a wildlife photographer who taught him to appreciate birds in a different way. / Photo: Mario Manzano



Growing up in love with nature

Mario grew up in the **Mixteca region of Oaxaca, a semi-desert area**. From a very young age, nature called to him: he would spend hours simply contemplating it.

“My mother would ask me, ‘What are you doing?’ ‘I’m looking at the moon.’ ‘And what do you see in it?’ ‘I see it’”.

He didn’t know then that he was training one of the muscles that would accompany him throughout his life: **observation**.

“I believe that the first photos I took weren’t with a camera but with my eyes”.

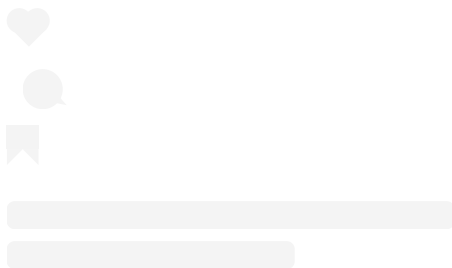
Those hours of contemplation inevitably led him to love nature. **He studied forestry engineering**, then a master’s degree, then a **doctorate in Canada** in natural resource management.

Mario spent more than two decades training engineers, scientists, and environmentalists at the Tec. *“I devoted my life to studying nature, then another half-life to teaching it”.*

Today, at 65, he travels through deserts and mountains with a camera hanging around his neck, searching for something that does not appear on maps: light.



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