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# photograph

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We asked Wendy Ewald to tell us about a picture that means something to her, and why. Wendy Ewald: Works, Projects, Collaborations: 1975-1996 is on view at Steven Kasher Gallery through June 2.

If ever I doubt the capacity of photography to dive deep and astound me, I look at this picture by Sebastian Gomez Hernandez, a 12-year-old boy in Chamula, Mexico. It's been 27 years since Sebastian brought me his bucket of sodium sulfite with some large-format negatives floating in it – one of them *The Devil Is Spying on the Girls*, as he titled it later.

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I work in a way that encourages the giving of such gifts. I'd asked Sebastian and other Tzotzil children to photograph their dreams or fantasies. I was worried that they might be disdainful of the idea, because for them the role of dreams in their lives is as important as the role of waking events.

I explained as briefly as I could what we would be doing. They giggled excitedly. "Fantasías?" they said, as if both the sound and the idea of the word were funny in a familiar way.

The next day I realized that they knew exactly what I was talking about. They turned up with masks they'd made from the gray inside-out sides of cracker boxes. One was the mask of a jaguar, another of a demon, and another was a devil with horns sticking out from the sides of his jaw. The resemblance to figures in Mayan glyphs was striking.

Sebastian used an awkward Polaroid Pro-Pack camera with positive/negative film to make this miraculous picture. He must have asked one of his younger siblings to put on the devil mask and climb up into the little tree.

When he brought me his negatives to wash I was in awe of the composition with the tree branches floating into the picture. And just how did Sebastian's little brother or sister get up in that tree?