2. *Coco*, 1993

The first half of the exhibition is dedicated to Lixenberg's monumental project titled *Imperial Courts*, now in its 33rd year. The work began in the spring of 1993 when a then 29-year-old Lixenberg visited the Imperial Courts public housing development in the wake of massive protests and unrest.

Once there Lixenberg spent time with residents, listened to their stories and captured stunning portraits steeped in humanity. About the series Lixenberg has said, "I wanted to show something that I didn't think was seen before." Indeed, before Lixenberg's series, few would picture gentle, contemplative portraits when conjuring up images of the residents of Los Angeles public housing projects.

Lixenberg's portrait of Coco, with her resolute gaze, is a hopeful one. Here a young pregnant women faces the future with determination. She holds her right arm across her chest in what appears to

be a protective gesture, but her left arm on her hip connotes that she has found solid footing. The photograph is poignant, but avoids sentimentality.

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