THE APARTMENT IN SAN JOSE



I visited the apartment today – the one abandoned over a year ago.

He had lived there since 1964. It looks as if he was preparing to leave – there were some things in boxes, and the place is a little to messy with junk. But all his things seem to be still there. He must have gone with very little.

So why did he leave? There are rumors locally that someone was after him. After he left, no one heard any more.



I took the cameras to record this personal archaeology and found it very disturbing. Yes the place will have to be cleared; but this everyday detritus seemed just too intimate …

Not intimate articles, but the lack of design and presentation, the way the stuff was just left lying, prepared for no one else …

The intimacy, ironically, heightened by absence and distance.

Maybe this is why I screwed up some of the film I was using.

How can anyone ever think that this kind of ethnography is somehow neutral? – the ethics of looking into someone's life – of handling, even loking at their things – awkward matters for an anthropologist/archaeologist.

More to come …