



La Cultura in Mexico City

A new museum puts a spotlight on the capital's ever-evolving arts scene

BY MARIDEL REYES

MEXICO CITY COMES WITH SOME BAGGAGE. People still associate the capital with crime, overcrowding and traffic. But beneath this grit, Mexico City has always had art in its DNA. After all, Diego Rivera painted his first murals here, and Frida Kahlo was born, worked and died on the outskirts of town.

Work continues on the new building for the Jumex Collection, the largest private art collection in Latin America. The building is in the upscale Polanco neighborhood.

COURTESY OF THE JUMEX COLLECTION

COURTESY OF THE MUSEO SOUMAYA



The Museo Soumaya is in a silver cloud-like building, reminiscent of a sculpture.



Casts by Rodin, a favorite artist of Carlos Slim, fill the museum.

In November, the Jumex Collection's new building opened to the public, cementing Mexico City's place as a must-see destination on the international art circuit. The contemporary art museum, located in the wealthy Polanco neighborhood, is funded by food and juice baron Eugenio López. It's the largest private contemporary arts collection in Latin America and features works by Tacita Dean, Olafur Eliasson, Martin Kippenberger and Bruce Nauman. The new museum sits on what's been dubbed "Millionaire's Row," next door to Museo Soumaya, owned by Carlos Slim, telecommunications magnate and one of the world's richest men.

"Mexico City is one of the urban areas that has the largest density of museums in the world," says Patrick Charpenel Corvera, director of the Jumex Collection. "Mexico has a big cultural infrastructure. That makes it easy for artists and ar-

MUSEO SOUMAYA

Carlos Slim spent \$70 million on a 150-foot tall anvil encased in 16,000 aluminum plates. The 66,000-piece collection includes works by Picasso, Renoir, Dali, Da Vinci, Rodin and Rivera.

Star attraction: The top floor is devoted to sculpture and features the biggest collection of Rodin sculptures outside of the Rodin Museum in Paris.

Exploring tips: Call ahead to make reservations for a private tour customized to your interests and time constraints.

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra 303, Ampliación Granada, Miguel Hidalgo

ART HISTORY

About 10 years ago, a handful of patrons helped make the city a safer place for creating, exhibiting and enjoying art.

Carlos Slim, the telecommunications magnate, kicked off the revival of the Centro Histórico, once the hub of Spain's 17th-century colonial empire. He redeveloped properties and rented out space to young artists at bargain prices.

"Mexico City's contemporary art scene has been boiling since the 1990s," says Ricardo Porrero, director of the city's first-ever Art Gallery Weekend, which launched this September. "A fantastic generation of artists born during the late '60s and early '70s have changed the art production and exhibition formats and gave our city great visibility in the art world."

tistic production to show, to publish and to put artworks in circulation."

The Jumex Collection opens with two exhibitions in the main space of the museum. One show highlights the permanent collection, which includes pieces by Mexican artists Gabriel Orozco and Carlos Amorales and international artists Franz West, Ugo Rondinone and Andy Warhol. The other is an installation by American sculptor Fred Sandback.

Outside, a Damian Ortega installation resembles a gigantic clock. The perpetual motion piece displays domestic objects moving in orbit. "It will be like a planetarium with different objects turning and turning. And every hour, it will be perfectly aligned," says Corvera. ●



MUSEO MEMORIA Y TOLERANCIA

Its goals are high-minded—to expose discrimination, make people confront their own prejudices and promote peace—and the exhibits are moving. (Take a chilling walk into a train car that was used to take people to Auschwitz, for example.) The late Mexican artist Helen Escobedo created an "introspection room" with a ceiling platform that moves down and then up, symbolizing oppression and liberation.

Star attraction: 20,000 crystalline "tears" suspended in the main hall signify the 2 million young victims of genocide worldwide.

Exploring tip: Take the elevator to the top floor and work your way down.

Plaza Juárez, Centro Histórico



MUSEO UNIVERSITARIO DEL CHOPO

Located in the boho neighborhood of Santa María la Ribera, the building is reminiscent of the Musée d'Orsay. It's housed in a 1902 glass-and-steel Beaux Arts structure imported from Germany. Inside, the space is bright white, with iron bridges connecting high-ceilinged galleries hung with contemporary works by Mexican artists such as Xavier Esqueda.

Star attraction: The top floor's Fanzinoteca gathers and studies self-published 'zines. Take a seat and page through to your heart's content.

Exploring tip: Start at the ground floor, where larger-than-life installations are exhibited.

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