

TheMedium

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President's Column



Dear ARLIS/NA Texas-Mexico members and friends,

Our chapter gathering in Mexico City this October was a rare opportunity to not only visit a place of incredibly rich culture, but also to connect with Mexican colleagues to further our relations – and truly live up to our Texas-Mexico name! And I must say that we were given an incredibly warm and gracious welcome by many new friends and colleagues. I want to thank each of them and especially our colleague Fernando Corona, who served as our superb liaison, interpreter, and guide.

Among the things that I'm most heartened by were the potential outcomes from this event – of which there are many. Firstly, several of our Mexican colleagues have expressed interest in joining the chapter, which speaks to the positive tenor engendered by our visit. We made a verbal commitment to return to Mexico at least once every five years to further relations and explore new parts of this diverse country. Additionally, our experience has opened up a dialogue with the Society's Executive Board about establishing affiliations with select Mexican library organizations. We've also voiced our support for a recently drafted International Relations Committee (IRC) proposal to the Executive Board to create a special international members rate – as this is clearly a major hurdle in drawing Mexican members.

At an institutional level, opportunities for exchanging publications with our counterparts are already underway between select libraries. Lastly, the photographic frenzy that was elicited by the sites of Mexico City has encouraged us to explore ways to best share and preserve images not only from this conference, but also to gather those from past events and into the future. More to come on this front.

Per usual, much is afoot with our vibrant and active group of art information professionals!

Finally, let me express my gratitude for allowing me to serve as your chapter President again. It's been an honor and a delight.

All my best,

Jon Evans
President, ARLIS/NA Texas-Mexico Chapter
Chief Librarian
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Chapter Meeting Report: Chapter Meeting Overview

Between Wednesday October 12th and Saturday October 15th, we undertook in Mexico City a series of activities unheard of for both the members of ARLIS/NA Texas-Mexico Chapter and fellow colleagues in charge of the libraries, archives, and centers for documentation in Mexico City. It was the first time that ARLIS/NA Texas-Mexico was officially present in the Mexican capital and reciprocally it was the first time that Mexican librarians had heard or had news from the Art Libraries Society of North America. The door was thusly opened for many expectations and emotions that began to form a course and a pulse that will undoubtedly remain open for more voices and perspectives to be integrated.

On Wednesday, we began the itinerary in the heart of Mexico City, the downtown full of hustle and bustle, as well as history – where every corner can surprise with a masterpiece or an unexpected detail. That happened to us a couple of hours before the beginning of the tour of the museums. The lunch in the Sanborns House of Tiles left many present astonished when, walking by the steps that connect the main dining room with the upper floor, they came upon the mural *Omniscience* by José Clemente Orozco. By 3 PM we were all ready to start a triple visit. First, the National Museum of Art let us see, guided by Chief Librarian Abigail Molleda, the rich collection of books and magazines on Mexican and Latin American Art. We continued with a tour of the masterpieces of nineteenth-century landscape painter José María Velasco. We then walked to the Franz Mayer Museum, where after visiting the permanent collection the head of the library, Miriam Velázquez, showed us the exceptional and ancient treasures in the Cervantes Collection (the most important in Latin America). Finally, we arrived at the Museum of the Palace of Fine Arts, the cultural emblem of the city and the country, where we toured the admirable murals on the second floor accompanied by museum researchers who explained the qualities and details of each of the murals: Siqueiros, Rivera, Orozco, Tamayo, Rodríguez Lozano ... paintings, sculptures, photographs, architecture – everything was combined into a mental mosaic with which we returned to the National Museum of Art to enjoy a generous cocktail sponsored by the Trust and the Director. Finally, we went to our chapter dinner in the beautiful restaurant Azul Histórico (Historic Blue), where a copy of a famous mural by Manuel Rodríguez Lozano welcomes visitors.

On Thursday we opened the doors of important collections in the south of the city, the so-called University City, at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the country's highest house of studies. First, with colleagues at the Institute of Aesthetic Research, we learned about the secrets and ways of working with the richest collection of research on artists and exhibitions in Mexico from coordinator Ángeles Juárez, and members of her team. From there we walked to the University Museum of Contemporary Art, where the coordinator of the documentation center, Sol Henaro, and the researchers Elva Peniche and Clara Bolívar, welcomed us for a presentation on important issues related to museums and libraries in the field of contemporary art. We returned to downtown to have a lunch at the restaurant of an iconic hotel with over a century of tradition, La Capilla (The Chapel). In the afternoon the chapter members were free to explore



Omniscience,

José Clemente Orozco

Chapultepec Park, including the halls of the National Museum of Anthropology and History, the most important representative of Mexican culture.

On Friday we were housed and sheltered by the Palace of the Counts of San Mateo de Valparaíso of the National Bank of Mexico, one of the historical and cultural headquarters of Citibanamex. First we toured the nooks of the historical archive, where are safeguarded the documentary, bibliographical, photographic and numismatic treasures of the bank. We also toured significant corridors with samples from one of the most important private art collections in Mexico and closed the visit with an explanation of the venue of our Annual Chapter Meeting, the Old Board Room, where an informal meeting with colleagues of libraries in Mexico and representatives of associations and libraries networks also took place. After the meal sponsored by the Directorate of Institutional Affairs, we returned for the presentations of members of the chapter. In the afternoon, we went to some unexpected places not included in the usual visits to the historic center: the Miguel Lerdo de Tejada Library of the Ministry of Finance, with a surprising postmodern mural inside an ancient enclosure that was religious in the past, and the Estanquillo Museum, home to the collection of cartoons and photographs of one of the most important Mexican writers in the second half of the 20th century, Carlos Monsiváis.

Finally, on Saturday, we made the long journey of almost 27 miles north of the city to arrive at the town of Tepotzotlán, headquarters of the National Museum of Viceroyalty. We delighted in the architecture of the old Jesuit school and the works of art spread throughout the grounds, the old library where we received an explanation on the handling of ancient materials, and the majestic altarpiece. At the conservation area we attended a workshop on working with documents, paintings, and ancient sculptures. We returned with a different taste of a Mexico away from the capital and its bustling historic center, where we finished the day visiting the back of the Metropolitan Cathedral and one side of the Templo Mayor in a panoramic and significant restaurant, La Casa de las Sirenas (The House of Mermaids).

This was just over 72 hours of a planning calendar with which we wished as a team to provide an unforgettable experience of the cultural Mexico, the Mexico of the palaces and the history distributed in the venues and the streets. We have left the door open and there will surely be more episodes of ARLIS in Mexico City, and above all there will be more Mexican participation in the future ARLIS/NA experiences.

Fernando Corona
Coordinator
Historical Archive Citibanamex

Chapter Meeting Report: Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes (Museum of the Palace of Fine Arts)

Our group convened inside the grand lobby of the Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes – officially opened in 1934 – where we met our guide Cesar who lead us to three murals painted by Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco respectively. While our group had time to view three murals, the institution is home to 17 murals in toto, and, according to Cesar, the only place in the world where these three artists' works are exhibited together.



Diego Rivera, *Man, Controller of the Universe* (1934) in the Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes. Photograph by Elizabeth Schaub.

We began in front of Diego Rivera's work titled *Man, Controller of the Universe* (1934). Cesar explained that the mural was based on the 1933 commission for 30 Rockefeller Plaza, Rockefeller Center in New York titled *Man at the Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future* (1933), which was unfinished and subsequently destroyed.



Diego Rivera is shown at work on his *Man at the Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future* (1933) at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, Rockefeller Center. By World-Telegram staff photographer. **Date Created/Published:** April 24, 1933. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, NYWT&S Collection, LC-DIG-ds-08080.

Next, we viewed *La Nueva Democracia* (1944) by David Alfaro Siqueiros. Cesar pointed out that Siqueiros elected to paint outside the wall space allotted by the government where one sees the mural begin to encroach towards the ceiling. It was suggested that this was an act of rebellion by Siqueiros. The artist used a combination of photographs and sketches to inform his work. The central hybrid figure – a combination of both male and female – was modeled after the artist's wife and is meant to represent democracy.



Detail of *La Nueva Democracia* (1944) by David Alfaro Siqueiros. Photograph by Elizabeth Schaub.

We ended our tour with *La Katharsis* (1934-1935) by José Clemente Orozco. Cesar suggested that there were many interpretations of this work available to the viewer; one emergent theme is that those in society with money forget about the problems that plague society, which in the end is deleterious for all.



Tour guide Cesar in front of detail of *La Katharsis* (1934-1935) by José Clemente Orozco. Photograph by Elizabeth Schaub.

Elizabeth Schaub
Director, School of Architecture Visual Resources Collection
The University of Texas at Austin

Chapter Meeting Report: Justino Fernández Library



The Justino Fernández Library provides collections and research support for the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas (the Aesthetic Research Institute), a research center under the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México umbrella. It is one of 130 libraries in the UNAM system. Its collection consists of more than 30,000 volumes on art, aesthetics, and visual culture. The collection's focus is chiefly, but not exclusively, focused on Mexican art and aesthetics. The collection also contains a newspaper library, which includes more than 1600 titles, as well as sizeable collections of art exhibit catalogs and ephemera, brochures, theses, journals, and multimedia items. Patrons may search [format specific catalogs](#) for holdings. The stacks are

closed and a reading room is available for research. The library services are robust and include an interlibrary loan program that is international in reach.

Library coordinator María de los Ángeles Juárez and librarians Jorge Aguilar Pérez, José Hernández Flores, and Alberto Sánchez Valdés provided ARLIS/NA Texas-Mexico members with a tour of the library's closed stacks, the floors of which employed a charming navigation system that referenced prominent figures in Mexican art history. The tour included a visit to the rare books vault, which contained a truly varied collection of monographs and serials (even a first edition of *Les Dinners de Gala*, a cookbook authored by Salvador and Gala Dalí in 1973).

The Institute supported by the library was founded in 1935 by art historian Manuel Toussaint. In addition to the study of art history, theory, and criticism, the Institute has published approximately 400 monographs, as well as the journal *Annals of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies*. It also hosts an annual International Colloquium on Art History. The Justino Fernández Library collection is featured in Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas exhibits and publications.

Justino Fernández, the library's namesake, was a protégé of Manuel Toussaint and succeeded him as head of the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas. He specialized in the study of Modern Mexican Art, particularly murals and Orozco, but his interests were broad enough to include publications on modern dance music, architecture, and a monograph on Michelangelo's art and poetry.

Catherine Essinger
Coordinator, Wm. R Jenkins Architecture & Art Library
University of Houston

Chapter Meeting Report: Museo Rufino Tamayo

"It is impossible, I feel, at a time when communications are so open, to set out deliberately to make art which is Mexican, Chinese or Russian. I think in terms of universality. Art is a mode of expression that has to be understood by everybody, everywhere. It grows out of the earth, the texture of our lives and our experiences. Maybe it was because other [Mexican] painters were older than I that they were so concerned with the facts of the Revolution. I wanted only to go back to our roots, our wonderful aesthetic tradition." – Rufino Tamayo.



Mexico City is both beautiful and overwhelming – a place where one is pulled in many directions simultaneously. The eye is constantly forced to reckon between the political and the religious, the pre-Hispanic and Hispanic, the ancient and the ... well, even more ancient! The main Zocalo square (the Plaza de la Constitucion) serves as an excellent example of this. A Catholic Cathedral is just next to the site of the Aztec Templo Major, which in turn is just a few blocks away from the National Palace, home to some of Diego Rivera's most famous mural works. Which may lead one to question: what form can the Museum take when art and history are seemingly omnipresent? The Museo Rufino Tamayo provides us with one possible answer to this question, and fulfills its namesake's goal of uniting the specific history and culture of Mexico with the contemporary moment.



Photo by Jon Evans

Founded in 1981, the Museo Rufino Tamayo exhibits contemporary art, maintains a permanent collection of international modern and contemporary artists, and highlights the life and work of Rufino Tamayo himself. As per the wishes of the artist, the museum was built in Chapultepec Park to make it easily accessible to the people of Mexico City. The museum was designed in tandem by two architects, Abraham Zabludovsky and Teodoro González de León. The pyramidal structure of the museum is meant to be a modern take on Mexico's pre-Hispanic architectural heritage, and the landscaping on the lower tiers of the building help wed the building's concrete façade to the landscape of the surrounding park. During our visit, a site specific installation

by Teodoro González de León was on display. *Six meter traversable cube* provided another take on pyramidal form, shaped as it was from six Egyptian triangles. The ancient was once again made new, with genuinely awe inspiring results.



Six meter traversable cube, photo by Joel Pelanne

The Museum's permanent collection was fantastic, and featured works by artists from across the globe: Torres-Garcia, Rothko, Frankenthaler, Ernst, and many others. The works of Tamayo on display were a highlight, and were laid out impeccably. The display of the Tamayo collections began with drawings and works on paper (including two featured artists' books) and opened up into galleries of some of the artist's larger paintings.

These galleries ultimately led to a temporary installation by the artist Eduardo Sarabia, *Plumed Serpent and Other Parties*, which deftly embraced the ancient / contemporary aesthetic-duality at the heart of the Museo Tamayo. Meant to represent the artist's personal fascination with the Quetzalcoatl (plumed serpent) from Mesoamerican myth, the installation took up an entire gallery wall and included drawings that incorporated imagery from both Mexican and European artistic traditions, references to political texts and myth, and almost 300 taxidermy birds. The birds featured were all facing extinction, thus linking the disappearance of myth and traditional culture to the disappearance of ecology and wildlife (one of the birds on display was, in fact, a Quetzal). The piece was, like the Museum itself and Tamayo's work as a whole, both new and old, contemporary and ancient – and as a result, timeless.

Joel Pelanne
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Assistant Technical Services Librarian
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston