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How Guadalajara's Craft Art History and Close-Knit Community Fosters Collaboration



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After a stay in Berlin, Jose Dávila decided to return to his Guadalajara hometown to continue his art practice. Here, his 2020 sculpture *Directional Energies*.

PHOTO KEVIN TODORA, 2020/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND MARFA CONTEMPORARY, DALLAS

“For me it was very important to go to OPA’s openings because it allowed us to see how other artists worked,” said **Cynthia Gutiérrez**, who learned formative lessons there and cofounded her own (since-shuttered) artist-run space.

The spirit of artist-run spaces continues to thrive today. Since 2015, **PAOS GDL**—a self-described nonprofit “civil association that promotes different contemporary artistic manifestations, cultural research, and production”—has drawn artists to spend time in a residency program and to mount exhibitions in the late José Clemente Orozco’s home and studio. It now counts among the city’s most exciting venues for viewing new art, with recent shows by the likes of Henry Taylor, Carmen Argote, Eamon Ore-Giron, Guadalupe Rosales, and affiliates of the art publication Terremoto.

This spring, taking inspiration from the erstwhile Oficina para Proyectos de Arte (OPA), artists Gabriel Rico and Javier M. Rodríguez opened a nonprofit space called **Ayer** with an exhibition by Mexico City–based artist Melanie Smith. Set in a former Coca-Cola storage warehouse, the new space will be dedicated to moving image, video, and installation projects, with a mind toward promoting a medium that has not always been front and center in Guadalajara. “I want to give something of myself to the city,” Rodríguez said. “Here, our circumstances make us more connected—it’s a very organic way of trying to make community out of a common purpose.”

Melanie Smith’s 2018 video *Q%#0%\$R/)* 6% was featured in the inaugural exhibition of Ayer, a new artist-run space in the city. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PROYECTO PARALELO

Fair Grounds

Another important aspect of Guadalajara's history is that it was the site of Mexico's first art fair, **Expo Arte**, which started in the early 1990s, and influenced a generation of young artists who were living in the city at the time. Each iteration of Expo Arte was accompanied by a symposium on contemporary art, and Cynthia Gutiérrez, who attended the final two versions while a student at the University of Guadalajara, described the gatherings as "a shock and a turning point for the way I thought about art at that moment."

Though the fair was short-lived, Guadalajara started the still-going annual tradition of festivities staged under the umbrella name **PreMaco** after Mexico City's Zona Maco fair launched in 2002. The week before each year's Zona Maco, Guadalajara's small group of commercial galleries (Galería Curro, Gamma Galería, Páramo, and Travesía Cuatro among them) join artist-run spaces, craft ateliers, and artists' studios in opening up to visitors to showcase the best of what the city has on offer.

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