

The evolution of the private art museum in Mexico

Rebecca Rose

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Art History and Philosophy

University of Essex

30th September 2015

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Professor Valerie Fraser for her support, wisdom and guidance throughout my research project. I would also like to thank the members of my supervisory boards, particularly Dr Michaela Giebelhausen, for their insightful comments over the years. I am grateful for the ESCALA collection, and its director Dr Joanna Harwood, for providing an inspiring resource during my time at Essex University. I would also like to thank the departmental administrative staff, particularly Myra Offord and Wendy Williams, for their patience and encouragement, and Sloman Librarian Christopher Anderton for helping to provide me with useful material for this thesis.

I am indebted to Patricia Sloane for taking me under her wing when I visited Mexico and providing me with valuable information about the contemporary art scene. I also wish to thank Patrick Charpenel, Vanessa Bohórquez, Gonzalo Lebrija and José Noé Suro for meeting with me and kindly answering my questions. I would also like to thank Robert R. Janes, Carla Stellweg, James Oles, Rubén Gallo and Gregorio Luke for corresponding with me for the purpose of my research project. My thanks also go to Vanessa Arelle and Tessy Mustri, who kindly provided me with helpful contacts for my visit to Mexico.

I would like to thank Professor Steven Boldy, Professor Melveena McKendrick, Georgina Adam and Caroline Niémant for inspiring me to pursue this research project. I would also like to express my gratitude to Miriam Metliss, Zanna Gilbert, Ian Dudley and Stuart Easterling for their kindness, time and ideas. Finally, to my parents for their love and support.

The evolution of the private art museum in Mexico

Over the last thirty years there has been a proliferation in the number and diversity of privately-funded exhibition spaces for contemporary art in Mexico. Driving this development is a new generation of art collectors and my research project is concerned with how collector-led models of patronage have influenced the recognition, impact and public display of contemporary art in Mexico.

My thesis begins by exploring what constitutes an art collection, the significance of a museum, and what motivates a collector. I then present an overview of the historical relationship between state and private art collections in Mexico, followed by a critique of landmark events in the genesis of the Mexican art market. In the second part of my research project I identify a group of influential mid-twentieth century collectors who established their own exhibition spaces in order to share their collections with the public, followed by an analysis of their legacy through the activity of the current generation of collectors, whose efforts to promote contemporary art within Mexico and abroad have spawned a new climate of creative enterprise and collaboration. This thesis seeks to present a survey of the evolution of the private exhibition space in Mexico by examining independent cultural initiatives whose ambition is to change the way the public engages with contemporary art. In my findings I examine how collectors' objectives manifest a vision for the museum visitor experience and the impact of these privately-funded institutions on Mexico's cultural identity.

Title:	The evolution of the private art museum in Mexico: Collector-led enterprise and its impact on public engagement with contemporary art.	
Preface		4
Introduction		7
Part One: <i>Mexico: A Cultural Topography</i>		
(i) The Museum – the myriad purpose of the museum, visitor engagement strategies and significance for socio-cultural development		19
(ii) The Collector – collecting practice and issues of motivation, influence and identity.		35
(iii) Developmental Challenges – historical overview of public and private funding models in museums of contemporary art in Mexico; creative practice that has subverted conventional museum spaces.		52
(iii) Mexico and the Global Art Market – landmark events in the evolution of the art market in Mexico, examining the role of auctions, art fairs, galleries and identifying a network of advisors, curators, critics and historians.		77
Part Two: <i>Building a Collection</i>		
(i) Twentieth Century Art Collectors – Carrillo Gil – Dolores Olmedo – Jacques and Natasha Gelman – Rufino Tamayo; influencers: Fernando Gamboa – Miguel Covarrubias – Inés Amor.		115
(ii) The New Generation – Eugenio López Alonso – José Noé Suro – César Cervantes – Isobel and Agustín Coppel – Patrick Charpenel – Moisés Cosío – Sergio Autrey		152
Analysis and Findings		190
Select Bibliography		198

Preface

Mexican visual culture has always been a source of great fascination to me and it was during my time working as an arts journalist (2006-2013) that I became particularly interested in what was happening in the world of contemporary art in Mexico. In 2002, Tate Modern appointed its first Associate Curator of Latin American Art, Mexican Cuauhtémoc Medina¹, who coordinated the newly formed Latin American Acquisitions Committee. Three years later, Tate Liverpool put on an exhibition designed to showcase contemporary Latin American art from the Tate Collection. *Inverting the Map* (15 October 2005 - 26 March 2006) was accompanied by a series of events and represented a new platform for Latin American art in Europe. This focus of attention on artists from the region extended to its galleries, curators and collectors, whose names started appearing both in print media or online when I read up on reports of art fairs and gallery openings. By gathering information from my experience working in the art world at the time, I began to find connections between these spheres of activity. A new energy appeared to be pushing the Mexican art scene into the pages of industry newspapers and magazines, and behind many of the headlines were not auction prices or ownership scandals but reports of new contemporary art foundations and museums funded by private collectors. This series of connections made me question how these developments would impact on the way contemporary art was experienced by the public in Mexico, a country with world-class archaeological museums and a total of thirty 32 UNESCO world heritage sites (the largest number of any country in the Americas) but with relatively low-profile contemporary art galleries. At the time, public museums dedicated to contemporary art were rare², and it seemed clear to me that private patrons were eager to address this issue by creating their own foundations and art spaces.

¹ Cuauhtémoc Medina (1965-) is a Mexican art historian, curator and critic.

² Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC) opened to the public in November 2008; previously the main publicly-funded space that exhibited contemporary art was Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Artes (MUCA), particularly under the directorship of Helen Escobedo (1934-2010) in the 1960s; Ex-Teresa Arte Alternativo in Mexico City, was founded in 1993. This exhibition space subsequently replaced the word 'alternativo' with 'actual', denoting a more inclusive approach that accepted contemporary art as a mainstream cultural medium.

My initial investigations were non-academic in nature but the findings were compelling enough for me to want to take my research further. As I explored the world of contemporary art in Mexico, through conversations with local arts professionals and a handful of ‘hobbyist’ collectors, the same set of questions kept cropping up: Why did certain collectors feel the need to build their own museums, and what were their ambitions for these new spaces? How would they determine their success? Would the permanent collection focus on Mexican or international artists?

The next stage involved finding the right academic institution for my research project. Essex University was a clear choice for me for two reasons: I was aware that its Latin American Art History department had a reputation for excellence, and I was familiar with texts written by members of its faculty; I was also very inspired by ESCALA (then UECLAA), the University’s collection of Latin American modern and contemporary art. I submitted a thesis proposal to Professor Valerie Fraser with references from Professor Steven Boldy, who had supervised me throughout my BA at Cambridge University, and Professor Alexander García Düttmann, who supervised my MA dissertation at Goldsmiths. Essex University accepted my application, and that I was able to begin my research.

The first book I found that touched on the issues relating to my topic was *Collecting Latin American Art for the 21st Century*, published by the International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Edited by Mari Carmen Ramírez, this compilation of essays revealed a swell of academic engagement with the topic. Within its pages I read an essay by Mexico-based curator Olivier Debrouse (1952-2008) that plotted the journey of Mexican cultural institutions over the last twenty years. The author describes his experience in late 2000 of a Gabriel Orozco retrospective at the Museo Rufino Tamayo shortly before visiting the Colección Jumex in its newly-opened gallery on an industrial plant in Ecatepec, 30km north of Mexico City. One sentence struck a chord with what I was encountering in my work as an art journalist: ‘The parallels and discrepancies between these two events indicated a profound conversion of the tastes, intentions and goals of private collectors in the last twenty years, which mirrored a transformation in the contemporary art scene’. I wanted to explore this theme within the parameters of an official research paper, to see where this surge of activity would lead and how it might

determine the way the public engages with contemporary art in Mexico. Debroise concludes his essay by surmising that the Colección Jumex ‘may very well become an international reference if [founder] López follows through with his plan to build another facility, with a library and archive, in a more central location in Mexico City’³. This plan has now been successfully realized, and the new Museo Jumex opened its doors on 19th November 2013 in the Polanco district of Mexico City. The inauguration of the Museo Jumex is a milestone in the trajectory of private art museums in Mexico and I have chosen this event to frame the end of my research, marking the point in time at which I close my investigation.

³ Olivier Debroise, ‘From Modern to International: The Challenges for Mexican Art’, *Collecting Latin American Art for the 21st Century*, ed. Mari Carmen Ramírez and Theresa Papnikolas (MFAH, University of Texas Press, 2002), 89.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a marked transformation in the way contemporary art is displayed to the public in Mexico. A driving force behind this phenomenon are the country's private collectors, whose cultural initiatives and museums are the focal point of my research project. The journey from passionate connoisseur to dedicated collector comprises risk, responsibility and also reward, particularly when the ultimate objective is to share one's collection with a wider public. My research is specifically concerned with those collectors who view themselves as custodians of the art they acquire, and who aim to offer accessible platforms for their collections in order to reach a broader audience.

ooOoo

I begin my investigation by presenting an overview of why museums matter, how a dedicated art space is relevant to its community and what constitutes a positive visitor experience. Understanding these issues enabled me to assess the socio-cultural impact of the collector-led art spaces I refer to in my thesis. This brief critique provides a foundation for the subsequent chapter on official cultural policy in Mexico and its implications for contemporary art, raising issues of creative rebellion and the friction between state-sponsored institutions and their privately-funded counterparts. The final chapter of Part One presents an outline of the contemporary art market in Mexico, identifying its participants and analysing the root cause of its rapid evolution. Understanding this commercial environment was key to my investigation of collectors' objectives and acquisition strategy, and I include a selection of *agentes culturales*, ranging from curators to critics and patronage associations, amongst others, who share a commitment to the promotion of contemporary art in Mexico and are an integral part of collector activity. Throughout Part One I refer to Mexican private museums, collectors and arts professionals where appropriate in order to provide a context for the broader themes of collecting, display and market forces.

I begin Part Two of my thesis by presenting a series of case studies based on my selection of mid-twentieth century Mexican art collectors who pioneered the collection and public exhibition of art. Following on from this group of cultural ‘awakeners’, I present a selection of Mexican collectors from the current generation who are at the forefront of modernizing the museum experience and detail how they are using their collections to stimulate public engagement with contemporary art. In the concluding chapter, I contextualize my findings and evaluate the impact of private art museums and related cultural initiatives in Mexico, identifying specific relationships with education, accessibility and creative production.

Methodology

My thesis looks at this subject from a museographic angle, analysing how museums are a changing environment and how visitor expectations of art spaces have evolved. In Part One, I examine how a private museum attempts to ensure that the integrity of their collection is not compromised by market forces, and how it aims to provide the visitor with a uniquely stimulating experience. Are these museums trying to present their collection in a way that correlates with the perception of contemporary art as a reflection of society? Is there a sensitivity in the relationship between the status of the collector and the visitor, particularly in Mexico where wealth is a polarizing factor? It is necessary to touch on broader questions about culture and society in order to understand the purpose and vision of private art museums in Mexico. What are the ramifications for a nation’s cultural identity when its leading contemporary art spaces are funded by independent collectors? Are these museums succeeding in engaging with a wider demographic? How do experimental new models for displaying privately-owned art link to the global trend for ‘collaborative consumption’ or cultural entrepreneurship? I wanted to find out how museum staff determine what constitutes a rewarding museum experience, and how the museum’s identity features in this encounter. The most successful contemporary art museums are not inflexible archives with static collections, but dynamic spaces reinvigorated by loans, acquisitions and

artist residencies; in order to succeed, collector-led museums must position themselves as a creative and intellectual resource, ‘capable of being experienced and used in different ways for multiple purposes’⁴, according to museologist John H. Falk. I am interested in those art collectors who are engaged with building museums as a civic resource, using art and exhibition design as a kind of pedagogical tool, consistent with the museum’s mission statement, and how this informs the art space with its own cultural identity. My research allowed me to assess how the model of art museums is moving away from traditional conservation and towards a more collaborative ethos, and specifically how collectors are at the forefront of this phenomenon.

During two extended field trips to Mexico I visited a variety of private and public museums, art fairs, galleries and experimental spaces such as public gardens, and endeavoured to meet as many people connected to these sites as possible, ranging from the collectors themselves to their museum staff, artists, independent critics and curators, and members of the general public who were contemporary art enthusiasts. Some of these encounters took the form of a spontaneous conversation, other interviews and tours were more formal and were digitally recorded. Upon return to the UK after my first research-assigned trip to Mexico in February 2010, I was able to calibrate the overarching themes of my PhD project. Visiting the country allowed me to begin to assess the impact of private contemporary art spaces on artists, the museum-going public and evaluate the culture of patronage in Mexico. I was now able to fasten these preliminary findings to a more structured critical analysis, and expand on my introductory reading to include texts that were relevant to the scope of my research. The original books and articles that laid the foundation for my investigation included academic texts on collecting as human behaviour, catalogues from museums’ permanent collections in Mexico and a selection of biographies of the country’s most important art collectors from the twentieth century.

Owing to the subject matter of my research project, which is concerned with current developments in Mexican culture and involves in the majority people who are still alive, I was able to

⁴ John H. Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* (Left Coast Press 2009)

extract a significant amount of information from modern media sources: newspaper articles, blogs and other internet resources from an energetic online community of academics, critics and art historians. Given that the internet has triggered a self-publishing phenomenon, there is an abundance of online material available that is by nature transient or extempore; the online references in my thesis have been selected after a thorough filtering process and casual participants in the debate who are communicating via amateur platforms do not feature in my research. As I became more involved in the research project, it became evident that my thesis would benefit from a short chapter that introduced a small and eclectic group of independent art collectors who were active in the mid-twentieth century, because they were responsible for initiating a culture of collecting and displaying art in Mexico; without them the current landscape would lack the rich texture it has today. As I moved deeper into my research I realized that this pioneering generation of collectors has inspired a spectrum of activity in their successors, ranging from acquisition strategy, collection management and display, as well as legacy-related objectives. In order to fully understand how private art collections operate today, it was necessary to turn a retrospective eye to this group of innovative men and women. Their achievements provide a bedrock of experience for the current generation of contemporary art collectors, and including them in my research project has allowed me to develop a solid understanding of how a culture of patronage in the visual arts has evolved. My methodology for research, therefore, is structured into three main components:

- Field research: interviews, site visits and information gathered from two extended research trips to Mexico in 2010 and 2012. I was able to observe first-hand the successes, frustrations and challenges facing these private art collections and collect enough material to produce detailed case studies.
- Secondary sources: data harvested from a variety of publications, including academic papers, exhibition catalogues, relevant journalism (print and online), autobiographies and biographies, theoretical and art history texts.

- Experiential research: attending and participating in a number of talks and events that related to my research project such as art fairs, panel discussions and conferences.

By combining these methodologies I have been able to produce what I believe is an original piece of work that offers insights into how private patronage is changing the way contemporary art is experienced in Mexico. Until recently, there were relatively few academic research papers on private initiatives in the Latin American contemporary art world. The situation has changed over the last decade and the topic of private art collections is a consistent feature of Latin American art history-focused academic conferences as well as commercial environments such as ‘round tables’ at art fairs. This activity can be attributed to greater visibility of privately-funded museums and foundations, a recognition of the value and potential of art collectors’ contributions, and perhaps most importantly, an acknowledgment of the potency and influence of Latin American art.

This thesis is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of the Mexican art world and its catalysts, nor does it aim to present an exhaustive list of every private contemporary art collection in Mexico. Its landscape is vast and complex; as such, the criteria for inclusion in my research stipulate:

- The collector(s) must be based in Mexico
- The collection must focus on contemporary art
- Some or all of the collection must be on public display
- There must be something uniquely interesting and / or innovative about the acquisitions strategy, exhibition of and future purpose for the collection.

List of case studies:

- Eugenio López Alonso, founder of Fundación / Colección Júmex in Mexico City
- José Noé Suro, founder of Colección Cerámica Suro in Guadalajara
- César Cervantes, Mexico City

- Isobel and Agustín Coppel, co-founders of CIAC in Culiacán
- Patrick Charpenel, in Guadalajara
- Moisés Cosío, in Mexico City
- Sergio Autrey in Hermosillo

Notable Omissions

Carlos Slim, a telecommunications magnate, possesses a vast collection of art which is housed in one of the most famous private museums in Mexico: Museo Soumaya. Slim does not feature in this thesis because my area of research is about collections of contemporary art, and his collection inside the Museo Soumaya consists of religious relics, colonial-era coins and European Old Masters, as well as the world's second-largest collection of Rodin sculptures and the largest collection of works by Salvador Dalí in Latin America. Another living Mexican art collector who is excluded from my research is Andrés Blaisten, who owns a remarkable selection of Mexican modern art that includes work by María Izquierdo, Diego Rivera, Francisco Díaz de León and Rufino Tamayo. I visited Museo Andrés Blaisten in 2010, when it was housed inside the Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco building in Mexico City. Two years later, the collection lost its home on the university campus and now exists online only, serving as a virtual archive. As with Slim, Blaisten does not collect contemporary art and is therefore exempt from my research criteria, although he was involved with a one-off contemporary art project with American photographer Stanley Tunick in 2007. The 'Citadinos' project involved Tunick producing thirty nude group portraits of local volunteers that were inspired by paintings and sculptures from the Blaisten collection of modern Mexican art. The photographs were displayed in an exhibition curated by Bertha Cantú at the UNAM before travelling to Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MARCO) in Monterrey. To my knowledge, there has been no subsequent involvement in contemporary art projects.

There are three museums whose omission deserves a brief explanation: Museo Amparo, in the city of Puebla, is one of the most important historical museums in Mexico. It was opened in 1991 and is

sponsored by Fundación Amparo, which was founded in 1979 by Manuel Espinoza Yglesias in honor of his wife. Although the museum hosts a busy calendar of temporary exhibitions of contemporary art, and its gift shop is stocked with a wide range of monographs by avant-garde Mexican artists, its permanent collection is focused on pre-Hispanic and colonial art. It is, therefore, exempt from my criteria for research, although the museum's board has recently implemented an acquisition program for modern and contemporary art that 'will have a definite form in a few years. In the meantime, this collection is kept in hold'⁵. Museo Franz Mayer, which opened in 1986 in Mexico City, houses one of Latin America's largest collections of decorative arts including textiles and ceramics, accumulated by German-born stockbroker Franz Mayer, who emigrated to Mexico in 1905. As in the case of Museo Amparo, the museum hosts temporary exhibitions of contemporary design but is exempt from my research because it does not feature contemporary art in its permanent collection.

Mexican artist José Luis Cuevas (b.1934), a key figure of the Ruptura generation, has established a museum in his own name. By the mid 1970s, Cuevas had accumulated a personal collection of paintings and drawings by modern Latin American artists including Francisco Toledo, Juan Soriano as well as works by international artists such as Roberto Matta. This small but significant archive was kept in the storage facilities at Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil while efforts were made to find a permanent home. The Museo José Luis Cuevas eventually opened in July 1992, in an old church in the historic centre of Mexico City. Inside the building, one exhibition hall is named after art critic and friend Marta Traba (1930-1983) and another after Fernando Gamboa (1911-1990), who was responsible for planning the layout of the museum. There are now 1860 works in the permanent collection; the majority of art on display in the museum is by José Luis Cuevas, with an area dedicated to temporary exhibitions of work by other artists. This small museum charges an entrance fee but is free to all on Sundays; it is run by Cuevas' wife Beatriz del Carmen Cuevas. Its relative size and focus on a single artist precludes it from further investigation in my thesis.

⁵ museoamparo.com accessed February 2015

Also excluded from my research are detailed profiles of artists, unless they are directly linked to a private initiative, a collector-led collaboration or serve to illustrate as an example of the friction between state-owned cultural institutions and contemporary art. I do not include, for example, an inventory of artists within every collection I mention in my thesis, but instead isolate individual artists who have benefitted from a specific partnership with the collector. I also mention those artists who are involved with collector-led projects that function as examples of growth and innovation in private collections.

Cultural Identity: Labels

To clarify my usage of the term ‘Latin American’ in this thesis: my research is concerned with contemporary art in Mexico, and I will use a specific description of origin wherever possible, but there are various instances where Mexican art falls under the more general classification of ‘Latin American art’. Examples include the Latin American auctions at Sotheby’s and Christie’s, which indicates a marketing purpose, or an art dealer referring to his Latin American clients, which is a response to a business environment. In such cases, I defer to the source description.

Elsewhere in my thesis, when I refer to ‘Latin American’ art I understand this term to include work produced by artists born in Central and South America. Artists from this region have often been grouped together for the sake of clarity and ease of use. This label, however, has proved to be problematic as it can appear reductionist or simplistic, an issue that was raised by Guy Brett in his 1990 study of nine contemporary Latin American artists⁶. A crux of the issue relates to condensing the social, historical and cultural diversity of 18 distinct nations into a convenient appellation. Art critic Marta Traba disputed⁷ the existence of a ‘Latin American art’ and warned of the negative impact from defining cultural identities in this way; in 1995 Gerardo Mosquera edited a compilation⁸ of theoretical discourses on the visual arts in

⁶ Guy Brett, *Transcontinental: Nine Latin American Artists*, (Verso, London 1990), 9

⁷ Marta Traba, *La Pintura Nueva en Latinoamérica* (Bogotá 1961)

⁸ Gerardo Mosquera, *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America* (London Institute of International Visual Arts 1995)

Latin America, affirming a Latin American cultural perspective while describing Latin America as ‘a continent of internal and external displacement’. Art critic Ben Genocchio has pointed out that the ‘widespread diaspora of Latin American artists and intellectuals during the 1970s and 1980s, many of whom still live in forms of voluntary or involuntary exile abroad, is an initial and obvious complication’⁹. These are important issues that deserve more attention than I am able to allocate in my thesis, but I subscribe to the opinion of Brazilian artist Felipe Barbosa (b.1978) who stated that ‘Any label has positive and negative effects. I think that labels eventually became a kind of curatorship, but I also like to believe that those people who like art, they are essentially curious human beings and the classification by region may be a source of interest and not a barrier. We live in a moment where there are several art fairs [...] and the fact that there is a focus on a precise aspect of the art production does not override the global context in which each work is placed’¹⁰. All categorisation is capable of creating a barrier, yet my usage is intended as a delineation of origin and not as a means of emphasizing a creative boundary.

How does my research test current ideas?

At present, there is relatively little research being conducted in the UK on the subject of contemporary art collections in Mexico. However, my thesis touches on a series of related topics, including museology and arts patronage, that are familiar themes in history of art academic research in the UK and worldwide. My thesis explores these broader subjects within the context of the Mexican art world, and I hope that my findings are relevant to the fellow researchers who are also interested in the growing phenomenon of private art museums.

Within the UK, I have identified one PhD thesis that is similar in its subject: Silvia Montes-García completed a PhD at Kings College in London in 2013, titled *The Globalization of Contemporary*

⁹ Ben Genocchio, ‘The Discourse of Difference’ *Third Text* 43 (1998): 3-12

¹⁰ Caroline Menezes, ‘Pinta, the Latin American Art Fair’ *Studio International* (03.06.2011), <http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/pinta-the-latin-american-art-fair>

Mexican Art; her research aimed ‘to clarify and explain the origins of globalization in the art world’¹¹. My own research examines the cause and effect of globalization on the Mexican art market and looks specifically at collectors and collector-led museum spaces, while Montes-García’s illuminating thesis is more of a case-study in the development of conceptualism, which was the dominant art form during the period she reviews, and what she describes as the ‘policy of multiculturalism’ found in the Western art world.

A limited amount of research has been published on my subject at PhD level in the UK¹², and although there is not a substantial archive of comparable studies at this stage, I have been able to access a considerable amount of research presented at ‘live’ events (attended in person or viewed online) such as art history conferences, as well as more commercial environments such as art fairs. The speakers vary from academics to museum directors, art professionals to dedicated collectors, some with no formal education in the arts and others with a scholarly understanding of art history. The diversity of panellists’ exposure to contemporary art frequently stimulates a lively and informative debate.

Outside of the UK, particularly in the US, Spain and Mexico, the topic of contemporary art collections in Mexico has a much stronger presence and regularly appears on agendas at Latin American art history-focused conferences. One centre of excellence is the International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA) at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, established in 2001 and responsible for driving a richer understanding of Latin American and Latino visual arts in the US and abroad, via a research-based exhibitions program in tandem with a dynamic online and print publishing catalogue. The research institute has invested over \$50m to initiatives in 20th century Latin American and Latino art and in 2003,

¹¹ [https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/silvia-montes-garcia\(b8b59564-ed87-44ed-aafb-42cd0f3141f8\)/biography.html](https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/silvia-montes-garcia(b8b59564-ed87-44ed-aafb-42cd0f3141f8)/biography.html)

¹² I want to mention two PhD theses for their proximity to my subject matter:

1) *Towards a Professional Learning Dialogue in Mexican Contemporary Art Museums* by Patricia Bueno Delgado (City University London, supervised by Professor Victoria Woollard, completed 2014); Delgado also co-authored a chapter on the Mexican art market in a book I found very useful in my research: *The International Art Markets - The Essential Guide for Collectors and Investors* (London: Kogan Page 2008 pp.207-213); 2) *Curatorial Practice in Mexico, 1822-1964* by Carlos Molina Posadas, University of Essex 2007

published *Collecting Latin American Art for the 21st Century*, a book which included an important essay by Mexican curator Olivier Debroise (mentioned in my introduction) and heralded a new wave of interest in cultural perceptions of Latin American art collections. In 2011 the ICAA announced that it would launch a historical digital archive of twentieth century primary sources in Latin America; the service is free of charge and available worldwide. ‘This project is just the beginning of the effort to recover the intellectual production of 20th century Latin American artists, critics and curators and to further research and awareness of this production in the United States and elsewhere’¹³, stated Mari Carmen Ramírez, MFAH curator and ICAA director.

Despite the shortage of postgraduate research theses related to my subject, a considerable number of books has published on similar themes. In addition to biographies and exhibition catalogues, some of the more general texts that have been helpful in putting together my research project include *Coleccionismo en México* by Miguel Ángel Fernández, *A Museum of One’s Own* by Anne Higonnet, *Interpreting Objects and Collections* edited by Susan M. Pearce, *Hablando en Plata: El Arte Como Inversión* edited by Arturo Galán de la Barreda, *Beyond the Turnstile: Making the Case for Museums and Sustainable Values* edited by Selma Holo and Mari-Tere Álvarez and *Boutique Museums: Private Art Spaces and Personal Visions* by Peter Doroshenko. I would like to make a special mention to Caroline Niémant, editor of *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, a densely-researched compendium of interviews that has proven to be an extremely helpful resource in my own project.

The subject of collector-led museums continues to gain momentum in print journalism, and related features appear periodically in broadsheet newspapers as well as specialist arts publications. While these articles are not academic papers, they can offer carefully researched analyses of the growing trend for collectors to create spaces to display their art to the public. I anticipate that the level of interest in this subject will mean that there will be a significant increase in the number of related dissertations and theses in the future.

¹³ ‘MFAH and ICAA to launch historical digital archive’, *Arte al Día International Online* (03.06.2011). http://www.artaldia.com/International/Contents/News/The_MFAH_and_ICAA_will_Launch_a_Historical_Digital_Archive_of_Twentieth_Century_Primary_Sources_in_Latin_America

The collector-led museums spaces I write about in my research are comparatively young establishments, liberated from the need to adhere to either a conventional exhibition style or a state-sanctioned message. These collectors are aware that they have the opportunity to display contemporary art in new and exciting ways, bringing innovation and access to a world that has been associated with exclusivity and privilege. An art museum can function as a window onto the world, both convex and concave: its paintings and sculptures offer a telescopic lens on what is happening beyond the gallery walls, whilst at the same time providing the visitor a space for contemplation. In summary, my research examines how collector-led contemporary art museums can act as prisms on cultural identity and society, and how certain collectors are exploring new methods of display in order to engage with as broad an audience as possible.

Part One: Mexico - A Cultural Topography

Part One is composed of four chapters, each illustrating distinct features which together formulate Mexico's present cultural environment. I begin with an exploration of the purpose of a museum and its commitment to the public display of art, raising issues of visitor experience, audience engagement and the potential for museums as agents of socio-cultural development. In the second chapter, I examine collecting practice as a consumer behaviour and as an extension of personal identity, exploring collector motivation and sphere of influence. The third chapter presents an historical overview of the challenges specific to private and public funding models in cultural enterprise, giving instances of abortive contemporary art spaces in Mexico and subversive artistic practice relating to frustration with the conventional display of art. The fourth chapter traces Mexico's role within the global art market, evaluating the significance of auctions, art fairs, galleries and identifying key figures within art world professions including advisors, historians and critics.

(i) The Museum

For the majority of the collectors I refer to in my research, a museum represents much more than a space to house their art collection. It also functions as a centre of learning and innovation, provides an important civic building for the local community and serves as an example of cultural regeneration. In this chapter I will review the role of museums in the twenty-first century and how they are able to stay relevant in the digital age, when artifacts and inventions can be accessed remotely from almost any location. There have been dramatic changes in the way we engage with art, as collector, spectator, or enthusiast. Art fairs, in particular, have redefined the cultural experience of contemporary art as a kind of entertainment or leisure activity. The modern museum is a place of inspiration, but the source of stimulus is diffused through a variety of media, not only the actual works of art in the permanent collection.

Architectural design, interactive displays and special events are all key determinants in the realization of a museum's vision. My research also explores how the traditional model of collecting and preservation has shifted towards a more collaborative system that echoes the ambitions of today's 'sharing economy', by which I mean the phenomenon of dividing human and physical resources between institutions, retailers and consumers¹⁴. This culture of sharing has had a meaningful impact on the way contemporary art is experienced in Mexico, with several collector-led initiatives at the forefront of this development.

At the core of each museum is the aim to inspire and engage its audience and for many collector-led museums, there is an official mission statement that defines their vision and ambitions to this end. Today's consumer is saturated with information and has a constant stream of data available at her fingertips. How does a contemporary art museum compete for attention in such an arena? By offering a unique experience: online galleries can enhance what a museum has to offer, but are generally an inferior substitute for enjoying the physical presence of a painting or sculpture. At a research conference on museology in 2013, Senior Curator at the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology in Cambridge, Mark Elliott, described museums as homes of serendipity: 'Our experience of a museum, and our reasons for being there in the first place, can depend on so much: the people we are with, the mood we are in, or how much we want to spend on activities that day. But "why" we go to museums doesn't really matter as much as what we get out of our visit. We may go to see a famous artwork, and end up meeting someone special. We may go to get out of the rain and come face to face with an artefact that changes the way we think, or lifts us somehow; something that sets us on a whole new journey of discovery. That's why I go to museums: because they are where the unexpected happens'¹⁵. This reality cannot be replicated online no matter how sophisticated the digital platform, and it is this feature of the 'museum experience' that many of today's curators and museum directors seek to promote. Despite the importance of digitising an art collection for the sake of accessibility, technology is not the overriding goal in museum sustainability;

¹⁴ Examples of the 'sharing economy' include companies such as AirBNB (accommodation) Uber (transportation) and Ebay (peer-to-peer marketplace); the ethos behind this kind of enterprise is 'access over ownership'.

¹⁵ Museology Research Conference, Cambridge University 26.11.2013, <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/we-ask-the-experts-why-do-we-put-things-into-museums>

the real emphasis will lie in creating an enduring impact through integrated services. Looking at art inspires ‘resonance and wonder’ writes literary critic and Harvard Professor Stephen Greenblatt, and the role of museums plays a significant part of this experience: ‘Museums function, partly by design and partly in spite of themselves, as monuments to the fragility of cultures, to the fall of sustaining institutions and noble houses, the collapse of rituals, the evacuation of myths, the destructive effects of warfare, neglect and corrosive doubt’¹⁶. The substance of this kind of encounter is so enthralling precisely because it cannot be replicated off-site.

In relation to the economic impact of the collector-led contemporary art foundations I include in my research, all are registered as non-profits, with at least one day a week with no entrance fee to visit exhibitions. Income generated from gift shop merchandise, general admission and event hire is reinvested in acquisitions, staff or special projects. Even without ‘box office’ takings a museum can make a significant contribution to the local economy by employing full-time and part-time staff and create a hub for the domestic tourist industry, capable of drawing visitors to a previously undeveloped area of a city. Recently-constructed private art museums in Mexico have been eager to emphasize their purpose as an accessible cultural space, and in so doing, hope to cast aside the anachronistic associations of galleries as elitist or forbidding spaces (I assess their success in these aims on a case-by-case basis in Part Two of my thesis). Carlos Alejandro López Ramírez, Director of the Salsa Museum in Cali, Colombia, has described how perceived cultural elitism is a real obstacle in Latin American countries: ‘The Latin American context is very different, so if the museums here do not become cultural centers where you can integrate education, recreation and preservation, in 15 years there are not going to be any museums. It is vital to show the community that the museum is not a temple or elitist, but a place where they can find leisure activities, knowledge, entertainment and overall, identification of their own heritage and culture’¹⁷. In order to survive, museums need to seek out new ways of engaging with visitors and focus on a collective

¹⁶ Stephen J. Greenblatt, ‘Resonance and Wonder’, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (Routledge, 1990), 230

¹⁷ Museology Research Conference, Cambridge University, 26.11.2013, <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/we-ask-the-experts-why-do-we-put-things-into-museums>

involvement with the local community, fostering links with a younger generation through an educational curriculum.

In addition to providing a learning experience, museums are capable of becoming agents of change through social enterprise and this is most valuable when the museums are located in areas where access to cultural facilities is limited. To varying degrees, all of the current generation collectors I include in my research are interested in displaying their collections in a way which disrupts the traditional process of looking at art; most have developed programs that encourage the audience to interact with their environment in a way that attempts to dissolve social barriers or preconceptions that enjoying art is a privileged pursuit. Museologist John H. Falk describes art galleries as sites of ‘free choice learning’, offering the opportunity to build on personal knowledge outside of the classroom. It is an intellectual resource ‘capable of being experienced and used in different ways for multiple purposes’¹⁸. Learning is a fundamental part of the museum experience, and for many collectors, turning their space into an educational resource is an integrated part of their plan. For private museums, developing a research facility usually begins with a library of art-related books that correspond with the works on display. These libraries are an important appendix to the main museum because they tend to house a specialist selection of books that are most likely unavailable in public libraries, in addition to a quiet reading and study space that is open to the public and free to use. Museums play an important role in public education, particularly when public funding is lacking and private initiatives can help address this issue by providing an educational resource and research facility. While a strong educational program is a key feature in a successful museum, there are issues of legitimacy if the space belongs to an individual collector. The curriculum must present a well-rounded set of ideas that pertain to the work on display, rather than glorify the collector’s taste or reflect on his or her status; to focus on the personality behind the collection can expose the museum as a vanity project. Exploring the challenges of creating a cohesive set of values in a collector-led museum environment is a key aspect of my research project because it usually lies at the crux of the collector’s commitment to public engagement. Collectors need to integrate long-term goals *ab*

¹⁸ John H. Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* (Left Coast Press Inc, 2009), 35

initio in order to create a space that succeeds in benefitting society, through a relevant archive of knowledge and creativity, a contemporary art exhibition space, specialist research facilities and / or a forum for creative experiment.

Over the last two decades several contemporary art museums in Mexico, large and small, have introduced on-site creative workshops, inviting the visitor to use the space to experiment with their own artistic practice. This is a significant step in developing a museum's relationship with its visitors because it repositions the visitor experience as distinctly active, rather than passive. Museums are great sources of creative inspiration, so providing a space where visitors can experiment with their ideas is a logical progression. The theme of in-house workshops is often instructed by the artwork on display, either in the permanent collection or a temporary exhibition, and are usually made available to a range of abilities, from family-focused groups to more advanced classes for learning specialist creative techniques. Nina Simon, author of *The Participatory Museum*, asserts that interactivity is a core principal of a dynamic art space: 'How can cultural institutions reconnect with the public and demonstrate their value and relevance in contemporary life? I believe they can do this by inviting people to engage as cultural participants, not passive consumers'¹⁹. Today's visitor has a sophisticated anticipation of the gallery experience, she explains, and can expect 'access to a broad spectrum of information sources and cultural perspectives'. Simon defines a participatory cultural institution as a place where visitors can 'create, share, and connect with each other around content'.... 'The goal of participatory techniques is both to meet the visitors' expectations for active engagement and to do so in a way that furthers the mission and core values of the institution'. Participation is prioritized in this way because it is a strategy that enables the visitor to penetrate the cultural institution. Interactivity is a means of synthesizing personal reality with the art on display, hopefully revealing new and absorbing perspectives for the visitor.

Art can have a real and lasting impact on people's lives. Collectors who are compelled to share their collections understand this and the men and women I have profiled in my research are all hopeful

¹⁹ Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Museum 2.0 Publishing, 2010), <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/read/>

that the public display of their collections will help promote a wider cultural awareness, by exhibiting works from both international and local artists. Identifying the social significance of the museum reveals how culture contributes to communities, but there is no uniform method of measuring their success. How are directors and curators able to monitor the way their museum ‘makes a difference’ if there is no rubric to monitor the outcomes? ‘Without generally accepted metrics, arts organizations will have more and more trouble making a case for themselves’, argues museum director Maxwell L. Anderson. He makes an interesting observation about the relationship between private funding and the need to measure achievement, that ‘Self-described “venture philanthropists” are just as determined to measure the value of their investment in non-profits as they are in venture capital investments. This new generation of arts patrons, including influential collectors and trustees from the world of business, has an increasingly large share of attention in museum boardrooms’²⁰. Traditionally, he explains, the essential indicators of success depend on three number-driven categories: the amount (and bankability) of exhibitions, sum total of visitors and sum total of members. Yet these scores can be considerably inaccurate, mainly due to the false implications of attendance figures, a significant proportion of which enter the museum through discounted or complimentary tickets. Anderson also believes there is a misguided fixation on blockbuster shows, which obscures the focus on engagement: ‘Museum leadership tends to focus its energies on exhibitions because they are newsworthy, give the impression of competitive advantage, create opportunities for entertainment, and drive lower-level membership sales’. He proposes that these touchstones for a museum’s success are replaced with indicators that relate to how it engages with its audience. Metrics must:

- Be directly connected with the core values and mission of the art museum
- Be reliable indicators of long-term organizational and financial health
- Be easily verified and reported

²⁰ Maxwell L. Anderson, *Metrics of Success in Arts Museums* (The Getty Leadership Institute, 2004), <http://cgu.edu/pdffiles/gli/metrics.pdf>

Anderson diagnoses the following aspects of a museum's identity as suitable qualities to satisfy his proposed metrics: quality of experience, fulfilment of educational mandate, institutional reputation (how many collection catalogues are published, for example), management priorities and achievements, calibre and diversity of staff (how many curators have articles published or adjunct positions), standards of governance, scope and quality of collection (which can be measured by how many works are lent to associate institutions), contributions to art conservation, quality of exhibitions and facilities' contribution to core mission. It is difficult to measure the outcomes scientifically, but 'institutions stand to learn a great deal about themselves by answering these questions'²¹, claims Anderson. Measuring a museum's success is a complex process and much can be learnt from sharing resources and wider cultural exchange. *Communicating the Museum* is a major international conference that is dedicated to this subject and features keynotes, expert-led seminars and debates on current trends and museum practice. The forum was established in 2000 by Corinne Estrada, CEO of communications agency Agenda who has experience of working at cultural institutions in Oaxaca, Mexico, together with Damien Whitmore, at the time Director of Communications at Tate. Their vision was 'to bring together arts and communications professionals from all over the world and provide a platform for networking and debate'²²; the conference takes place in a different cultural city each year and hosts guests from over 2,500 organisations from 40 countries worldwide, indicating the scale of interest in maximising the museum experience for visitors, researchers and staff.

Some excellent research has been published on the relationship between early and mid-twentieth century Mexican art and cultural identity²³, much of it converging on the themes of officially sanctioned

²¹ Anderson, *Metrics of Success in Art Museums*, <http://cgu.edu/pdffiles/gli/metrics.pdf>

²² *Communicating the Museum*, http://agendacom.com/en/communicating_the_museum/about_ctm/ accessed February 2015

²³ Miguel Ángel Fernández, *Coleccionismo en México* (Museo del Vidrio, 2000); Erica Segre, *Intersected Identities: Strategies of Visualization in 19th and 20th Century Mexican Culture* (Berghahn Books, 2007); John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Duke University Press,

public art and cultural nationalism. The intensity of this partnership is one of the reasons why there has been an occasional reluctance for artists (and collectors) to collaborate with state-endorsed cultural initiatives²⁴. The private art museum does not make a political statement, however, as much as a socio-economic one: it can be a badge of sophistication, culture and enterprise. The construction of a world-class contemporary art museum designed by an internationally renowned architect positions a city as a cultural metropolis on a par with Bilbao, Miami and Liverpool. In this sense, Mexico's art spaces are a tool for 'soft diplomacy', enabling the country to project a particular image in a way that circumnavigates politics or more traditional government routes. This kind of action does not have a specific strategic objective, but is geared towards the more general purpose of improving cultural relations between Mexico and abroad, while promoting the country as at the vanguard within the international cultural panorama. Art historian Carol Duncan has written that 'having a bigger and better art museum is a sign of political virtue and national identity - of being recognisably a member of the civilized community of modern, liberal nations', and that privately-sponsored cultural institutions have the power to 'demonstrate the goodness of a state or municipality or show the civic-mindedness of its leading citizens'²⁵.

Collector-led contemporary art museums in Mexico display an exploration of space that often rejects the 'bricks and mortar' edifices of traditional cultural institutions. The influence of the 'white cube' concept of display, with its connotations of infinite space and the uninterrupted gaze, still looms large in contemporary art galleries in Mexico and all over the world. The development of moveable partition walls and flexible floor plans afforded exhibition spaces a new flexibility, but contemporary art is generally still experienced in a place that triggers specific behaviour: following a designed route, often in silence. Duncan states that museums 'do not simply resemble temples architecturally; they work like temples, shrines and other such monuments'²⁶, relating the visitor experience to a kind of ceremonial

2009); Shelley E. Garrigan, *Collecting Mexico: Museums, Monuments and the Creation of National Identity* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

²⁴ I elaborate on this theme in the third chapter of Part One: Developmental Challenges

²⁵ Carol Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship' from *Exhibiting Cultures*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven Levine, (Washington: Smithsonian Inst. 1991), 89

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 91

ritual. However, there is a trend in collector-led museum spaces in Mexico to experiment with reactivating the exhibition space, revising their relationship to the classic white cube and offering practical alternatives that aim to making the museum as inviting and inclusive as possible. How this is being achieved is presented on a case-by-case basis in Part Two of my thesis. Striking museum architecture is a required feature of a cosmopolitan skyline; It is also crowd-pleasing and highly marketable, and as Maxwell Anderson described in his paper on museum metrics, gives a ‘picture of impressive wealth, power and privilege harnessed in the service of a public interest’²⁷. Museums provide significant cultural landmarks in a city and contemporary art spaces tend to lend a cityscape its more radical contours. They have a local as well as an international reputation; the number of volunteers applying for positions can be a useful way of measuring a museum’s standing within the local community, for example.

Tanya Barson, Curator of International Art at Tate Modern, presented a paper at a conference in 2011²⁸ that focused on the issues of the museum’s ‘expanded field’, or myriad purpose: ‘museums are educational and social places, civic laboratories, places for experimentation and ideas.. much more than repositories of objects, producing as well as preserving knowledge’. She described how museums are responsible for building new narratives of art, and how this informs its aspirations and identity as an institution. Today, not only are museums ‘becoming hybrid structures, engaged in ever-diversifying range of activities’, but they ‘can help correct the lack of visibility within mainstream art histories’, Barson explained. The scope of these responsibilities is considerable, and a serious undertaking for a collector-led museum that wishes to be viewed as a leading cultural institution. At the same conference, Osvaldo Sánchez, Director of the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City and co-founder of the Patronato de Arte

²⁷ Maxwell L. Anderson, *Metrics of Success in Art Museums*, (Getty Leadership Institute, 2004), <http://cgu.edu/pdffiles/gli/metrics.pdf>

²⁸ *Between Theory and Practice: Rethinking Latin American Art in the 21st Century*, (The Getty Center, Los Angeles, 11-13 March 2011), http://getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/events/theory_practice/index.html

Contemporáneo²⁹, described the museum ‘as a kind of republic - it is for the people’. One of the major opportunities afforded collectors who decide to build a museum is that they are able to express new ideas without the burden of historical identity: they are in the privileged positions of being able to create a space that manifests an independent vision. This is a freedom that can be abused, of course, depending on the individual’s agenda. Even with the greatest architectural sensitivity, it is impossible to create a totally neutral space in which to view art when it is a representation of a single person’s taste. The museums I examine in my research which have succeeded in building an inclusive and challenging environment while bearing the stamp of a personal collection, are those which have pursued creative collaborations at every stage of development. The collector, for example, has enlisted the advice of a curator, or collaborated directly with the artist on a specific commission. When the knowledge base swells, it benefits the collection, keeping it dynamic and porous. An acquisition strategy that is firmly closed to external guidance is in danger of becoming a solipsistic performance that may alienate a public audience.

One of the most important responsibilities of a contemporary art museum relates to its narrative: exhibition spaces can be eminently powerful places because they can reproduce and formalize ideologies, and once a private museum has declared itself as a cultural institution it must be mindful of the fact that it is presenting a version of art history. The work on display in a museum has the potential to ‘restage the relationship between people and material things’³⁰, writes cultural theorist Michelle Henning. ‘In doing so, they become important forms of experience, memory and knowledge’. A museum volunteers a kind of collective memory that imposes a structure and a context on the way art is experienced. So how does a collector-led museum develop its DNA in a universal language? A museum’s identity is binary: how it sees itself, and how it is seen by others. Its mission statement will also need to address the conflict of how to create something of permanent value while recognizing the importance of change. Public confidence in the institution must also be at the core of its values; a lack of trust in its message and intentions will erode

²⁹ PAC is a Mexico City-based private organization set up in 2000 with the aim of promoting contemporary art. Member donations contribute towards art projects and conferences; PAC is profiled in detail in the fourth chapter of Part One: Mexico and the Global Art Market.

³⁰ Michelle Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory* (Open University Press, 2006), 184

the visitor's desire to engage with the art in any meaningful way. In 2015, *Museum Identity*, a magazine publication for museum professionals, conducted a survey asking directors and curators what museums will be like in the future, and trust was a recurrent theme in the responses: 'Museums are full of trusted evidence - collections - marking time and place that we use to tell stories [...] More than ever, we will use that knowledge to be informed and to nourish our sense of being [...] Because of their authenticity and new-found accessibility, museums will be the enduring “-paedias”³¹. In this sense, a museum is a custodian of cultural heritage with an authority that demands an appropriately sensitive acquisition and conservation strategy. Museologist Robert R. Janes, author of *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*³², has written extensively on how museums need to focus on sustainability in order to survive. In a conversation in July 2015, he explained to me that 'many private galleries have a public commitment, and take their social responsibility very seriously. They use their collections creatively, and their autonomy relinquishes them from any government cultural policy'. The art contemporary scene is a mercurial environment, and in order for an exhibition space to make the greatest impact it must have an integrated sustainability program which allows the collection to mature and not stagnate. The most dynamic private contemporary art collections in Mexico are those which are constantly seeking out new ways to collaborate with artists and arts professionals.

The theory and practice of museum management has provided great insight into the aims and operation of the contemporary art collectors who are central to my research. After reading a series of key texts on museology I realised that I did not subscribe to the traditional method of categorising museum visitors, which arranges humans by demographic. For the most part, this is the favoured system in museums all over the world and is intended to help staff assess diversity goals. It appeared to me that museum culture is experiencing a sea change that is operating on two levels. First of all, the move away from the long-established responsibilities of 'collect, preserve and interpret' towards a sharing ecosystem,

³¹ Mark Graham, Director of Research at the Canadian Museum of Nature, 'What will museums be like in the future?', *Museum Identity Magazine* Issue 10 (2015), <http://www.museum-id.com/idea-detail.asp?id=283>

³² Robert R. Janes, *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*, (Routledge, 2009)

proposed by museum director Maxwell L. Anderson as ‘gather, steward and converse’³³. In an article for *The Art Newspaper*, he produces a litany of evidence to back up his claim that the traditional museum model is now redundant. As a museum director and curator³⁴, he has witnessed how bureaucracy and the prohibitive price of art can stagnate the museum’s competence as well as the visitor experience. The escalation of auction prices alone means that museums are effectively excluded from the market. Anderson lists other factors such as ‘the physical impossibility of permanently committing to massive installations, and the potential of infinite editions of digitally based artworks. All of these have made collecting as we once understood it into a quaint expression that implies an unappealing contest: whoever owns the most art when he dies wins. So let’s gather instead. Let’s pursue gifts and bequests, make joint purchases, embark on long-term goals, make time-limited commissions, buy what makes sense, and devote our time and expertise to gathering people, expertise, objects and experiences’³⁵. This drive towards a more collaborative consumption chimes with the objectives of many of the new generation of contemporary art collectors in Mexico, who have created mobile art libraries, created short and long-term residency opportunities for artists, sponsored temporary installations and developed initiatives that will be described in full in the Part Two of my thesis.

The second transition involves refocusing the traditional museum model towards the needs of the visitor. Recent interpretations and proposed theories place ‘audience engagement’ at the centre of the work and activity of the museum. This is a profound shift away from the model of cultivating knowledge by historicizing the art on display, where the visitor was treated as a passive recipient. Museum directors and curators now aspire to offer the visitor multiple platforms for activity, which means inviting him to participate in a way that will hopefully enrich his experience. How does this concept translate into reality? Here are two scenarios that outline the difference in approach:

³³ Maxwell L. Anderson, ‘Gather, Steward and Converse’, *The Art Newspaper* 08.06.2010

³⁴ Maxwell L. Anderson is the Eugene McDermott Director at the Dallas Museum of Art in Dallas, Texas; formerly the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art and a curatorial assistant at the Museum of Metropolitan Art in New York. This article is excerpted from a paper given at the June 2010 Annual Meeting of the Association of Art Museum Directors in Indianapolis.

³⁵ Maxwell L. Anderson, ‘Gather, Steward and Converse’, *The Art Newspaper* 08.06.2010

Sequence 1: Cristina decides to visit an exhibition. She goes to the museum, walks around the display.

Before she leaves, she might buy a postcard or book from the museum gift shop.

Sequence 2: Cristina decides to visit an exhibition. She goes online to the museum's website to find out more information about the artist, and watch a short video of the curator talking through the exhibition highlights. While on the website, she is able to see the calendar of events that correspond to the exhibition, including educational workshops and free talks. She is invited to sign up to a newsletter that will keep her informed of future events. When she arrives at the museum she is offered an interactive audio guide that features recordings from a selection of critics, art historians and perhaps the artist himself. She feels immersed in his world. The art is not presented chronologically on white walls but installed in a way that feels like a series of encounters. Upon leaving, she sees a sign that invites her to share her thoughts on the exhibition social media account, using the museum's suggested metadata tag³⁶. She leaves via the gift shop and perhaps buys a postcard or book. On the bus on her way home, she connects with the museum's social media account and scrolls through other visitors' descriptions of their experiences.

It is important to point out that the visitor has the option of declining each invitation; the aim is not 'ambush marketing' but rather a request to engage. I have read a selection of recent research³⁷ that suggests that the first sequence adds up to an inadequate and outdated museum experience, and I realised that my findings on collector-led spaces in Mexico were in tune with this new model of visitor-focused initiatives as indicated in the second sequence. One idea, proposed by museologist John H. Falk in his

³⁶ Metadata tags (or 'hashtags') are used to collate online public opinion

³⁷ Selma Holo and Mari-Tere Álvarez, *Beyond the Turnstile: Making the Case for Museums and Sustainable Values*, (Altamira Press 2009); John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *The Museum Experience* (Left Coast Press, 2011); Robert R. Janes, *Museums and the Paradox of Change*, (Routledge 3rd Edition 2013).

book *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*³⁸, struck me as particularly helpful in providing a system for a new museum that wanted to ‘frame the museum visitor experience around the visitor’s motivations’. This method of categorisation ignores the more traditional quantitative measurement of museum traffic by age, gender, nationality and so on. Falk believes that a more intelligent way of responding to museums visitors is by satisfying their ‘motivations’: what were they looking to gain from their experience at the museum? He contends that most people visit a gallery space seeking to fulfil a specific identity-related desire, and not because they want to see a particular painting or sculpture. These ‘motivation’ categories identify as follows:

1. Explorers
2. Facilitators (visitors bringing children, for example)
3. Experience Seekers (focused on museum highlights)
4. Professionals / hobbyists (a small but influential group)
5. Rechargers (visitors who are there to relax and enjoy their surroundings)

It is important to point out that the classifications listed above are not characteristics of the individual visitors, but temporary roles that are interchangeable on a single visit - which means that a museum will need to communicate multiple messages. That is to say that someone may enter the art space as a ‘facilitator’, but emerge satisfied that they had encountered something new and interesting (an ‘explorer’). Understanding their motivation provides insights into how museums can have an impact on people’s lives, and is therefore a useful strategy for a cultural institution that wants to engage with the public. Because of its progressive application, I believe this methodology is most appropriate for my assessment of the success of the private contemporary art museum in Mexico, as it addresses the curiosity of the individual visitor. ‘An ethnicity or income bracket does not predict why you go to a museum or

³⁸ John H. Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* (Left Coast Press, 2009)

enjoy the experience'³⁹, writes Falk. Another reason why a museum will benefit from framing the visitor experience around motivational categories is related to the online accessibility of contemporary art. For over a decade, major art resources have digitised their archives and uploaded them to the internet, making them available to all who are connected to the web. In order to prompt the visitor to look around the space in person, the museum must present an incentive that appeals to one or more of the qualities listed above. Asking 'What does the visitor want to get out of this experience' seems a much more helpful approach than allocating visitors by demographic.

While focusing on the visitor experience is of paramount importance if a museum is to succeed and evolve, this target must co-exist with the museum's dedication to the quality of its collection and display. Museums are in the privileged position of being able to communicate stories to generations through image and sound, providing a refuge or place of inspiration for its visitors. The museums I concentrate on in my thesis do not aim to be encyclopaedic narratives of contemporary art - Mexican or otherwise - but present a considered selection of work that resonates with its environment and sparks critical debate. Many of the collectors I spoke with described how important it was for them to create a space where the audience is actively engaged, and rejected the idea of a museum as an outdated resource with limited application. French philosopher Alphonse Lamartine (1790-1869) described museums as 'cemeteries for the arts', yet two hundred years later we are witnessing what American historian Professor Jay Winter (b.1945) describes as '[building] cathedrals for the modern world, places where sacred issues are expressed and where people come to reflect on them. A museum is also a kind of bridge between the academy and the public [...] A museum without contact with scholarship turns sclerotic very fast'⁴⁰. This is a useful definition of the permeability of the modern art space: a successful museum must be a nucleus of expertise and at the time same responsive to the interests of its visitors if it is to evolve; this judgment will often inform the collector's acquisition strategy and provide a focal point for the collection.

³⁹ John H. Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, (Left Coast Press, 2009)

⁴⁰ Jay Winter, *The Legacy of the Great War, 90 Years On* (University of Missouri Press, 2009) 34

Several of the private collections I saw in Mexico distance themselves from presenting a single dominant narrative in favour of multiple, nonlinear dialogues between the works on display. Most museums aim to hold a mirror up to a cultural landscape; the collector-led museums I feature in my research offer both convex and concave reflections on contemporary art, presenting a public space for contemplation while revealing an individual perspective through his or her selection of art.

(ii) The Collector

The desire to acquire and display objects is a common human behaviour; why and how we do this is linked to memory and hope. For some, such as the dedicated music fan who collects band memorabilia, it is a way to communicate loyalty, while for others, like the rare coin collector, the need to procure is more of an obsession. In this section I want to explore what drives the urge to collect and in particular, what motivates someone to build an art collection. Understanding this impulse is a useful way for me to examine a collector's long-term objectives and measure the value of the collection in terms of its contribution to a cultural narrative. I also examine why a collector is drawn to the visual arts and what inspires him to share his collection with others. 'Art and culture emerged after 1800 as mutually reinforcing domains of human value, strategies for gathering, marking off, protecting the best and most interesting creations of "Man"'⁴¹, is James Clifford's explanation of why collectors find it meaningful to acquire important works of art. In building an art collection, a collector is able to present his synthesis of human aesthetic experience while satisfying his appetite to engage a world that provides cultural and social stimulation. The contemporary art collections studied in my thesis are 'works in progress', meaning that they continue to evolve through acquisitions and creative collaborations; the rewards found in the pursuit of collecting art are detailed in this chapter alongside a brief analysis of how a collection is a means of self-expression.

Collecting is a specialist type of consumer behaviour, claims Professor Russell W Belk: 'In the collecting form of consumption, acquisition is a key process. Someone who possesses a collection is not necessarily a collector unless they continue to acquire additional things for the collection. The collection usually grows as a result, but because some collectors concentrate on upgrading rather than expanding their collections, quantitative growth is not inevitable'⁴². Yet as a consumer behaviour, collecting

⁴¹ James Clifford, *On Collecting Art and Culture from The Predicament of Culture: 20th Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* Cambridge, (M.A. Press, 1998) 234

⁴² Russell W. Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (Routledge, 2001), 66

paintings and sculptures is unusual in the sense that they are works of art ‘that don’t get consumed. That is, they get used, but not used up. Looking at them doesn’t deplete them’⁴³, observes art historian Richard Shiff. The more established collections I refer to in my thesis, such as Jumex and CIAC, are predicated by highly developed acquisition strategies where the collector works closely with one or more arts professionals. The collectors whose exhibition spaces are less formalized tend to operate on a more spontaneous basis, acquiring pieces at gradual intervals and usually as the result of a personal connection with an artist or gallery. Both practices - of which there are several permutations - illustrate the importance of the acquisition stage of collecting. This is the moment where collectors are able to develop key relationships with dealers as well as the artists themselves, laying the foundation for future purchases.

A certain social prestige is associated with the acquisition of luxury items, which includes contemporary art. Our social, economic and cultural identity is defined to a great extent by our consumer habits, and the expenditure involved with building an art collection communicates a specific message about status. This so-called ‘conspicuous consumption’ is about publicly displaying economic power but also about self-representation as a harbinger of cultural judgment. Patronage of visual culture provides a particular platform for philanthropists, in that it reinforces their connection with civilization; art historian Carol Duncan has described privately-funded museums as ‘powerful identity-defining machines. To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and some of its highest, most authoritative truths. It also means the power to define and rank people to declare some as having a greater share than others in the community’s common heritage - in its very identity’⁴⁴. The responsibilities that pertain to a patron’s potential influence on cultural narrative are explored in a subsequent chapter of this thesis (Part One, Chapter iii: Developmental Challenges).

⁴³ Louisa Buck and Judith Greer, *Owning Art: The Contemporary Art Collector’s Handbook*, (Cultureshock Media, 2006) 100

⁴⁴ Carol Duncan, ‘Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship’ from *Exhibiting Cultures* ed. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Smithsonian Inst. 1991), 100

Linked to the satisfaction derived from this level of control is the experience of commodity fetishism, related to what Karl Marx described as a ‘religion of sensuous appetites’⁴⁵, and prevalent in the world of the uber-collector. Taking these extremes into account, collecting art - as a consumer behaviour - is able to bring out the best and worst in an individual. In her book *A Museum of One’s Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift*, Anne Higonnet identifies the negative and positive aspects of collecting: the human tendencies to ‘hoard, gloat, steal, flaunt, distort, lie [and] deny death. It also brings out some of the better ones: to inspire, share, create, improve and protect, not to mention denying death’⁴⁶. How this balance manifests itself in personal art collections is something I consider when examining each case study featured in my research, as it functions as a barometer of a collection’s authenticity as well as the collector’s overall commitment to its excellence. For collectors of art, there are specific motivations involved. ‘The collector’s mania embraces the selfish desire to own things for yourself, the altruistic desire to own them for others, and the somewhat crude desire to stop anyone else owning anything you happen to fancy’, writes James Goodwin in the introduction to *The International Art Markets*⁴⁷. Although each private art collection is a unique combination of these crosscurrents, one instinct tends to dominate.

The psychoanalytical explanations for collecting are broadly linked to the pleasure found in accumulating personal possessions, and relate to a desire to establish order over chaos. In behavioural economics, there is a phenomenon known as the endowment effect, which is the theory that humans ascribe a greater value to items once they have secured ownership. ‘Humans are unique in the way we collect items purely for the satisfaction of seeking and owning them’⁴⁸, writes psychologist Christian Jarrett. The rewards in building an art collection are as diverse as the collector’s motivations, and may relate to emotion, social or intellectual stimulation. It is important to clarify, however, that there is a

⁴⁵ Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *On Religion* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1982) 22

⁴⁶ Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One’s Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift*, (Periscope Publishing, 2009), 214

⁴⁷ James Goodwin, *The International Art Markets: The Essential Guide for Collectors and Investors* (Kogan-Page, 2009), 17

⁴⁸ Christian Jarrett, ‘Why do we collect things? Love, anxiety or desire’, *The Guardian* 09.09.2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/nov/09/why-do-we-collect-things-love-anxiety-or-desire>

difference between the pleasure found in collecting art and the satisfaction experienced when sharing one's collection.

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) has written extensively on the impulse behind collecting, and his analysis of its related process of judgment chimes with the convenience of acquiring art: 'It should be stressed that the concept of collecting (from the Latin *colligere*, to select and assemble) is distinct from that of accumulating [...] Collecting proper emerges at first with an orientation to the cultural: it aspires to discriminate *between* objects, privileging those which have some exchange value or which are also 'objects' of conservation, or commerce, of social ritual, of display - possibly which are even a source of profit'⁴⁹. In this sense, building a collection is a kind of performative quest without end. 'What makes a collection transcend mere accumulation is not only the fact of its being culturally complex, but the fact of its incompleteness, the fact that it *lacks* something'⁵⁰, is Baudrillard's observation. He also makes a connection between a collector's own identity and his activity: 'The collector is driven to construct an alternative discourse that is for him entirely amenable, in so far as he is the one who dictates its signifiers - the ultimate signified being, in the final analysis, none other than himself'⁵¹. The art collector's vanity, Baudrillard explains, is believing himself 'equal of the canvas itself'⁵². The way in which this relates to art collectors is interesting because in acquiring an object, it becomes an extension of the self. The activity is transformed from 'possessing' into 'being', a conversion which is a familiar process to almost all art collectors and perhaps especially those who decide to put their collection on public display. 'It is invariably *oneself* that one collects'⁵³ Baudrillard states, and in so doing, the collector is attempting to create a system. We use objects to balance and monitor our lives, and building a collection of objects indicates a specific way of engaging with reality. In the same essay, Baudrillard describes a 'jealousy system', whereby the object is confined and does not leave the collector's possession. The motivation

⁴⁹ Jean Baudrillard, 'The System of Collecting' from *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, (Harvard University Press, 1994) 23

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 24

⁵² Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (Telos Press, 1981)

⁵³ Baudrillard, *The System of Collecting*, 12

behind its confinement, he states, is a fear of the object being lost or damaged by others which would symbolize castration in the context of a collection as a representation of the self: ‘When all is said and done, one never lends out one’s phallus’⁵⁴. What does it mean, therefore, when an art collector decides to share his treasure with the public? Perhaps that he prioritizes the growth of a collection over its collapse. The hoarding of his acquisitions may reflect another kind of insecurity: ‘In a consumer society in which many have come to measure success in material terms, the total estimated monetary value of a collection is a way for collectors to “keep score” or monitor growth and progress, even though they may well have no intention or even a possibility of selling the collection’⁵⁵, observes Belk, who goes on to suggest that the keen sense of competition felt between collectors is one of the reasons behind the popularity of buying collectibles at auction⁵⁶. There is undoubtedly an element of ritual in this hunt for treasure: roaming galleries and tracking artists’ careers are enjoyable stages of the art collector’s journey. This activity deepens the level of engagement - and pleasure - the collector derives from his pursuit. Furthermore, the measure of care and attention given to the process behind building a collection is revealed in the quality of acquisitions and the coherence of the selection as a whole.

The concept of an art collection representing a form of identity for the collector is coherent with the objectives of many collector-led exhibition spaces. What does a collection reveal about its owner? In his book *Collecting in a Consumer Society*, Russell W. Belk describes how in building a collection, ‘there is a special moment of pride because, unlike ordinary purchasing with fixed prices and large supplies, money alone is not enough to acquire collectibles in competition with others. Collectible objects are not only luxuries, they are almost by definition rare or difficult to assemble. The collector must be shrewder, quicker, more knowledgeable, more discerning, more diligent, or simply luckier than other collectors to be successful’⁵⁷. The ability to discriminate denotes connoisseurship, and places the collector in a desirable cultural milieu that affords him respect, or at least attention, from his peers. In addition, rarity of

⁵⁴ Ibid., 18

⁵⁵ Russell W. Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (Routledge, 2001), 80

⁵⁶ Ibid., 68

⁵⁷ Ibid., 69

acquisitions is prized because ‘a related benefit sought by most collectors is the chance to stand out as being unique by virtue of possessing rare, valued and unique possessions’⁵⁸, Belk points out, arguing that ‘it is not enough to succeed if everyone else succeeds as well. The desire for uniqueness in collectibles is the desire for uniqueness among people’⁵⁹, yet he maintains that this desire may be strongest in more individualistic cultures. The concept of identity is strongly linked to this desire: ‘Another related benefit of collecting is in enlarging the collector’s sense of self. To say that collectors are attached to their objects in their collections is like saying they are attached to their arms and legs. However, unlike arms and legs, the choice and assembly of objects to form a collection is ostensibly a self-expressive creative act that tells us something about the collector’⁶⁰. Within the selection of contemporary art collectors profiled in the second part of this thesis, there is a range of self-expression exposed through their collections; some are infused with a distinct personality or sense of humour, while others prefer to allow thematic objectives to take centre stage. One example of this variation is found by contrasting the collections of José Noé Suro and Isabel and Agustín Coppel: artistic work produced in Suro’s factory corresponds with its industrial materials of fibre-glass, metal and ceramic, while the Coppels’ sculpture garden in Culiacán is primarily a social project that was designed to regenerate a neglected urban park.

It is common for collectors of all kinds to aspire to make a personal statement via their collection, and for some collectors of contemporary art there is no greater accolade than being perceived as a zeitgeist by one’s peers. The ability to recognise emerging talent indicates an instinctive appreciation of what is ‘good’ art without relying on a network of advisors; this is one of the reasons why many art collectors eschew the services of professional advisors when purchasing art, as they feel it would dilute the integrity of the collection, not to mention reduce the amount of pleasure derived from making an autonomous decision. For more ego-led projects, the totalitarianism of decision-making can be a highly satisfying part of the process. Beyond the satisfaction of being recognised for an ability to detect fresh

⁵⁸ Ibid., 88

⁵⁹ C. R. Snyder and Howard L. Fromkin, *Uniqueness, the Human Pursuit of Difference* 1980

⁶⁰ Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society*, 89

talent, there are other ways for a collector to establish himself as having an ‘edge’ over fellow art-lovers: to truly set himself apart from the crowd his collection needs to have a reputation as being uniquely focused, perhaps on a theme or a particular period in an artist’s career. Art collections tend to be built either ‘horizontally’, which involves accumulating a wide selection of work without focusing on a specific medium, artist or unifying theme, or ‘vertically’, where collectors crystallize their vision or taste and focus on acquiring select groups of artists, or concentrate on a specific era. One of the main benefits of creating a sharper focus within an art collection is that it gives the collection a solid identity - and the collector becomes associated with a specific kind of art, as well as demonstrating a kind of intellectual rigour; here could be a conceptual framework to a collection (focusing on a particular colour, or only women artists). A singular aesthetic dictates a specific acquisition strategy, and enables a collector to cultivate a reputation: a collector might choose to associate himself with provocative work, for example, and bask in the reflected glow of controversy. Mexican collector Moisés Cosío put up part of the finance for artist Pedro Reyes’ puppet show *Baby Marx*, an ‘ideological screwball comedy’ with puppet versions of philosophers Karl Marx and Adam Smith. The piece was originally created for the Yokohama triennial in 2008, but has evolved into a series of online clips and was given a special screening at the Walker Center of Art in Minneapolis in 2011. This experimental piece by an internationally-acclaimed Mexican artist is a shrewd fit for Cosío, a young collector who is eager to patronize unconventional projects both at home and abroad. He is a fitting example of a collector as an impresario, engaging in entrepreneurial proposals to promote cultural initiatives. Cosío’s efforts are detailed in a detailed profile in Part Two of my thesis.

If a collector intends for his collection to demonstrate a particular ‘edge’, or specialism, he is using it as a tool to build an individual vision. Social historian James Calvert-Hollis describes ‘Human beings collect experiences, as they do material possessions; and these are then pieced together to create a personal narrative’⁶¹. Building a collection is also a form of production, in the sense that a collector

⁶¹ James Calvert-Hollis, *Understanding the Visitor Experience: Collecting Experiences* (University of Lincoln, 2014), https://www.academia.edu/7271454/Collecting_Experiences_and_Personal_Narratives

creates a new entity from an assembly of parts which in turn can feel like his own version of a creative production. In *The Predicament of Culture: 20th Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, James Clifford describes an ‘art-culture’ system whereby objects are contextualized within an ideological and institutional structure, defining the collector’s overall goal as ‘an exercise in how to make the world one’s own, to gather things around oneself tastefully, appropriately’⁶². But collections can represent much more than a simple expression of taste: works of art are converted into symbols, just as museums become emblematic of a cultural identity; collections have the power to provide art with a new context or allusion. Interestingly, some of the world’s leading contemporary art museums now strive to present multiple narratives within their collections: radical re-hangs (such as at Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2004 and Tate Modern in London in 2006) were carried out in order to expose the multiplicity of the works on display. A single narrative can appear outdated or imperious. Art historian Antonio Urquizar Herrera has written that once objects are collected, there is a change in status, that they are recontextualized and determined by their surroundings: ‘To a certain extent, the history of collecting is the history of these recontextualizations’⁶³. This appetite for revision is one of the reasons why several of the collectors profiled in my thesis are so eager to introduce new dialogues within their collections; a failure to do so would prevent the collection from remaining relevant and dynamic. The most popular methods of exploring a new aesthetic discourse include seeking out new acquisitions and working with external curators whose original perspectives offer fresh interpretations of the collection. An indirect reward of being an art collector is the feeling of camaraderie with one’s peers - or the delight found in competition. Art advisors Ethan and Thea Wagner claim that ‘It’s quite ordinary, almost de rigeur, for collectors to open their homes to friends, fellow collectors, museum groups, artists, dealers and curators. In doing so they seek to affirm (and project to others) their self-image: the constellation of traits they hold

⁶² James Clifford, ‘On Collecting Art and Culture’ from *The Predicament of Culture: 20th Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* Cambridge, (M.A. Press, 1998) 218

⁶³ Antonio Urquizar Herrera, *El coleccionismo en la formación de la conciencia moderna del arte: perspectivas metodológicas* (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Spain, 2009), https://www.academia.edu/4086035/El_coleccionismo_en_la_formaci%C3%B3n_de_la_conciencia_moderna_del_arte._Perspectivas_metodol%C3%B3gicas

dear to their collecting, such as knowledge, individuality, discernment, perspicacity, personal taste and sensibilities, courage and prescience'⁶⁴. In Mexico, as elsewhere, the majority of these 'open house' evenings coincide with contemporary art fairs as part of the VIP program or are coordinated by arts patronage circles such as Mexico City-based Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo (PAC). There is a strong social aspect to collecting art, and this is an intrinsic part of the collecting experience at all levels from hobbyists to connoisseurs. Collectors assemble to exchange news and share the spark of discovery, and the satisfaction of membership of a community of like-minded individuals can be a strong part of the appeal. This *esprit de corps* is conspicuous at all collector-focused events, including art fairs, patron receptions and vernissages. Beyond the social rewards, most collectors claim to find the greatest satisfaction in building a rapport with the artists whose work features in their collections. In Mexico, several contemporary art collectors have developed important relationships with artists that are centred on co-production: Guadalajara-based José Noé Suro, for example, invites artists to use the machines in his foundry to produce large-scale pieces in technical materials such as metal, fibreglass and industrial ceramic. Although other collectors might reject the idea of cultivating a friendship with the artist because it can obscure any objectivity, in general a personal connection with the artist is desirable because it deepens their understanding of the creative process. 'Commission-based patronage of individual artists is one of the most sophisticated forms of collecting'⁶⁵, writes Louisa Buck in her guide to collecting art, as it indicates a real level of engagement between collector and artist. Several of the new generation of collectors I include in my research are committed to the role of facilitators, providing 'incubation' opportunities for the artists whose work they collect. This conductivity rejects a more formal artist-collector relationship; today's patrons are more interested in engaging with the artist on a germinal level, collaborating on joint initiatives or sponsoring projects. For the artist, an association with a respected collector can be highly advantageous. Not only can it provide a boost to his career as well as financial support, it also serves as affirmation, particularly when the collector has acquired a number of his pieces.

⁶⁴ Ethan Wagner and Thea Westreich, *Collecting Art for Love, Money and More* (Phaidon, 2013)

⁶⁵ Louisa Buck and Judith Greer, *Owning Art: The Contemporary Art Collector's Handbook* (Thames & Hudson / Cultureshock Media, 2006) 39

On a practical level, a work is more likely to be requested as a loan for external exhibitions if it belongs to an important collector, because curators tend to pay close attention to new acquisitions for major private art collections.

In addition to the pleasure found in fostering a fledgling artistic career, it can be particularly gratifying to support emerging artists who go on to achieve international recognition as this means that the collector's discernment is approved by the market, which in turn indicates a type of official endorsement. For some, the pleasure of collecting art is about 'trophy hunting' - paying exorbitant prices for works by world-class artists - yet the financial rewards are rarely the primary incentive for most contemporary art collectors. This also applies for tax breaks, despite there being attractive tax reductions for philanthropists in Mexico: in a report published in the *Financial Times* in 2011⁶⁶, Latin American philanthropy in the visual arts was noted to be on the rise, and in Mexico 'grantmakers' are able to write off 7% of their tax according to data compiled by the US-based Council on Foundations. 'In Mexico's highly centralized system, all applications for non-profit status are reviewed by a handful of federal lawyers in Mexico City, explains Monica Tapia of Alternativas Sociales, a non-profit that seeks to bolster civil society in the country'⁶⁷. The report claims that attitudes towards cultural patronage are changing because private individuals are taking over where the government used to preside. 'More than half the Mexican companies surveyed in 2008 by Alternativas Sociales said that tax incentives played little role in their giving decision. Roughly 40% said improving their image was the key objective of donations'⁶⁸. Mexico is unusual in that it also extends a favourable tax relief scheme to its artists, who have the option of paying their taxes with artwork. This program, called *pago en especie* (payment in kind), allows over 700 professional artists to pay federal income tax by donating sculptures, prints and paintings to the state. The scheme was originally proposed in 1957, supposedly the result of a negotiation between muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros and the Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit that allowed a friend of the artist

⁶⁶ Alexander Kliment, 'FT Report: Latin America, Social Enterprise and Philanthropy', *Financial Times*, 01.12.2011, <http://www.ft.com/latin-america-philanthropy-2011>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. Kliment,

to stay out of prison for tax evasion by paying his debt in art⁶⁹. The scheme was formalized in 1975 and all submissions are now catalogued in the *pago en especie* government collection before being displayed in small travelling exhibitions or in the dedicated gallery space inside the same building as the Secretariat's head office in Mexico City; the collection features work by a diverse group of artists including Carlos Mérida, Leonora Carrington, Magali Lara and Roberto Cortázar. Recently, the program was modified in order to allow artists to '*etiquetar*' (label) their submissions, meaning that they could request that the piece go towards a specific permanent collection such as MUAC or Museo Amparo⁷⁰. There is a clear social benefit to this kind of programme yet the nature of its arrangement means that the collection cannot develop a coherent acquisition strategy because it is dependent on the artist's selection. The absence of a prevailing theme or any widespread promotion leaves the door open for private art collectors to provide a more visible and tightly constructed platform for contemporary art in Mexico.

Motivation

On 13th June 2013, I went to a conference on *The Art of Collecting: Questioning Status and Practices* at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London that aimed to open up a critical debate on the changing status of the collector within the art world. Speakers included auctioneers, dealers, curators, collectors and advisors and themes for discussion covered the motives and ambitions that drive modern collectors, the role collectors play in pricing and demand of the marketplace, and the structures involved in acquiring a piece of art. This event was an unusual feature on the Courtauld's calendar, whose research seminars tend to focus on artists or historical themes. One of the reasons why there is so much interest in developing a better understanding of art collectors is because it is not an immediately transparent activity, and as such is a source of fascination for others. At the conference at Courtauld, Philip Hook, director of

⁶⁹ Eva Hershaw, 'In Mexico, Artists can Pay Taxes with Artwork', *The Atlantic Magazine* 11.04.2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/04/in-mexico-artists-can-pay-taxes-with-artwork/360519/>

⁷⁰ Author conversation with Patricia Sloane, Associate Curator of MUAC/UNAM and former director of Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil (2000-2002), February 2012

Impressionist and Modern art at Sotheby's, presented the motivations behind collecting art in four quadrants: spiritual element; investment; status; intellectual / aesthetic pleasure. While the first reason indicates a relatively passive experience, the impulse behind the subsequent three definitions correspond with a more active role. These four forces, Hook explained, existed in different proportions depending on the individual: he gave the extreme example of one collector who had locked away all of his art in a bank vault and had instead decorated his walls with framed certificates of each painting's authenticity. Hook also described how the quest for status could create a gladiatorial atmosphere in auction rooms, where 'rich men's arguments' were thrashed out in a public arena. Other motivations are often at play: a collector might buy a 'bad' Picasso, for example, simply to take it out of circulation⁷¹; other collectors would describe a sensation of reconnecting with a great tradition through their love of acquiring art, similar to a kind of spiritual reward. Other factors that have influenced the development of collector profile and market structures over the last ten years relate to an unprecedented wealth creation, the rise of alternative asset classes and the adoption of art as a consumer good by the fashion and design industries. A collector may believe that by engaging with art as a purchaser his behaviour is similar to that of a guardian, and justify his expenditure as beneficial to society. Social historian Frank Herrman wrote that 'Collecting is a form of self-indulgence, but by and large it is a beneficial one [...] The preservation of many of the world's greatest works of arts in the face of deliberate destruction, contempt or neglect has been due to the collector's acquisitive urge, the quest for beauty, the indulgence of taste and the desire for association and continuity with the past'⁷². But by claiming the responsibility of a custodian, is the collector making an excuse for his self-indulgence? Belk points out that this rationalization is often used by collectors in order 'to assuage the guilt of self-indulgent acquisitiveness [thereby portraying] the collector as a saviour of lost, neglected or endangered objects'. This inclination is not necessarily connected to the resources of the collector: 'Many less wealthy collectors also see their collections as part

⁷¹ Attributed to Stanley J Seeger; Obituary, *The Daily Telegraph* 03.07.2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/art-obituaries/8614266/Stanley-Seeger.html>

⁷² Frank Herrmann, *The English as Collectors: A Documentary Chrestomathy*, (Norton, 1972) 22

of a mission to save and preserve'⁷³. How this impetus relates to the art world in Mexico is evident in the government's strict laws which are designed to regulate the exportation of artworks and therefore protect the country's cultural heritage; originally this legislation was drafted to safeguard archaeological sites and pre-Hispanic artefacts, but over recent decades has been extended to include works by artists including Diego Rivera, Dr. Atl, Frida Kahlo and many more.

The range of emotion experienced in the building of an art collection - reward, excitement, gratification, self-indulgence - can be intoxicating but also hard to articulate: 'Even a very serious and reflective collector is hard put to offer a clear, convincing explanation of his inclination or the intense emotion that occasionally occurs in the process of obtaining an object', writes Werner Muensterberg⁷⁴. It can also be difficult for a collector to determine the scale of his project and its ambitions from the outset: for some of the collectors I focus on in my research, such as José Noé Suro, there was no grand design to his factory-based collaborations with artists; a chain of creative partnerships grew organically and the scope of each project varies depending on the production requirements of the artist. Eugenio López Alonso, on the other hand, has described how he was inspired to establish a visual arts foundation after visiting the Charles Saatchi art collection in London and reading Marjory Jacobson's book *Art for Work: The New Renaissance in Corporate Collecting*, a study of large-scale collections belonging to commercial institutions. This book presents a series of detailed case studies of corporate collections from around the world and concludes with a practical guide on how to launch an art program. Interestingly, Jacobson's book stresses the importance of working alongside arts professionals from the project's inception. López employed Patricia Martín to develop his vision for an arts foundation from the outset; Fundación Jumex now includes the core collection, the museum, an experimental gallery space located on the Jumex juicing plant, and a publishing platform.

⁷³ Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society*, 83

⁷⁴ Werner Muensterberg, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion: Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 3

Although building an art collection is still regarded as an exclusive pursuit, contemporary art is more accessible now than it has ever been. Today, there are myriad alternative means of acquiring a work of art outside the traditional purchasing route, such as equity, reward-based crowdfunding or creative partnerships. The practicalities of different artistic media need to be taken into consideration when building a contemporary art collection. Paintings might be preferred because they are unique and tend to be relatively easy to display, unlike large-scale installations or videos. If the collector has the space available, in a suitable climate, he might choose to build a sculpture garden. Photography and prints are generally a less expensive way to start a collection, as with drawings, which can be valued highly due to how they reveal the creative process behind more elaborate pieces. There may be issues pertaining to maintenance, for example, or installation. If a piece is particularly challenging to display due to dimensions or fragility of materials, a collector might decide that the most appropriate solution might be to negotiate a long-term loan to a museum.

There are also different levels of collector involvement, depending on the kind of engagement desired. When a collector supports a cultural institution, he may be invited to lend work from his collection for exhibitions; donations are also common, as is sponsorship for artistic commissions or construction projects that will expand the gallery space. Other models of patronage might involve promoting a fundraising event, sponsoring a post on the museum staff or working closely with the museum director and his staff to resolve any notable absences in the permanent collection. For collectors who build their own exhibition spaces, the degree of contribution is unlimited. Facilitating residencies, educational workshops, community outreach programs as well as a carefully-considered acquisition strategy and hiring enterprising staff are all key components of the collector experience at this level. Peter Doroshenko, author of *Private Spaces for Contemporary Art*⁷⁵, has suggested that a business model has an important place in the development of many private art foundations, namely the bestselling *In Search*

⁷⁵ Peter Doroshenko, *Private Spaces for Contemporary Art* (Rispoli, 2010).

of Excellence, by Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman Jr⁷⁶. The book proposes eight basic principles of management, of which the most relevant to running an arts foundation, in my opinion, are: active decision making (reducing bureaucracy), listening to what the customer (read: visitor) wants, autonomy and entrepreneurship (fostering innovation) and ‘productivity through people’ (organizational structure of staff). A business manual may seem a peculiar point of reference for the world of visual culture, yet with exhibition spaces and non-profits increasingly being run as family business it is perhaps a logical development. As indicated above, López admits to finding inspiration in Marjory Jacobson’s *Art and Business: New Strategies for Corporate Collecting*⁷⁷ when establishing Fundación Jumex.

Finally, the collector must be prepared to allow for mistakes to be made; gallerists speak of novice collectors being susceptible to buying with their ears as well as eyes, a liability that diminishes with experience. Experimentation and growth are part of the collector’s journey and acquisitions will vary according to fluctuations in taste as well as finances. Most art collectors will recount both triumphs and defeats relating to acquisitions, alliances and sponsorship. For many, the integration of good and bad experiences is part of the adventure of collecting art.

As specified in a subsequent chapter on the art market in Mexico, collectors are important because they can have a significant impact on the swells and hesitations of the art market, as well as a distinct influence on the way in which art is experienced and displayed. Over the twentieth century, private art collections such as those belonging to Carrillo Gil and Dolores Olmedo (described in detail in the second part of this thesis) raised the profile of the independent collector to the extent that they became accepted as part of the cultural elite. For an artist to have a work included in a prestigious collection reflected well on his status and was likely to increase demand for his work. Gil and Olmedo have been succeeded by a new generation of art collectors whose approval can have an enormous impact on artists’

⁷⁶ Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman Jr., *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies*, (Profile Books, 2004).

⁷⁷ Marjory Jacobson, *Art and Business: New Strategies for Corporate Collecting* (Thames and Hudson, 1993).

careers: ‘In the contemporary art market the collectors’ influence is broader today than any other time in history’, explains market expert James Goodwin. ‘From being a strictly specialist subject catering for a small elite, contemporary art has entered the cultural mainstream. The obsession with consuming the contemporary can be seen as an inevitable product of a high-speed, novelty-seeking and commercially driven era. These collectors secure social status by surrounding themselves not with art of the past but by supporting radical living artists who, they believe, express the spirit of the times. As a consequence, today’s expanded contemporary art world offers more opportunities for collectors of all incomes and inclinations than any other time’⁷⁸. Over recent years, a class of so-called ‘star collectors’ has emerged in the art world. Examples include François Pinault (who exhibits his art collection at Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana, an old customs house in Venice), Charles Saatchi (whose *Sensation* exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1997 heralded a new generation of Young British Artists), Don and Meera Rubell (who are credited with Miami’s cultural regeneration⁷⁹) among others. Mexican collector Eugenio López Alonso is now a member of this cadre, and his Fundación Jumex has put Mexico on the contemporary art world map and raised the profile of Mexico as a hub of cultural enterprise. ‘As the worldwide proliferation of museum buildings and the ever-more congested calendar of international biennales and triennales testify, contemporary art is now a key sector of the leisure industry and a powerful force in urban and national regeneration.’⁸⁰, writes Louisa Buck. The star collectors are driving this transformation, and the influence of private exhibition spaces on a city’s cultural identity is one of the reasons why López’s Fundación Jumex commands close observation.

‘Collecting presupposes a story; a story occurs in a “chronotope”’,⁸¹ observes James Clifford. The power of these stories lies in their ability to shape the way art is experienced. Collecting may be the

⁷⁸ Goodwin, *The International Art Markets*, 18

⁷⁹ Louisa Buck, ‘Art Basel Miami Beach: Let the bright lights shine’, *The Daily Telegraph* 06.12.2013 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/art/18033/art-basel-miami-beach-let-the-bright-lights-shine.html>

⁸⁰ Buck and Greer, *Owning Art*, 13

⁸¹ James Clifford, ‘On Collecting Art and Culture’ from *The Predicament of Culture: 20th Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* Cambridge, (M.A. Press, 1998) 236

‘paradise of consumption’⁸², but for an art collection to stay relevant, it must be porous. Collector-led spaces, therefore, have a dilemma: how do they balance their responsibility as custodians of contemporary art while engaging in the very construction of a cultural narrative? In Mexico, although there is no uniform model for acquiring contemporary art, my research identifies a pattern in how privately-funded exhibition spaces are changing the way contemporary art is displayed to the public. At the core of this activity is the private art collection.

⁸² Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Duke University Press, 1993)

(iii) Developmental Challenges

One of the central reasons why privately-funded exhibition spaces have become such influential platforms for contemporary art in Mexico is because the state has hitherto shown limited interest in non officially-sanctioned contemporary art. In this chapter, I examine the confluence of factors behind the trend for collectors to put their collections on public display and how this behaviour is, in part, a reaction to decades of friction between public cultural institutions and private enterprise in the visual arts. I also look at the obstacles faced by privately-funded exhibition spaces as well as the advantages they might experience contrasted with public art museums. By reviewing a series of case studies from the last 30 years in Mexico, I am able to identify where private cultural institutions are most vulnerable and what they need to address in order to increase their chances of survival.

A complex relationship between state patronage and visual art presented itself when the government used the revolutionary art of the *muralistas* in the 1920s and 1930s to promote official culture; art historian Rubén Gallo describes how ‘PRI governments poured millions of pesos into the arts (in the form of commissions, fellowships, grants, and prizes), sending a clear message that the promotion of Mexican culture was one of the regime’s central policies [...] As art critic Shifra Goldman⁸³ has shown, state support effectively ‘laundered’ artistic production by rewarding artists who avoid the political and the controversial, as became manifestly clear in the blockbuster exhibits of Mexican art organized by PRI governments’⁸⁴. During the post-revolutionary period, public museums appeared at regular intervals: the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia opened in 1939, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA) in 1946, Museo Nacional de Historia in 1944 and Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in 1947. During the earlier part of the twentieth century the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), created in 1921, supervised all government programs relating to the visual arts. Art historian Ana Garduño believes that

⁸³ Shifra M. Goldman, *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States*, (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 273

⁸⁴ Rubén Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 11

this burst of museum-building was not supported by a coherent official expansion plan: ‘The collections, formed with a variety of acquisition strategies, were not the product of a systematic program of acquisitions and donations based on short-term, medium-term or long-term goals and did not follow a master plan for the creation of a national museum system. As a result, permanent exhibition spaces were built haphazardly, the products of sporadic, disorganized, and even conflicting cultural projects’⁸⁵. When INBA was formed in 1946 it beckoned a new phase of government-led co-operation with the private sector. This partnership revealed itself principally through the promotion of Mexican art abroad, such as touring exhibitions. When Consejo Nacional para La Cultura y Las Artes (CONACULTA) was established in 1988⁸⁶ it ‘marked a stormy transition where the private sector became a major player in the arts in Mexico’⁸⁷, and gave a legitimacy to many hitherto sidelined independent art projects. Its formation marked the beginning of a new phase in Mexico’s cultural landscape, not least because it represented the moment when much stronger connections were forged between private funding and artistic production. CONACULTA’s role remains very important, coordinating programs across Mexico to promote its cultural heritage. Its position is intended to be politically neutral and its mission statement is not linked to a specific cultural ideology, other than through its support for creative initiatives which ‘elevate the presence of Mexican art’. From the end of the 1980s the relationship between public and private initiatives in contemporary art takes on a new scope and intensity: in 1989, Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (FONCA) was established, ‘to serve as the pivotal institution among government, the private sector, and the cultural community’, describes George Yúdice, adding that ‘The ratio of state to

⁸⁵ Ana Garduño, ‘Museums and Collections in Mexico since 1800’ from *World Scholar: Latin America & The Caribbean*, (Gale Cengage Learning, 2011), https://www.academia.edu/5681201/_Museums_and_Collections_in_Mexico_since_1800_

⁸⁶ CONACULTA was created to ‘coordinate cultural and artistic policies, organizations and agencies’, with the overall objective of ‘preserving Mexico’s cultural heritage’. Source: www.conaculta.gob.mx

⁸⁷ Ana Garduño, ‘Art and the Private Sector’, *Mexico Today: An Encyclopaedia of Life in the Republic*, Ed. Ana Paula Ambrosi, Silvia D. Zárate and Alex M. Saragoza, (ABC-CLIO 2012), 54

private investment in culture through FONCA went from US\$125,000 to \$0 in 1989 to US\$7.2m to US\$16.5m in 1993)⁸⁸.

The combination of government ownership of cultural institutions and a political appropriation of public murals engendered a climate of mistrust that culminated in La Ruptura, a new generation of artists lead by José Luis Cuevas in the 1950s. This diverse group of sculptors, painters and printmakers were determined to break free from the social ideals of state-endorsed creative production and instead pursue freedom of expression. Cuevas took issue with the government's patronage of the visual arts and accused them of encouraging a 'cactus curtain'⁸⁹, stifling creative innovation and alienating Mexico from cultural development. This state monopoly on cultural institutions meant that Mexico did not have a single privately-funded museum until 1964, when the artist Diego Rivera and Banco de México created Museo Diego Rivera Anahuacalli, a joint venture facilitated by art collector Dolores Olmedo. This landmark development precipitated a steady wave of privately-funded museums, including Museo Franz Mayer in 1986 (dedicated to decorative arts), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey in 1991 (contemporary art) and Museo Soumaya (pre-Hispanic, viceregal and European art) in 1995, expanded to a second location in 2011. 'Since the end of the 1980s, this expansion in private foundations has coincided with the removal of cultural matters from the government agenda. Thus the state withdrew from, and skimmed on, fulfilling the cultural obligations it had assumed since the postrevolutionary period'⁹⁰, writes Garduño. The demerging of state and contemporary visual culture accelerated after the student movement and Tlatelolco massacre of 1968, with public funds subsequently diverted from almost all creative projects after the financial crash of 1982.

The void left by the dip in public funding meant that in the early 1990s, artists established alternative spaces such as La Panadería (1994-2002) and Temístocles 44 (1993+), the latter circulating its own magazine *Alegría*. Contemporary art needed to develop a stronger support system in the private

⁸⁸ George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*, (Duke University Press 2003), 277

⁸⁹ José Luis Cuevas, 'The Cactus Curtain', *Evergreen Review: The Eye of Mexico* Vol. 2 No. 7 (Grove Press, 1959)

⁹⁰ Garduño, *Museums and Collections in Mexico since 1800*

sector: it is at this moment that we see how individual and corporate collectors as well as commercial galleries moved towards a deeper engagement in the promotion of Mexican contemporary art. Gallo points out that from the early 1980s onwards, ‘Mexican art collectors renounced a nationalistic posture and shifted their focus to contemporary, international works, with a preference for conceptual and neo-conceptual art; their intention was to present a panoramic vision tied to the international mainstream’.⁹¹

Not only had the artistic community lost faith in the government, so had many of the private patrons. Gallerist Inés Amor wrote in her memoirs that she believed the reason why Mexican collectors did not donate their collections to the state was due to a profound distrust, and a lack of security in knowing where the collection would end up: ‘It might break up. That’s why they prefer to sell, because at least then the works are catalogued and numbered in inventories’⁹². At the time, a culture of donations to public museums did not exist in Mexico the way it did in Europe and North America; a wariness of state bureaucracy prevented collectors from parting with their collections for fear that most of it would end up in storage, or on the walls of official residencies rather than public display. Furthermore, the Mexican government did not historically offer any specific legislation or tax policy to art collectors⁹³. In an essay for the catalogue of an exhibition of contemporary and classical art in Mexico City’s MUNAL museum, curator James Oles wrote that collectors and artists’ estates now ‘seek to create their own museums or foundations, rather than donating work to the state. This is not just a question of being ungenerous or egotistical, or of unfavourable tax laws, but is the legacy of a decades of institutional weaknesses, political imbroglios and hyperbolic nationalism; though many have fought to diminish these threats, many collectors and artists still lack total confidence in the federal museum system’⁹⁴. This shift in models of patronage has prompted a renaissance in privately-funded exhibition spaces. Osvaldo Sánchez, former Director of Museo Tamayo and Carrillo Gil, has written that ‘Mexico’s more solid museums and

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Teresa del Conde, *Una Mujer en el arte Mexicano: Memorias de Inés Amor* (IIE-UNAM, 1987), 240

⁹³ Garduño, *Museums and Collections in Mexico since 1800*

⁹⁴ James Oles, ‘Barbarians at the Temple: Contemporary Art at the MUNAL’, Essay from catalogue for exhibition of Jumex collection *La invención de lo cotidiano* at Museo Nacional de Arte, November 2008-March 2009

contemporary art collections have been founded and developed by private corporate institutions [...] It is not happenstance that all of the end-of-term spending and presidential fanfare have favoured pre-Hispanic and colonial collections, while contemporary art museums suffer under miserly budgets, with no policies for audience development, collecting or international projection. This is one of the historic reasons that establishes private collecting as a corrector of the imperfect exercise of government when it comes to matters of patrimony⁹⁵. As someone who has worked for both public and independently-funded cultural institutions, Sánchez has had direct experience of how government funding has dwindled over the last thirty years and his use of the word ‘corrector’ is particularly significant. His assertion that private collections are now responsible for rectifying the omissions of public cultural institutions resonates with my research into the objectives of collector-led museums. Former Jumex curator Patricia Martín has also expressed her frustration with the government’s lack of interest in promoting contemporary art: ‘I wish Mexican cultural institutions had a vision - any vision - regarding contemporary art, but they do not. Cultural politicians (*funcionarios*) are bureaucrats do not understand contemporary art, and have never been able to relate to it. For me, it is quite astonishing that they do not see the value and importance of promoting it. This is why private collectors in Mexico and private projects have taken up so much space in the national art scene and why they are so relevant; here the State is simply absent [...] Cultural authorities do not have adequate backgrounds: they have a short-term mentality, and most take refuge in the commodity of their desks and salaries. All of this makes it impossible for them to innovate anything⁹⁶.

There are numerous obstacles facing collectors who choose to take their collections public. At a conference on Latin American art at the Getty Center in 2011, Mexican curator Guillermo Santamarina claimed that it was ‘unrealistic to design a museum for the public when the Mexican public is so big⁹⁷. The country’s capital city is one of the most densely-populated in the world, with 8.85m inhabitants and

⁹⁵ Osvaldo Sánchez, *Hablando en Plata: El Arte como Inversión* (Landucci, 2002), 225

⁹⁶ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, ed. Caroline Niémant (Peeping Tom’s Digest #2 2011), 182

⁹⁷ *Between Theory and Practice: Rethinking Latin American Art in the 21st Century*, The Getty Center, Los Angeles, 11-13 March, 2011

117.9m in the entire country⁹⁸. To design any cultural institution that relates to the interests and experiences of a populace is a Sisyphean task; at present, contemporary art museums may appeal to a specific demographic but several of the current generation of collectors are determined to exhibit their collections in a way that disrupts traditional barriers of display. How this is being attempted is presented case by case in Part Two of my thesis.

In addition to the issue of the lack of government funding, another reason why public art museums encounter difficulty is related to their management. ‘As political parties change, directors are regularly shuffled around, leading to a lack of consistency in programming and operations. Typically there is little money for acquisitions’⁹⁹, revealed an in-depth report on the Latin American art market in 2011. This is an opinion shared by Mariana Pérez Amor, who inherited Galería de Arte Mexicano (GAM) from her mother Inés Amor after she died in 1980. ‘[The state] doesn’t have anyone who has a vision or who has the intellectual capacity to understand the basics of contemporary art. They are totally paralyzed because they don’t understand anything’¹⁰⁰. Museologist Rene G. Cepeda, who teaches a course on museum history at Universidad de las Américas in Puebla, informed me that disorganized management is a real source of concern: ‘Public museums can have staff from another government department, with no specialist knowledge’¹⁰¹. The problems of inadequate funding and lack of long-term conceptual vision are compounded by a general inertia towards contemporary art; some of Cepeda’s own art history students struggle to accept contemporary art as a compelling movement. ‘Last semester I asked my students to survey museums in Mexico. There wasn’t a single report on Jumex or indeed any contemporary art museum. All I got was Museo Amparo, Fort War Museum, Museum of the Revolution and the Cinco de Mayo Museum. This is an art class, and I still get reports on history museums’¹⁰². This response suggests that the power of association between political history and cultural identity exists even for today’s

⁹⁸ Data source: United States Census Bureau 2010

⁹⁹ Charlotte Burns and Helen Stoilas, ‘Latin American Focus: Where Public Meets Private’, *The Art Newspaper* Issue 224, 01.05.2011

¹⁰⁰ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, ed. Caroline Niémant (Peeping Tom’s Digest #2, 2011), 98

¹⁰¹ Conversation with author 05.08.2015

¹⁰² Conversation with author 05.08.2015

generation of university students. Cepeda blames this immobilization on the country's conservative taste in art: 'People favour art that is figurative and classical-looking.. they like to see the brushstrokes here! Many would consider work by Jeff Koons, for example, as ridiculous'. For contemporary art to capture the attention of the media, he explains, it needs to have a novelty factor; Cepeda gave the example of a temporary exhibition of the work by Japanese contemporary artist Yayoi Kusama¹⁰³ being reported on television not because of its content but because of the length of its queues to visit the show in its final week, which lined the Paseo de la Reforma, one of the main roads in Mexico City. What made the exhibition newsworthy may not reflect well on Mexico's media coverage of contemporary art but it does demonstrate that it has a willing visitor base, perhaps more so than Cepeda gives credit for. He is in agreement with my perception of private collectors as giving contemporary art a more visible platform, specifically citing Jumex as 'pushing contemporary [art] as something not just pretty or decorative'.

Cepeda refers to the traditionally 'hostile' environment of the gallery space as another impediment to motivating public engagement with contemporary art; this is a common issue in the critique of museum architecture whereby the edifice is identified with a ceremonial monument or temple. By glorifying an exhibition space we create a monument; the flaw in this model is that it can also appear impenetrable and eventual visitors 'shift into a certain state of receptivity'¹⁰⁴. The progressive visitor experience, as outlined in my previous chapter on museums, prioritizes interactivity over passive compliance. In Mexico, several contemporary art collectors have endeavoured to display their collections to the public in a way which makes a formal exhibition structure redundant: Moises Cosío's art foundation Alumnos47 has a mobile art bus which travels to Mexico City neighborhoods which do not have contemporary art spaces; Eugenio López Alonso's Fundación Jumex opened its first exhibition space inside its juicing plant in Ecatepec, an industrial zone to the north of Mexico city; Agustín and Isabel Coppel filled a neglected public park in Culiacán with a selection of sculptures from their

¹⁰³ *Yayoi Kusama: Obsesión Infinita* 26.09.2014-18.01.2015 Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City

¹⁰⁴ Carol Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship' from *Exhibiting Cultures*, (Smithsonian 1991), <http://web.calstatela.edu/faculty/jgarret/texts/Duncan-Ritual.pdf>

collection, excluding any ‘do not touch’ signs and encouraging visitors to interact with the works on display.

The subject of private exhibition spaces attracts much debate over issues of vanity, self-promotion and even corruption. Cultural critic Ben Mauk wrote that ‘these neo-aristocratic institutions don’t pretend to have any real connection to the public sphere. Usually at a remove from urban centres, they are museums of equity display, equal parts prestige and portfolio, and they compete for artwork with institutions that are at least semi-public’¹⁰⁵. A contemporary art collection is a modern tool of self-promotion, with its own social milieu and placing the owner within a cultural elite, and this can have a negative impact on the credibility of a museum and its objectives. When I discussed this issue with Mexico City-based curator Patricia Sloane, she described how ‘You can be stupidly rich and very low profile - nobody knows you have this money. But what happens when you start spending those zillions of dollars on art? Then that changes the quality of your money, the colour of your money and it brings a protagonism into your persona. I think philanthropy has that double role of, “Do I want to spend money on showing who I am? Am I going to invest part of my money on making myself visible? And is art or culture going to be the tool to my visibility?”’¹⁰⁶. The scale and presentation of ego-led collections can also be bombastic and therefore alienate its audience, as well as the museum community. Art critic Tyler Green makes an interesting observation on the difference between displaying a private collection in a public museum or inside the collector’s own gallery space: ‘Private collections are an insult to scholarship and curators’ and ‘inadvertently reinforce the notion that art is trophy owned by the privileged few, rather than a means through which intellectuals engage communities and nations in a broader discourse’¹⁰⁷; However, Green did not take issue with collector-led museum spaces, or the fact that wealthy collectors want to share their collections with the public: ‘In many places, notably in Miami, collectors have shown their art in spaces controlled by themselves or their family-controlled-and-funded foundations. This is an

¹⁰⁵ Ben Mauk, ‘The Rise of the Private Art “Museum”’, *The New Yorker* 28.05.2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/the-rise-of-the-private-art-museum>

¹⁰⁶ Conversation with author April 2012

¹⁰⁷ Tyler Green, ‘Turning Museums into a Vanity Space’, *The Art Newspaper* Issue 207 November 2009

honourable thing. That is how private collectors should, if they choose, share their art with the public'. The presentation of private collections is a sensitive issue where grandiose designs may backfire on the owner's original objectives, yet vanity projects can be exposed by the collector's lack of commitment to any kind of wider social engagement or cultural initiative. In a time of conspicuous consumption, a private art museum is the ultimate status symbol for billionaires. In 2005, French businessman François Pinault converted an 18th-century Venetian palace into a showroom for contemporary art. He presented a selection from his own collection over a series of three exhibitions, and was subsequently named the most influential person in the world of contemporary art for two years running (2006 and 2007) by *Art Review* magazine. This is significant because it formally recognizes the extent of power of a single collector and his private art space. In 2013, Russian billionaire Viktor Vekselberg opened a museum dedicated to Fabergé eggs, containing an estimated \$850m worth of decorative art inside the Shuvalovsky Palace in St Petersburg¹⁰⁸. Due to open in September 2015 is American philanthropist Eli Broad's museum that will house part of his collection of over 2,000 works of modern and contemporary art. To engage with the art world at this level brings collectors a unique level of visibility and a particular social status, which may overshadow the authenticity of their motivation. For an artist, having work acquired by certain collectors carries a very desirable cachet; to have work on display in the permanent collection of a private museum can bear equal prestige to its inclusion in a publicly-owned museum.

That is not to say in order to be taken seriously, collectors are unable to embrace the more social side of the art world - celebrating a *vernissage* is a long-established tradition in galleries all over the world. Art-related events and launches are an effective means of building a community of local enthusiasts or raising awareness for a new initiative. Social events are also a highly efficient way of raising funds for independent creative projects, and as such are an integral part of how artists are able to develop their careers; fundraising events in the visual arts might involve an auction for a private commission, or a ticketed gala with proceeds going towards a foundation that supports artists' residencies

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Heyman, 'A New Status Symbol for Billionaires: Art Museum', *The New York Times* 19.11.2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/20/arts/international/the-new-status-symbol-for-billionaires-art-museum.html?_r=0

or subsidizes studios. Social events can benefit the arts because these types of occasion are occasionally viewed with suspicion: the social whirl associated with the contemporary art scene can appear frivolous and one-dimensional. Lavish receptions might reflect well on the host's generosity but can eclipse the purpose of the event, just as ostentatious displays of wealth do not always sit well with events intended to celebrate creative talent. Art fairs and biennials are responsible for placing contemporary art within the context of the social season, where opening nights tend to be less about artistic triumphs and more an exercise in public relations. Once the canapé trays are cleared away, however, the serious business of selling art remains. A successful launch is now a habitual part of the ecosystem of patronage and creative endeavour.

The issue of finance is also very important: public museums have an obligation to serve their communities and remain conscientious of the source of their funding, yet private contemporary art spaces are not accountable in the same way. A potential disadvantage of this reduced liability means that an independently-funded museum may turn out to be self-serving without the need to justify its spending. Museologist Robert R. Janes refers to other implied handicaps: '[private exhibition spaces] can be bound by the vision of the owner-collector, which may be very limited. He might not hire the right sort of staff who have broader perspectives; they might emphasize the popular rather than the difficult. The collection could end up being out of touch, not just with the academy, but the museum profession and the public itself'¹⁰⁹. As well as these curatorial issues, the rudimentary concern of funding can also be problematic, in that the foundation or exhibition space relies entirely on the economic health of an individual or corporation. Some of Mexico's most dynamic contemporary art collections (notably FEMSA and Televisa's CC/AC) have been jeopardised by unexpected financial constraints or a managerial reshuffle, and serve as a reminder that private sponsorship can be fragile. (I expand on these two particular cases further on in this chapter).

Another potential problem in building a contemporary art foundation is securing its future after the owner-collectors have died. Private collections tend to be infused with a distinct personality, or at

¹⁰⁹ Conversation with author 06.07.2015

least a specific curatorial theme; Jumex, for example, is a nominally corporate collection yet its founder, Eugenio López Alonso, is very much the figurehead of its vision and is promoted as such. The enduring relevance of these foundations, private museums and itinerant collections depends on the founder's commitment to their legacy and can be safeguarded by forging links to external cultural institutions, local communities and pledging endowment funds, although these may not suffice to ensure their continuation.

In the hands of a committed and socially-engaged collector, the impact of a contemporary art collection can be constructive and far-reaching. In Mexico, one of the most pronounced benefits of a privately-funded exhibition space is its autonomy, particularly because the issue of censorship has prevented more controversial works of contemporary art from being displayed to the public. In 1987, a Catholic protest group demonstrated against the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City for displaying a work by Rolando de la Rosa that featured Marilyn Monroe depicted as the Virgin of Guadalupe. Even though the artwork was installed in the 'alternative' salon inside the MAM, the museum director Jorge Alberto Manrique was petitioned to resign and government funding for unorthodox art was subsequently blocked. Art historian Rubén Gallo describes how as recently as 1996, 'Silvia Pandolfi, then director of Carrillo Gil, one of Mexico's most prestigious museums, acknowledged that there were clear though unspoken limits imposed from above: "the National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA)," she told an American journalist, "has always been clear that we should not be political"¹¹⁰. Gallo also recounts how, in 2002, a book launch for artist Vicente Razo's catalogue of Anti-Salinas figurines was due to be held at Sala Siqueiros in Mexico City: 'A few weeks before the launch, Itala Schmelz, the museum's director, was advised by INBA officials that the book's subject was too controversial (despite the fact that the PRI was no longer in power and that the Sala was founded by Mexico's most radical artist, the muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros), and the event had to be moved to a different location [in the US]¹¹¹. Mexico remains a conservative country, yet private art collectors are able to acquire works which publicly-funded museums might struggle to justify to their boards. The Colección Jumex, for example, features work by Californian

¹¹⁰ Mary Schneider Enríquez, 'Silvia Pandolfi: History and High Tech', *ArtNews* April 1996, 126

¹¹¹ Rubén Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 11

artist Paul McCarthy (known for his sexually provocative sculptures) as well as Mexican artist Daniel Guzmán, whose recent work has expressed political satire as well drawn parallels between Aztec human sacrifice and the drug-related violence in Mexico.

Amassing a collection of contemporary art is costlier than ever before and has become prohibitively expensive for many public museums, which can have a negative impact on the calibre of their permanent collection. This is one of the reasons why several public museums seek to nurture relationships with collectors, who are able to assist via loans, donations or sponsorship. That is not to say that all collectors have deep pockets: in two case studies presented in the second part of my thesis, a lack of capital has motivated the collector to explore alternative means of immersing himself in art. Osvaldo Sánchez, who has worked with several collectors, writes that ‘The most outstanding private art collections do not always directly reflect the financial standing of their collectors. In Mexico, the great private personal collections of modern and contemporary art in our recent history are not due to any of the ten Mexican families that regularly appear in Forbes’¹¹².

In building a public exhibition space for an art collection, a collector may feel he is making a contribution to society. ‘Private museums can demonstrate the civic-mindedness of its prominent citizens’, writes Carol Duncan, ‘The museum context is, in this sense, a powerful transformer: it converts what were once displays of material wealth and social status into displays of spiritual wealth’¹¹³. This contribution can also take the form of encouraging philanthropy: the efforts made by collector Eugenio López Alonso to give contemporary art a platform in Mexico have been so successful that he has stimulated a culture of collecting that was previously very limited. Together with the philanthropic group PAC [Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo]¹¹⁴, collectors are playing a key role in continuing patronage while state funding disappears. Mariana Munguía Matute, programme coordinator at PAC between 2001-2004, believes that ‘The problem in Mexico is that the government has been cutting its cultural budget

¹¹² Osvaldo Sánchez, *Hablando en plata: el arte como inversión* (Landucci, 2002)

¹¹³ Carol Duncan, ‘Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship’ from *Exhibiting Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp & Stephen D. Lavine (Smithsonian, 1991) 95

¹¹⁴ I profile PAC in detail in the fourth chapter of Part One: Mexico and the Global Art Market.

dramatically over the years, but they haven't taken into consideration that culture depends on them as an important foundation and this has made society not very participative because they knew it was the government's responsibility. Now with the cuts in budget, they should be working on alternate solutions like tax reductions and other incentives for the private sector to participate more actively'¹¹⁵. Patronage circles such as PAC seek to address the deficiency in funding towards contemporary art projects by introducing collectors to a variety of sponsorship channels.

Private collections can be a valid curatorial model and have the advantage of being able to take greater risks with their acquisition strategy than most publicly-funded cultural institutions, which can invigorate the dialogue within a collection and potentially offer the visitor a livelier experience. 'Mexican contemporary artists under 50 years of age have no major works in the national museums. Apart from the Tamayo collection legacy, there is no grouping of international contemporary art of import in any government collection. When it comes to exhibiting and historically conceptualizing Mexican art of the last half of the twentieth and beginning of the 21st centuries, private or corporate collections will have to be tapped'¹¹⁶, predicts Sánchez. Not only are private collections filling the void of contemporary art in public museums, they are also responding to the lack of academic resources related to contemporary art at public schools and universities. Museologist and university teacher Rene G. Cepeda informed me that there are very few research libraries holding books on contemporary art in Mexico, which may be an incentive for several art collectors to build libraries in tandem with their collections. These often begin as book depositories but evolve into study facilities that are accessible to all visitors, and are intrinsic part of the collector's vision of an interactive cultural space.

Above all, the private exhibition space has greater freedom of expression. it is not bound by convention and has the opportunity to innovate in what it collects, how it collects, and how it is presented to the public. One example of how privately-funded spaces prioritise this resource is in OPA (Oficina para Proyectos de Arte): co-founder Fernando Palomar explained that the gallery space had been financed

¹¹⁵ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene* ed. Caroline Niémant, (Peeping Tom's Digest #2, 2011), 153

¹¹⁶ Osvaldo Sánchez, *Hablando en plata: el arte como inversion*, (Landucci, 2002)

almost exclusively by Jumex, Televisa and the López Rocha family, noting that ‘We asked for help from the state once, but they gave us little and asked for a lot, so we never asked again’¹¹⁷. When I discussed this issue with museologist Robert R. Janes, he told me that ‘Private museums often have a spirit and energy you don’t find in other public spaces. The advantage of a private space is that they are autonomous and have freedom to act without being subject to government policy. They can operate in the institution’s best interests, with more latitude to experiment and be creative’¹¹⁸. Bureaucracy and slow progress are often cited as major frustrations with publicly-funded museums. In Peter Doroshenko’s book *Private Spaces for Contemporary Art*, director of the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art Jérôme Sans states that the main difference between public and private institutions is that ‘when you work at a private space, the decision-making is direct and to-the-point. One does not have to organise twenty meetings, write fifty reports and wait months to get answers. Most decisions can be made in either on meeting or one telephone call, and then you know whether things are possible and where you are going [...] You can also work with the benefactor to dream bigger dreams and take greater risk when it comes to the programming’¹¹⁹. Collector-led exhibition spaces are also able to react against the traditional (encyclopedic) format of public museums and instead present specific moments in the development of contemporary art.

In summary, the advantages presented to private art museums relate to:

- Access to greater wealth resources
- Not subject to government policy or censorship
- Freedom to innovate
- Not reliant on public funding

¹¹⁷ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene* ed. Caroline Niémant (Peeping Tom’s Digest #2, 2011), 168

¹¹⁸ Conversation with author 06.07.2015

¹¹⁹ Peter Doroshenko, *Private Spaces for Contemporary Art* (Gestalten Verlag, 2009), 210

- Opportunity to provide research facility and civic resource
- Create a platform for contemporary art that is absent in public cultural institutions

The obstacles, however, can be hazardous:

- Dependency on financial health of a corporate or individual
- Post-obit continuation
- Perception as vanity project

The threat of collapse is real. As previously mentioned, FEMSA and Televisa corporations both had celebrated exhibition spaces that no longer exist and Mexico has seen other important art collections disappear from public view, such as the Jacques and Natasha Gelman collection. In the second half of this chapter, I review the grounds for their disintegration in order to illustrate the vulnerability of private art collections.

In 1977, Monterrey-based beer and soft drinks companies FEMSA-Cervecería Cuauhtémoc Moctezuma opened Museo de Monterrey, designed to house its corporate art collection. The permanent collection grew steadily and in 1987 received a donation of over 400 works on paper by Latin American artists from the collection of Cartón y Papel de México, a cardboard and paper manufacturer. The archive expanded further in 1991, acquiring Paul Cook's 'Window South' collection of over 200 works from Latin American artists. The FEMSA permanent collection comprises more than 1000 works of Latin American art from 1914 to date and remained on display in the museum until its closure in 2000. The corporation cited the restructuring of philanthropic efforts as the reason behind its termination, but the collection itself continues to travel frequently around Mexico and abroad in temporary exhibitions; FEMSA remains the main sponsor of Monterrey's contemporary art biennial (established in 1992) and subsidizes a regular program of art-related roundtables and events. The company states that 'The creation of this collection would be fruitless without the possibility of sharing it with the public' and also professes

a ‘commitment to the integral development of its collaborators, their families and the communities where it operates, and where its support for education and the promotion of culture are a fundamental part of its endeavour’¹²⁰. FEMSA’s now displaced collection has managed to survive a critical change in circumstances by adapting its purpose; the itinerant FEMSA collection is now reaching an arguably wider audience than before and has put on over 100 exhibitions in 9 countries since the Museo de Monterrey closed in 2000. It is a positive example of how a ‘homeless’ art collection can adapt to a change in circumstances, but it also demonstrates the considerable financial responsibility of maintaining a physical museum space.

The Televisa Collection has experienced a similar ordeal. This vast collection of contemporary art and photography was acquired by Paula Cussi, wife of Emilio Azcarraga Milmo (then CEO of media empire Televisa) under the guidance of curator Robert R. Littman. A museum was created to house the collection, called Centro Cultural de Arte Contemporáneo (CC/AC) and existed between 1984 and 1997. During this period of activity, the museum put on over 170 exhibitions and had a staff of 120; two of its most celebrated shows include an exhibition of depictions of the Virgin of Guadalupe in 1988, and a selection of works based on Octavio Paz’s art criticism in 1990. In an interview given to *The New York Times*, Littman described how as a private foundation, Televisa was not subject to adhering to government-endorsed cultural policy: ‘We provided an independent focus on the visual arts. We didn’t have to do a show because the President of Mexico signed a peace treaty with Lower Slobovia’¹²¹. The refined aesthetic of Televisa’s contemporary art collection was perhaps at odds with its programming, which relied heavily on telenovelas and game shows. This discrepancy intimates that CC/AC might have been part of a corporate PR campaign, particularly as art historian Ana Garduño has observed that ‘‘CC/AC did not have the intention to motivate the local collectionism [sic] or create networks of cultural

¹²⁰ FEMSA, *Actions with Value* http://www.femsa.com/sites/default/files/SR_2007.pdf

¹²¹ Julia Preston, ‘A Museum in Mexico Suddenly Shuts Down’, *The New York Times* 23.09.1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/23/arts/a-museum-in-mexico-suddenly-shuts-down.html>

support'¹²² adding that 'The emergence of this type of private collection determined the neoliberal dynamic that influenced the field of art distribution and consumption at an institutional level, more than the type of spectator who merely entered the museums with a precise purpose'. Similar to FEMSA, the post-closure Televisa art collection appeared in temporary exhibitions in cultural institutions such as the Museo Tamayo in 2001, the Palacio Nacional de Bellas Artes in 2002 and the MUNAL in 2003, but unlike FEMSA it has been reduced to its core collection of photographs, supervised by Mauricio Maillé. Televisa stated that it was required to scale down its art collection because it was unable to sustain its annual stipend of \$12m¹²³. When CC/AC's fate was announced, Mexican art critic Raquel Tibol compared the closure to a 'divorce where only one party makes the decision. It is an action by a private company that fails to respect the tacit cultural agreement between a museum and its public'¹²⁴. The closure of CC/AC is a recent example of how privately-funded exhibition spaces are susceptible to dissolution depending on finances and management.

A third case is found in the short-lived presence of La Planta, a 10,000 sq ft cultural centre inside a converted soda factory. This exhibition space was privately funded by Jorge Vergara, founder of Grupo Omnilife and one of the richest men in Mexico. Despite a critically acclaimed inaugural exhibition *Yäq*, curated by Jumex's Michel Blancsubé and featuring over 130 pieces by 74 artists including Robert Morris, Maurizio Cattelan and Jose Dávila, the space closed in the summer of 2008 after only eight months. La Planta's mission statement referred, unusually, to the proliferation of the private contemporary art space and its role in the local community: 'One phenomenon that is growing in importance is that of the art collector who fulfills the role of a public personality and is identified as such. From a private and very personal passion that develops on the fringe, collecting has become an activity in its own right and foundations are opening all over the world. In the face of growing withdrawal of public institutions [...] praise be to these private initiatives, which devote part of their assets to the good of the

¹²² Ana Garduño, 'Art Exhibitions' from *Mexico Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Republic* ed. Ana Paula Ambrosi, Silvia D. Zárate, Alex M. Saragoza (ABC-CLIO 2012), 66

¹²³ 'Media and Philanthropy equals Synergy', *Global Giving Matters*, September 2008. <http://www.synergos.org/globalgivingmatters/features/0809azcarraga.htm>

¹²⁴ Preston, *A Museum in Mexico Suddenly Shuts Down*

community and agree to share it'¹²⁵. This declaration rings hollow upon discovering how long it remained open to the public. In a statement given to local newspaper *El Informador* after La Planta closed its doors for the last time, founder Jorge Vergara described how the space struggled to find a local audience and that the general response from the public had been disappointing¹²⁶. Despite its dynamic contemporary art scene, Guadalajara is culturally conservative and its reaction to La Planta may point to a lack of synchronicity with Vergara's vision. However, the gallery's director, Mariana Munguía Matute, presented a different version of events, describing the experience as 'totally different from any that I have had. It is unusual in Mexico to have a private initiative like the one Omnilife had: to open a high-end art space in Guadalajara, to have a space and an institution that could organise or bring shows normally not seen in this city for lack of infrastructure, funding and initiative. It was incredible to develop it from the beginning. Unfortunately, the business underwent significant changes and decided to close the project after only nine months. These are things you cannot control'¹²⁷. Cuauhtémoc Medina's assessment was less forgiving, blaming the gallery's failure on the caprices of its owner: 'The fact that La Planta was so promising when it opened and was later closed due to the owner's whim demonstrates the lack of substance in the commitment one has to expect from people with money in this country in relation to cultural patronage'¹²⁸.

What is particularly interesting about the timing of this project is that it should have worked in La Planta's favour: plans had been underway since 2004 for a satellite Guggenheim museum to be built in Guadalajara. This highly ambitious project was designed to provide the city with a dedicated modern and contemporary art space and Taller de Enrique Norton Arquitectos (TEN) had been engaged to start work

¹²⁵ Ivan Lozano, 'La Planta: Contemporary Art in Guadalajara', *Glasstire* January 2008
<http://glasstire.com/2008/01/03/la-planta-contemporary-art-in-guadalajara/>

¹²⁶ *Cierra la galería de arte moderno La Planta* *El Informador* 12.07.2008
<http://www.informador.com.mx/entretenimiento/2008/24940/1/cierra-la-galeria-de-arte-moderno-la-planta.htm>

¹²⁷ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene* ed. Caroline Niémant, (Peeping Tom's Digest #2, 2011)

¹²⁸ Mariana Aguirre, *Interview with critic, curator and historian Cuauhtémoc Medina: Part One* *Art21 Magazine* August 2012 <http://blog.art21.org/2012/08/03/interview-with-critic-curator-and-art-historian-cuauhtemoc-medina-part-1/>

on the initial plans. Guggenheim museums, most notably in New York and Bilbao, are renowned for their architecture as well as their collections, and TEN's design for the seat in Guadalajara was suitably elaborate: a vertical stack of 'floating' museums separated by 'complex interstitial spaces' on the edge of a canyon outside the city. Three of these stacks would house the Guggenheim's permanent collection, and the interstitial spaces serve to promote site-specific art or temporary exhibitions¹²⁹. Controversially, public land was granted for the site. Development began but the project was abandoned in 2009, leaving an open construction site. The Guggenheim franchise does not have a positive track record for effectuating proposals: plans for outposts in Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, Salzburg, Taichung and Singapore have failed to come to fruition and desertion usually relates to financial issues (Guggenheim require a licensing fee from local operators) or wider cultural differences. Art critic Lee Rosenbaum has expressed cynicism towards international museum franchises such as the Guggenheim scheme, asserting that 'the launch of a satellite museum in a foreign country that is capable of conceiving and managing its own cultural institutions is not collaboration; it's colonisation'¹³⁰. The project was taken up again in 2011 by local collector Patrick Charpenel; all connection to the original Guggenheim franchise was severed and the museum was renamed Museo Barranca. Herzog and de Meuron architects (known for executing world-class exhibition spaces such as Tate Modern in London) were engaged to produce a new design for the same site. It was proposed that the building would house a collection of international as well as Latin American art, focusing on Mexican modern and contemporary art and accommodating extensive educational facilities open to the public. New management did not dispel wariness of the project: art critic Mariana Aguirre expressed her suspicion that 'it appears [...] that the museum will be closely tied to the interests of private collectors and to an entrepreneurial class intent on using art as a way to gain prestige but without local institutions after which to model itself or a cultural scene able to properly support it'¹³¹.

¹²⁹ 'Museo Guggenheim Guadalajara', *Noticias Arquitectura* 27.02.2006,

<http://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-1082/museo-guggenheim-para-guadalajara-mexico>

¹³⁰ Lee Rosenbaum, 'Forum: Should we be cynical about international museum franchises?', *Apollo Magazine* December 2014, <http://www.apollo-magazine.com/forum-cynical-international-museum-franchises/>

¹³¹ Aguirre, *Are there any Good Contemporary Art Museums in Mexico?*

The project has experienced severe delays, but work is continuing on the site and the government is now providing funding for its development. Museo Barranca currently has no fixed date for completion.

Private collections are similarly exposed to fluctuations in fortune. The Gelman art collection has been involved in a legal battle that has prevented its public display in Mexico for several years: when Natasha Gelman died in 1998, her collection consisted of 95 pieces, including well known works by Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Gunther Gerzso. She bequeathed the collection to Robert Littman, an American curator who had worked closely with Natasha in building the collection. He set up the Vergel Foundation to manage the collection and coordinate travelling exhibitions, and continued to acquire works by younger artists. A report in the New York Times stated that ‘According to her will, Mrs Gelman wanted Mr Littman to ensure that the collection be shown - in a private museum, because she distrusted the Mexican government - and that it stay together’¹³². Littman’s success in finding a home for the collection was short lived: soon after securing what appeared to be a suitable building in Cuernavaca in 2004, a cousin of Mrs Gelman opened a legal case arguing for a greater share of her estate. Littman removed the works from the Cuernavaca museum in 2007 while legal proceedings continued in Mexico City; the collection now tours cultural institutions abroad and remains out of the country.

A more recent example of a private art collection transferring from its original home is the sale of several works from Alma Colectiva, owned by the former Secretary of Tourism for Jalisco State Aurelio López Rocha. Rocha has a reputation for supporting the careers of young Mexican artists and in 2011 received the prestigious Montblanc de la Cultura Arts Patronage award, donating the prize money to the Guadalajara BC Cultural Capital Promotion Foundation. Two of his most influential contemporary art projects include ExpoArte Guadalajara in the 1990s and Oficina para Proyectos de Arte (OPA), a non profit arts organization that is subsidized by Rocha¹³³. Alma Colectiva was one of Mexico’s finest contemporary art collections with over 1,200 works from the 1980s and 1990s; a highlight of the

¹³² Elisabeth Malkin, *In Mexico, An Ownership Fight Sends a Collection into Hiding* The New York Times 26.11.2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/27/arts/design/27gelm.html>

¹³³ When I met OPA’s administrator, Madlen Schering, in April 2010, she informed me that the López Rocha family paid the rent for the space, a large gallery on the 23rd floor of a skyscraper in the centre of Guadalajara.

collection's history was a dedicated exhibition at Guadalajara's Museo de los Artes in 1999, curated by Carlos Ashida. In May 2013, López put up part of his collection for sale at Phillips auction house in New York. Lots included important works by Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco (*Naturaleza recuperada*, 1990, sold for \$509,000 from an estimate of \$250-350,000) and Damián Ortega (*Auto Construcción*, 2005, sold for \$100,000 from an estimate of \$60-80,000¹³⁴). Rocha continues to support the visual arts through a variety of cultural programs and loans, yet Alma Colectiva has reduced its scale and is less visible than other contemporary art collections in Mexico today.

The frustration with state-run museums is not only experienced by collectors but also with several contemporary artists. Three recent examples of Mexican artists who have subverted the traditional model of public cultural institutions through radical creative performances include Vicente Razo, Gustavo Prado and Miguel Calderón. Razo collected Salinas¹³⁵ memorabilia and opened his own Salinas museum in 1996 with the slogan 'Stop doing ready-mades, start making museums', accompanied by an 'official catalogue' featuring essays by Carlos Monsivais and Cuauhtémoc Medina. Razo believed that his work was too political to be displayed in any public museum, therefore installed the work in his own home: 'Considering the torpid state of Mexican museums - immersed in a colonised and elitist agenda, with an atrophied bureaucratic corps, and fearful of confronting the smallest figment of reality - I decided that it would be a healthy and necessary act to preserve these original testimonies of contemporary Mexican history in the space of a museum: I wanted to "activate" these objects'.¹³⁶ Razo's collection of figurines and kitsch souvenirs presented a personal narrative that was notably absent from any official history of the Salinas sexennial. Art historian Rubén Gallo describes how the artist parodied 'the PRI's penchant for creating bureaucratic institutions, [drafting] a set of "bylaws and statutes" defining the museum's mission statement, and - following the logic of the PRI's boundless nepotism - he named himself director'¹³⁷.

¹³⁴ Auction results via Phillips.com

¹³⁵ Carlos Salinas de Gortari served as President of Mexico from 1988 to 1994

¹³⁶ Vicente Razo, *The Official Museo Salinas Guide* (Smart Art Press, 2002), 64

¹³⁷ Rubén Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 139

Gustavo Prado is another artist whose work subverts the restrictions of state-run galleries by building a private museum in his own home. Using his surname to appropriate Madrid's famous Museo del Prado, the artist installed an exhibition of work by his alter ego, a photographer called Aurora Boreal. In 1997 he opened Museo del Prado, accessible to the public and at its peak drawing over 1000 visitors a month¹³⁸. The museum's display featured his collection of Boreal's pictures, taken in Mexico City's popular photographic portrait studios with Prado dressed up as his second self. Prado claimed that he became jealous of Boreal's commercial success and decided to kill her off, informing those who enquired that she died from obesity. In a surreal twist, the homespun exhibition was such a success that it subsequently transferred to Centro de la Imagen, a government-funded photography museum. 'El Museo del Prado made explicit what state-run museums work so hard to conceal', writes Gallo, 'the individual vision that acquires, organizes, displays and arranges the permanent collection'¹³⁹. Both Razo and Prado's exhibition spaces present highly personalized narratives within the context of a private museum, rebelling against the encyclopaedic or authoritative version of events found in more conservative cultural institutions. Their art also satirizes the controlling influences that public museums can have on creativity, which prevents artists from submitting work that does not fit in with official cultural policy; Howard S. Becker's observation that 'the point is not that work cannot be distributed, but that contemporary institutions cannot or will not distribute it, and that they thus exert, like every other established part of the art world, a conservative effect, leading artists to produce what they can handle and thus get the associated rewards'¹⁴⁰, is relevant to this type of censorship.

A third example of a Mexican contemporary artist exploring themes of censorship within the framework of a public museum is Miguel Calderón, co-founder of artist-led creative laboratory La Panadería¹⁴¹. He differs from Razo and Prado in that he did not create his own exhibition space but instead penetrated two of Mexico City's most established museums, the Museo Nacional de Antropología

¹³⁸ Ibid., 149

¹³⁹ Ibid., 150

¹⁴⁰ Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (University of California Press, 1982), 129

¹⁴¹ La Panadería was an old bakery in Mexico City that housed an artist-led collective founded by Miguel Calderón and Yoshua Okon (years active: 1994-2002)

and the Museo Nacional de Arte. Calderón's intention was to disrupt the traditional presentation of Mexican civilization and art history: in the Museo Nacional de Antropología, he staged photographs of himself standing inside the museum's famous diorama displays, pointing guns at taxidermied beasts in the style of a gangster. The series was called *Artificial History*, 'an accurate description of the strategies through which state institutions like the Museum of Anthropology construct a deceitful narrative of the past', states Gallo. At the MUNAL, Calderón was invited by curator Robert R. Littman (formerly of Televisa's CC/AC collection and the Gelman collection) to create a piece that responded to the paintings on display inside the museum. According to Gallo, the artist was struck by two things: the type of art hanging on the walls (religious paintings and simulations of 'European' artistic styles) and the type of people who spent their days inside the MUNAL building (janitors, guards and cleaners). Calderón sensed an 'abyss' between the people who worked there and their surroundings: 'local versus foreign, elitist versus popular, fantasy versus reality'¹⁴². This interpretation corresponds with the accusation levelled against certain long-established cultural institutions, which is that they are imposing and austere structures that alienate a wide section of society. As indicated in my previous chapter on museums, this is a particular barrier that collector-led spaces will need to address if they intend to promote a more inclusive visitor experience.

Calderón's response to this divide was to create a series of photographs called 'Employee of the Month', inspired by the museum's 'Painting of the Month', which highlighted a specific work from the permanent collection and placed it near the main entrance to the museum. The artist photographed MUNAL's staff on the streets of Mexico City, adopting poses they had seen on the walls of the museum. One image shows a cleaner with a stray dog slung over her shoulder, in the style of *Jesus as The Good Shepherd* (1998). 'If Razo and Prado follow revolutionary strategies, Calderón prefers a reformist approach: he does not give up on state-run museums to create his own but merely proposes a series of solutions to fix what is wrong'¹⁴³. These three artists used their work to highlight the friction between

¹⁴² Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art*, 154

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 156

state-sanctioned cultural content and reality; private contemporary art museums have an opportunity to disrupt the official narrative and engage with the public via their collections in way that breaks free from tradition. As detailed above, collector-led exhibition spaces have a creative autonomy that allows them to display more subjective or politically engaged work than their public counterparts.

These examples of abortive museums, abandoned exhibition spaces, frustrated collectors and rebellious artists illustrate the erratic history of displaying contemporary art in public spaces. The current generation of collectors represent a new phase in Mexico's cultural development and is responding to past misadventure by collaborative and multidimensional initiatives. Several collectors who are building private exhibition spaces are doing so with a public commitment and creating proposals that aspire to social as well as well as cultural regeneration. One example of a successful partnership between a public art museum and private funding is Mexico City's Museo Tamayo, which opened in 1981. At first, there were disagreements between Televisa (who funded the construction of the museum) and the artist-founder, Rufino Tamayo. Management was eventually handed over to INBA in 1986, and it now operates on a hybrid funding model, taking advantage of the endowment left by Tamayo himself which provides 30% of the total budget. The museum eventually overcame organizational disputes and is one of Mexico's most prestigious cultural institutions, hosting successful exhibitions of contemporary art from all over the world. Collaboration can be a very fruitful enterprise, reducing the burden on public funding while providing the cultural engagement desired by collectors. Carmen Cuenca, former director of the Tamayo Museum, has stated that 'One of the greatest things to happen to Mexico is mixed funding. There's still an ambivalence about giving collections to the government. The more the two entities are brought together, the better'¹⁴⁴.

The role of the collector is growing and private and corporate sponsorship now plays a key function in promoting and conserving contemporary art. 'Over the last few decades, models for corporate collecting have been changing and diversifying in their priorities', writes Osvaldo Sánchez. 'Technical complexity and the cost of maintaining corporate museums have prompted strategic sponsorship alliances

¹⁴⁴ Charlotte Burns, 'Latin America Focus: Where Public Meets Private', *The Art Newspaper* 01.05.2011

with already existing museums by donating works previously selected by the museum, granting acquisition funds or putting corporate collections on permanent loan to publicly supported institutions. This sets up a permanent corporate presence in prestigious institutions, assuring that the collection stays together, while making an impressive civic and philanthropic statement'¹⁴⁵. Examples of this kind of partnership are found in existing collaborations between MUAC (Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo) and corporate sponsors including Televisa and Jumex, amongst others. Several art collectors I profile in my research feel a civic responsibility towards Mexico's cultural assets and are using their collections to engage with the creative process in a way which is meaningful to society. 'Had it not been for these corporate efforts, Mexican art of the past two decades would have been left at the mercy of the total dearth of governmental support for contemporary art and for maintaining an international presence'¹⁴⁶, explains Sánchez.

The reduction in public funding allocated towards the acquisition and promotion of contemporary art has provided an opportunity for private collectors who are increasingly making their mark on Mexico's cultural landscape. Not only are these individuals and corporations in the privileged position of being able to take greater risks than publicly-funded institutions, they often have deeper resources. The most successful collector-led cultural initiatives are those which utilize their creative freedom while seizing the opportunity to develop public engagement with contemporary art, and the climate of mistrust is evolving into a tendency towards collaboration and enterprise.

¹⁴⁵ Osvaldo Sánchez, *Hablando en plata: el arte como inversion* (Landucci, 2002), 227

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 228

(iv) Mexico and the global art market

In the following chapter I trace the development of the art market in Mexico and its relevance to today's culture of collecting contemporary art. In order to better understand what drives today's collectors, I want to look at the origins of the culture of buying contemporary art. In this section of my thesis, I present a brief survey of the evolution of the Mexican art market. I have divided its development into the following categories: landmark events, auctions, art fairs, galleries, advisors, curators, historians and critics.

What constitutes an art market? It has been described as a commercial ecosystem where 'producers don't make work primarily for sale, where buyers often have no idea of the value of what they buy, and where middlemen routinely claim reimbursement for sales of things they've never seen to buyers they've never dealt with'¹⁴⁷. This description, despite its light-hearted cynicism, does depict a fairly accurate impression of its nebulous structure. In general terms, the art market operates in two halves: primary and secondary, at a ratio of 1:3. Primary indicates that the work for sale is new to the market, whereas the secondary market is largely dictated by auction houses and features works that have previously been sold. It is therefore much more influenced by 'supply and demand', which is estimated by comparable items. Galleries, dealers and collectors are usually responsible for determining the value of a work on the primary market. The secondary market may attract criticism for its inconsistencies, but it can also have a positive effect on the world beyond the auction house or bank vault by allowing us to rediscover artists who were relatively unknown at the time of their creative output.

Within Latin America, the art market existed only on a national scale until relatively recently. There was a limited circuit of international art fairs and biennials, with major art auctions conducted in the U.S. and Europe. The way collectors acquire art has changed significantly over the last two decades, pursuant to consumer habits. One shared characteristic of collectors and the art market is that they are

¹⁴⁷ Stuart Plattner, 'A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Market for Contemporary Fine Art', *American Anthropologist* 100 (2) 1998: 482-493

both mysterious; the art market is notoriously lacking in transparency, meaning that its valuation methods are often subjective and that its activity is unregulated. Yet there are also differences: at the Art Basel Miami Beach panel discussion in December 2013, Tate Modern director Chris Dercon described how in emerging countries (an umbrella term which I consider to include Mexico), private collectors, museums and initiatives ‘are very important. Institution building is not about creating spaces, but structures. Structures which are sustainable. Long-term initiatives which are structures of memory’¹⁴⁸. By contrast, the market is short-term.

This overview highlights several (but by no means all) of the most important art-related events and exhibitions that contributed towards the promotion of contemporary art in Mexico; it also demonstrates how this current of interest was beginning to permeate at an institutional, not only creative or commercial, level. The 1990s were a pivotal stage in the evolution of the Mexican art market, and can be traced back to a series of events which, surprisingly, include an interview with pop star Madonna in *Vanity Fair* magazine. In the April 1990 issue, the singer mentioned that she had recently purchased Frida Kahlo’s painting *My Birth* (1932). Madonna was at the peak of her celebrity at the time and public interest in her life was strong. Although Kahlo’s achievements were undoubtedly recognised by the art world, the exposure in the magazine provided a new kind of international platform for the artist and confirmed her glorification as a cult pop icon. In the same decade, there were several landmark exhibitions about Mexican art, the most elaborate being *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries* at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, 1990 (whose catalogue featured a foreword written by Octavio Paz, 1914-1998). George Yúdice describes how the artworks included in this blockbuster exhibition ‘were meant to operate as a medium of negotiation, a form of cultural brokering. This is evident in Octavio Paz’s inaugural lecture for the exhibition, in which he reconciles the “otherness” of Mexico’s past, with

¹⁴⁸ *Public/Private: Museums Go Global* moderated by András Szántó, Art Basel Miami Beach Conversations 06.12.2013. Footage: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aW_WqMbjKEw

the future (present) of its modernity'¹⁴⁹. Other exhibitions were focused purely on Mexico's contemporary art, such as *Through the Path of the Echoes*, a travelling exhibition organized and circulated by Independent Curators Incorporated, New York. Between 1990-1993, this selection of work by Mexican artists including Alberto Montano (b.1953), Ruben Ortiz Torres (b.1964) and Georgina Quintana (b.1956) was accompanied by an exhibition catalogue with essays written by guest curator Elizabeth Ferrer and Mexican author Alberto Ruy Sánchez (b.1951). 'As we enter the final decade of this century, it is clear that a new aesthetic in the visual arts has modified the artistic panorama of Mexico', writes Sánchez, an observation that could be extended to generation of collectors and curators who were actively involved in the country's contemporary art scene at that time. The 'modified panorama' that Sánchez refers to indicates a broader cultural landscape with a new relationship to a global art market.

At the 45th Venice Biennale in 1993, Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco featured *Empty Shoe Box* as part of his display. This simple cardboard box caught the attention of the art world and soon became recognised as one of the most controversial pieces of conceptual art ever produced. One of the reasons why *Empty Shoe Box* was so disruptive is because exhibition space is extremely expensive; Francesco Bonami, the curator who invited Orozco to participate in the Venice Biennale, explained that 'the idea that such an uneventful object was taking up so much real estate caused quite a commotion among many artists'¹⁵⁰, and compared the extravagant use of space to parking a caravan in Monument Valley. The controversy shone a spotlight on contemporary art from Mexico. Orozco was 'hot' - his media coverage (both applauding and disparaging) ensured a heightened visibility that captured the attention of the art world.

Art historian Rubén Gallo's book *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s* identifies five major trends in artists' creativity at that time. Although his analysis focuses on works of art, rather than the market, it provides a perceptive overview of the cultural climate during what was one of the most

¹⁴⁹ George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*, (Duke University Press, 2003), 240

¹⁵⁰ Francesco Bonami, 'The Early Adventures: Gabriel Orozco', *Tate Etc Magazine* 01.01.2011 <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/early-adventures>

turbulent economic and political periods in modern Mexican history. Gallo observes that ‘the most recent development in Mexican art has been its sudden - and lucrative - insertion into the global art circuit and its frenzied world of biennials, art fairs, and international exhibitions. In 2002 alone, over half a dozen major museums around the world devoted large-scale exhibitions to Mexico¹⁵¹ ... This flurry of interest culminates in 2003 with *Mexico Illustrated*, a mammoth project organized by Albright College that was billed as “the largest exhibit ever, everywhere, of Mexican art”, featuring 61 artists and a budget of half a million dollars’¹⁵². Both Gallo and Mexican art historian Cuauhtémoc Medina stated at the time that the media attention was a fleeting phenomenon; in 2002 Medina claimed ‘There is no doubt that Mexican art is caught up in the cyclical current through which every five years, a given country... is suddenly incorporated into - and rapidly discarded from - the geographies of global culture’¹⁵³. Although this cycle undoubtedly exists, I would argue that the explosion of interest at the turn of the century has matured into an enduring fascination with Mexican contemporary art that has manifested itself in solo exhibitions at some of the world’s most prestigious art institutions¹⁵⁴. As a consequence of this interest, Mexico’s cultural landscape and its native collectors are under the scrutiny of the art world’s media. Now, more than twenty years later, Mexico hosts one of the most successful contemporary art fairs in Latin America and has turned it into a social fixture as much as a commercial enterprise; Mexican galleries now represent some of the biggest names in contemporary art, including British artist Damien Hirst¹⁵⁵. These are key factors which have shaped the rapid evolution of the art market in Mexico, a country that is now

¹⁵¹ *Twenty Million Mexicans Can’t Be Wrong* at the South London Gallery, *Axis Mexico* at the San Diego Museum of Art, *Zebra Crossing* at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, *Mexico City: An Exhibition about the Exchange Rates of Bodies and Values* at P.S.1 in New York then travelling to Kunst-Werke in Berlin.

¹⁵² Gallo, *New Tendencies in Mexican Art*, 10

¹⁵³ Cuauhtémoc Medina, ‘El Ojo breve / Viajeros frecuentes’, *Reforma* 25.07.02

¹⁵⁴ Minerva Cuevas, Vienna Secession 2001, Damián Ortega, Centre Pompidou, Paris 2007, Carlos Amorales, Philadelphia Museum of Art 2008, Gabriel Orozco, Tate Britain, London 2011

¹⁵⁵ Represented by Galería Hilario Galguera, Francisco Pimentel 3, San Rafael, Mexico City. www.galeriahilariogalguera.com

an active participant in a global art economy which experienced an increase in value of 152% from 2001 to 2007 alone¹⁵⁶.

In 1999, part of Eugenio López Alonso's Colección Jumex was shown at Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil¹⁵⁷. This was the first exhibition of its kind for the collection and demonstrated the shift in power that corresponded with a new wave of exhibitions from private collections displayed in state-run art institutions. This particular event represents a critical change of direction in the ambitions of private art collections because from this point onwards, not only does contemporary art in Mexico begin to gain traction on a global scale, but a wider channel of collaboration opens up between public and private cultural initiatives. 'Museums started to operate as legitimate mechanisms while also increasing the value of private collections of art. To a certain extent the museum's calendar adapted to the agenda of the private sector whose support coincided with the exhibition being shown'¹⁵⁸, explains Mexican art historian Ana Garduño.

In 2001, Puerto Rican-born curator Mari Carmen Ramírez began her tenure at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, where she supervised several milestone exhibitions that not only focused on Latin American artists but crucially also promoted the collecting of art from this region. In 2002 the MFAH's International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA) published *Collecting Latin American Art for the 21st Century*, which explored what editor Ramírez described as the 'shifting profile' of Latin American collections. Inside its pages, Mexican artists and collectors were referenced in a series of case studies that illustrated the challenges of collecting art from such a vast region; Mexico-based curator Olivier Debrouse contributed an essay that traced 'the transition in Mexican art patronage from its nationalist origins to its present international climate'. Further landmark exhibitions of Mexican contemporary art included *Mexico City: An Exhibition about the Exchange Rate of Bodies and Values* at PS1 in New York, 2002,

¹⁵⁶ *Contemporary Art Market: The Annual Report 2006/2007*, cat. The Artprice, Brochage, France October 2007

¹⁵⁷ *Colección Jumex*, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil 21.04.1999 - 08.08.1888

¹⁵⁸ Ana Garduño, 'Art Exhibitions' from *Mexico Today: An Encyclopaedia of Life in the Republic* ed. Ana Paula Ambrosi, Silvia D. Zárate, Alex M. Saragoza (ABC-CLIO 2012), 68

Eco: Mexican Contemporary Art, co-ordinated by CONACULTA and displayed at Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid in 2005, and one of the most ambitious exhibitions on contemporary art to take place in Mexico to date: *The Age of Discrepancies: Art and Visual Culture in Mexico 1968-1997*. This bold survey of creative practice covered painting, performance, film, music, installation, photography and poster design, and was accompanied by a 470-page tome with essays presenting a written critique parallel to the exhibition's visual history. Its mission statement declared 'an attempt to introduce a curatorial model for a future (and still non-existent) museum of contemporary Mexican art'¹⁵⁹; *The Age of Discrepancies* was originally shown at the Museo Universitario de Ciencia y Arte (MUCA) gallery at UNAM in Mexico City, and comprised over 300 works by 119 artists. This experimental exhibition and its commitment to presenting a significant but poorly documented period in Mexican art history was groundbreaking in its scope, and signalled a new approach to appraising and displaying contemporary art.

The leading auction houses for sales of Latin American art are Sotheby's and Christie's, whose auctions take place outside of Mexico. Their offices in Mexico City are regional headquarters which manage Mexican clients who are buying or selling. The country's most high profile auction house is Morton, whose sales range from antiques to jewellery and wine, but also include frequent auctions of modern and contemporary art. In October 1979, Mary-Anne Martin organized the first auction of Mexican art at Sotheby's in New York; prior to this event there was no 'marketplace' dedicated to Latin American art and its artists were not marketed to collectors as a distinct group. The issues of nomenclature regarding art from this region are well documented¹⁶⁰, but Martin maintains that presenting collectors with a specific category of fine art enabled a scene to flourish: 'There is no doubt in my mind that the huge interest in this field would not exist today if the auctions had not shed light on the art of this

¹⁵⁹ Press release for the presentation of *The Age of Discrepancies: Art and Visual Culture in Mexico 1968-1997*. http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/magazine/articles/2008/era_discrepancia.

¹⁶⁰ I refer to key texts on the debate of labelling art as 'Latin American' in my introduction

vast region with a common, though not homogenous, heritage'¹⁶¹. Martin also points out that the astonishing speed with which Frida Kahlo's paintings became highly-prized at auction was a determining factor in raising the profile of Mexican art: 'In 1979 it was not worth faking a Frida Kahlo. By the late 1990s, I was being offered at least one fake Frida a month!'¹⁶². Sales of Rufino Tamayo's paintings also provide a helpful barometer of collecting habits: major paintings would routinely sell above their estimate price¹⁶³, yet when less significant works follow the same pattern, 'it indicates an improved market' explains Martin. Not only are Mexican artists now featured in high profile, international auctions, they are also represented by galleries all over the world, and their work is visible at art fairs and museums across the continents. Has this raised profile changed the way collectors engage with Mexican art? Evidently yes, and a principal reason for this shift is linked to emboldened attitudes of the new generation of collectors. Martin believes that they are 'unswayed by the dictates of conventional art history books [...] Blessed with an opportunity to travel frequently, these collectors are much less insular in their tastes than their parents' generation [...] It will be revealing to see what develops next, as collectors make their preferences known'¹⁶⁴. That statement was made over fifteen years ago and the parameters have since shifted: now, collectors often enjoy a much deeper involvement with the creative process ranging from sponsored residencies to offering production facilities. The nature of this relationship has become more collaborative, creating a synergy between artist and collector that harks back to a Medici-style model of patronage.

The total auction value for Latin American art work in 2002 was approximately 28m U.S. dollars, 30% of which corresponds to Mexican art work which puts Mexico as dominant in the region. In 2007, that number had grown to 55% at Sotheby's and 45% at Christie's. The report that accompanied the figures states that 'This shows not only that Mexican artists are present in great numbers at international

¹⁶¹ Mary-Anne Martin, 'The Latin American Market Comes of Age' from *Leonard's Price Index of Latin American Art at Auction*, ed. Susan Theran Newton, (Mass. Auction Index, 1999) <http://mamfa.com/2374/the-latin-american-market-comes-of-age-2>

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Sandías, 1950 by Rufino Tamayo sold for \$2.67m in November 1997; Músicos 1937 by Rufino Tamayo sold for \$827,500 in 1998.

¹⁶⁴ Martin, *The Latin American Market Comes of Age*

auctions, but also that their works reach the highest prices'¹⁶⁵. Significant sales from this period include Rufino Tamayo's mural *America* (\$2.6m Christie's, 1993), Diego Rivera's *Vendedora de Flores* (\$2.8m Christie's, 2006) and Frida Kahlo's *Roots* (\$5.6m at Christie's, 2007). The report also claims that collectors who acquired Mexican contemporary art in 2005 were able to expect a highly favourable 15% return on investment; art is a recognised asset in investment portfolios and the Mexican art market, although small, is one of the most dynamic in the economy.

Contemporary art fairs have been a boon to the Mexican art market. Expo-Arte was the first of its kind and took place in Guadalajara in 1992, accompanied by a series of panel discussions that focused on art theory. The jewel in the crown of contemporary art fairs is the VIP program, which tend to follow the same protocol all over the world: local collectors, museum directors and cultural influencers from the target region are given the opportunity to host a private event at their home, a gallery or exhibition space in order to welcome the out-of-town collectors. Participation is invitation-only, and only those collectors (or senior level museum professionals) who have a history of acquiring contemporary art are eligible. The VIP experience is designed to feel as exclusive as possible, with champagne receptions and complimentary chauffeur-driven cars to escort guests around town. Underneath the veneer of glamour, the main objective remains irrefutably commercial: to encourage this select band of collectors to spend money on art associated with the fair. I met with Kristina McLean, Head of VIP Relations for Frieze Art Fair in London to discuss which part of the VIP program yielded most interest from guests. 'The 'at home' receptions are always oversubscribed'¹⁶⁶, she explained, due to the way in which they provide an intimate environment for collectors to share recommendations and experiences. This is an example of how the social network inside art fairs extends beyond the aisles of the exhibition marquee: introductions made off-site can be as valuable as those inside on-site gallery booths. Event coordinators are aware of

¹⁶⁵ Patricia Bueno Delgado and Ercilia Gómez Maqueo y Rojas, 'Mexico', *International Art Markets: The Essential Guide for Collectors and Investors* (Kogan-Page 2008), 207; their data compiled from Sotheby's & Christie's catalogues.

¹⁶⁶ Conversation with author, London September 2013

this preference and tailor the VIP program accordingly. In addition to providing a core VIP program of studio visits, talks and parties with established collectors, many contemporary art fairs now run a parallel schedule which is designed to appeal to a younger generation of future collectors. In this program, the emphasis is more on social interaction and experiencing art in a convivial milieu. As with the primary VIPs, the prestige of these events is carefully designed to entice another circle of potential collectors to invest in contemporary art in the supposed comfort zone of a fair. For the fair coordinators, it is important to attempt to secure the support of novice collectors by guiding them through the art fair experience, although this is not a tactic that will work for all. For many guests, art fairs are overwhelming in their scale and commotion, and the frenzied ‘trade floor’ dynamic is not conducive to engaging with art in any meaningful way. In general, however, art fairs are an efficient means of building a network with fellow art lovers and can open doors to previously unfamiliar artists.

The ancillary activity of an art fair extends beyond the VIP program and the price of general admission usually includes entrance to a series of panel discussions with artists, critics, museum professionals and gallerists. Several art fairs, including the influential ARCO in Madrid, have a dedicated ‘collectors forum’ as part of their speaker program. When I visited ARCO in 2012, the forum was moderated by Peter Doroshenko, former artistic director of the privately-funded Pinchuk Art Center in Ukraine and now Executive Director of Dallas Contemporary. Doroshenko is also the author of *Private Spaces for Contemporary Art*¹⁶⁷, a compendium of fifty private museums from around the world which house significant collections of contemporary art. At the forum I attended at ARCO, prominent international collectors were invited to participate in roundtable discussions on a variety of issues relating to their taste, acquisition strategy and long-term objectives for their museums. Also present were a selection of art advisors and representatives of corporate collections. Doroshenko has witnessed first hand how there has been a significant shift in the way collectors have opened up their collections to public display: ‘No longer is the world looking to the public art venue to be educated about contemporary art. Instead the art enthusiast and the art world are turning their attention more and more to private collectors

¹⁶⁷ Peter Doroshenko, *Private Spaces for Contemporary Art* (Rispoli Books, 2010)

who have chosen to create their own private spaces to share with the world what has inspired them in their own interaction with contemporary art, and in their own collecting'¹⁶⁸. Questions raised at the ARCO forum ranged from 'What were your reasons behind opening a space to house your collection?' to 'What kind of impact does your space have your community?'; the collectors shared a long-term commitment to their museums, wishing for them continue to grow and also give back to their social environment long past the their own lifetime. When a museum is intended as a gift to society, the authenticity of the collector's altruism is often called into question. However, the evidence of deep consideration given to the growth of the collection and its continuing relevance is usually an indication that socio-cultural investment behind the museum is genuine. Mexican contemporary collectors who have been asked to participate in collector panels at art fairs include Guadalajara-based José Noé Suro, Culiacán-based Agustín Coppel, and Mexico City-based Patrick Charpenel at Art Basel Miami Beach at 2007, 2010 and 2013 respectively. Their inclusion in what is arguably the most high-profile art fair in the world is an indication of the level of interest in the activity of Mexican collectors; given the pool of international collectors available to speak at such events, a collector must have a singular acquisition strategy or perspective on the art world in order to be selected.

The art fair, which promotes both primary and secondary markets, is of particular relevance because it has been uniquely influential in stimulating growth in the art market in Mexico. The 2012 edition of Zona Maco attracted over 40,000 visitors and hosted 120 galleries from 22 countries; approximately one third of the exhibitors came from outside Mexico and within this number were a small selection of world-class galleries such as Hauser & Wirth, Lisson Gallery and David Zwirner. In 2011, Nicholas Logsdail of London's Lisson gallery told *The Art Newspaper* that 'We decided to participate for the first time as we have longstanding relationships with collectors and the art world here'¹⁶⁹. Alongside the fair's collectors program, there is a New Proposals scheme which provides booths for galleries less than five years old which represent emerging artists. Fair co-founder Zélika García explains the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Charmaine Picard, 'Local galleries fare well at Zona Maco', *The Art Newspaper* 01.05.2011

inspiration behind her concept: ‘The idea came from an art fair that used to be held in Guadalajara from 1991-1998. I visited Expo-Arte as a student in 1996 and by the time I went back a few years later, the fair had closed. Inspired by the Guadalajara fair, I decided to create a brand new art fair of my own. The first edition was called Muestra and started in 2002 in Monterrey, and by 2004 the fair had become more structured and professional; we had set up a selection committee for gallery applications, started involving curators in the process, and established a dedicated collectors program. We then decided to change the name from Muestra to Zona Maco, and to move to Mexico City’¹⁷⁰. García’s visionary approach was helped by a crucial geography: Mexico is the gateway between the US and Latin America and its capital city has a rich cultural heritage with a vibrant social scene. Plans to capitalise on the fair’s success are already underway, with García planning the inaugural Zona Maco Foto for September 2015. Her role in developing Mexico’s contemporary art market is considerable: her combination of creative instinct and commercial farsightedness has given Mexico an international platform on which to showcase its artists and galleries while raising the profile of local museums and collectors who host satellite events during the fair. Other fairs have sprung up to coincide with Zona Maco, eager to access the pool of collectors, curators and dealers who are in the city. The most significant of these is the Material Art Fair, which focuses on emerging artists from younger galleries.

Marc Spiegler, co-director of Art Basel, has described Zona Maco as ‘undoubtedly the most important fair in Latin America’¹⁷¹. Its importance lies not only in its energy but the scope of its endeavour: part of the task of the art fair in Mexico has been to educate its visitors in how to purchase contemporary art. In an interview from 2008, Zona Maco co-founder Pablo del Val described the newcomers as ‘taking their time to make up their minds. Most operations [deals] take place on a Sunday, the last day. People were not used to going to galleries so some of them panicked when they came to the fair for the first time, not knowing how it worked or how to ask for a price. In this sense, there has been a learning process and people are more confident now’, to which García added ‘At first there were even

¹⁷⁰ Constance Breton, ‘Conversation with Zélika Garcia’, *Artphaire Magazine* February 2015

¹⁷¹ Charmaine Picard, ‘Local Galleries fare well at Zona Maco’, *The Art Newspaper* 01.05.2011

people asking “Are they for sale?”¹⁷². This instructional undertaking informs the kind of galleries selected to exhibit at the fair, which focuses on more experimental art. ‘The fair has to go for aesthetic and conceptual strictness because part of its responsibility lies in education, and what makes future collectors get used to the formats, the aesthetics and the concepts of a committed art’, García explained. In the same interview, the founders reveal that the fair is 100% privately funded and does not receive any government support. ‘If we were to get subsidies’, Del Val points out, ‘we could multiply our efforts, offering more parallel programs, better promotion, a larger collectors’ program, and so on [...] The state should understand that collecting enriches a country’s cultural heritage, and that the collector greatly contributes to the survival of the artist and the perpetuation of their creative activity’¹⁷³. Regarding the funding of a commercial art fair, corporate or individual sponsors typically foot just under 10% of the overall expenditure (the production costs of Zona Maco was estimated at USD3.3m in 2011)¹⁷⁴.

An art fair is also a forum for new and experienced collectors, dealers, curators and critics to exchange ideas. This fertile networking environment provides a springboard for collateral enterprises, an example of which is ‘Collectrium’, a recently-developed mobile technology that recognises and identifies works of art. Once the app is installed on a mobile device, a visitor can point her smartphone at any registered artwork and instantly receive information on the artist or the work itself; she also has the option of sharing the data on social media, contacting the gallery and adding her selection to a library of ‘favourites’ for personal references. This technology debuted in March 2011 at the Armory show in New York, but was rolled out to the ArteAmericas fair in Miami and Zona Maco in Mexico City within weeks of development. These two fairs are the preeminent art fairs for the Latin American community and are geared towards the Latin American collector; the app is available in Spanish as well as English. This kind of technology, which is tailored towards streamlining the visitors’ experience, has a particular application

¹⁷² Pat Binder and Gerhard Haupt, ‘Art Fair in Mexico City’ *Universes in Universe Magazine* May 2008 <http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/magazine/articles/2008/femaco>

¹⁷³ Pat Binder and Gerhard Haupt, ‘FEMACO 2008: Art Fair in Mexico City’, *Universes in Universe* May 2008. <http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/magazine/articles/2008/femaco>

¹⁷⁴ Picard, *Local Galleries fare well at Zona Maco*

for collectors who are able to use Collectrium to store their own private collections alongside their selection taken from art on display at the fair. The fact that a software development company prioritized the Spanish-language version of an app and specifically targeted visitors at Latin American art fairs, is an indication of the level of influence that a fair or expo environment has on the marketplace. It is worth noting that there is now such a significant group of collectors in Mexico that the country has its own VIP liaison at Art Basel Miami Beach, arguably the world's premier international fair for modern and contemporary art.

The role of the art advisor is a relatively recent addition to the art market. In 2010 I met with New York-based art advisor Ana Sokoloff at PINTA, an art fair that specialises in contemporary art from Latin America. She explained how advisors help collectors navigate their way through events such as PINTA by preparing dossiers for clients, and coordinating with galleries to know what they will have on display. 'The relationship is slightly different now [post-recession]. Advisors used to spend more time 'educating' clients and as such it can develop into a much more human or friendly relationship. There was a shift in the buying habits of our clients, however. Half of the people we work with are using advisors to help decorate their houses; when the project is finished, our relationship comes to its natural conclusion. For the other half, it is an ongoing relationship. In these cases, many of our clients see us as insuring their choices - we are, in fact, insuring their investments'¹⁷⁵. A major concern for established advisors such as Sokoloff has been how to assert your credentials in a world which is for the most part unregulated; one can claim to be an art advisor with no official qualification. Experienced advisors can affiliate themselves with governing bodies such as the US-based Association of Professional Art Advisors, of which Sokoloff is a member. The APAA proposes a code of ethics that is designed to reassure corporate and private clients that they are engaging the services of trustworthy experts; membership is by invitation only and candidates are vetted before being welcomed to the group.

¹⁷⁵ Conversation with the author, November 2010

Advisors have an important role in the modern art market because new collectors may feel overwhelmed not only by the choice of art for sale, but the variety of locations where they can make a purchase. Advisors will help clients navigate art fairs and galleries in addition to negotiating with dealers or even artists directly. In general, the payment of services is structured on commission. Projects range from short-term consultancy (often relating to interior decoration, as identified by Sokoloff) to long-term alliances that evolve with the collector's taste and budget. Eugenio López Alonso, founder of Fundación Jumex, has described how 'an advisor is not a salesperson. I want to be very clear about the matter. Collecting is an intellectual endeavour, and so, the advisor presents art from his or her expertise, from research, from seeing the galleries and exhibitions - from their eye and intellect. They must dialogue with you as well, and challenge you'¹⁷⁶.

Advisors often have affiliations or partnerships with commercial galleries. The main impact of the art market on contemporary art galleries in Mexico relates to the kind of artist they represent. Traditionally, Mexican collectors were conservative in their acquisitions, preferring to invest in modern masters such as Francisco Toledo and Diego Rivera, and Mexican galleries generally obliged. But as tastes have broadened, dealers have expanded their repositories. In 2002, art dealer and former director of Los Angeles-based Chac Mool gallery (co-owned by Eugenio López Alonso; closed since 2005), Esthelle Provas, described the revision of interest in contemporary art: 'This new generation of Mexican collectors is beginning to travel more and invest more in international art. Their tastes are different'¹⁷⁷. In the same article, fellow dealer Teresa Iturralde addressed the issue of promoting contemporary artists from Latin America specifically as *Latin American artists*: 'I don't want to be pigeonholed into one category. We're tired of that label. I promote contemporary artists'.

Outside of Mexico, dealers appeared to share this enlightened attitude: 'Mexican art has always been about porousness and hybridity', observed Betti-Sue Hertz, curator for contemporary art at the San

¹⁷⁶ Peter Doroshenko, *Private Spaces for Contemporary Art* (Gestalten Verlag, 2009), 139

¹⁷⁷ Estelle Provas in conversation with Laura Meyers, 'Contemporary Mexican art gains momentum in global art scene', *Art Business News* Vol 29 Issue 7, July 2002

Diego Museum of Art. “Even the Mexican Modernists like Diego Rivera, whom we see as so “Mexican”, were spending huge amounts of time outside their country absorbing aesthetic ideas. So international dialogue has always been a tension in Mexican art. And today, the circulation of art ideas is even more global, especially with the increase in biennials and fairs... today’s artists are adapting international strategies to a Mexican context¹⁷⁸. This shift in attitudes coincided with an increase in the amount of commercial art galleries based in Mexico. A series of avant-garde spaces began to appear in Mexico City and Guadalajara, including the internationally renowned Galería OMR (founded in 1983), Nina Menocal (1990), Galería Enrique Gerrero (1997), Kurimanzutto (1999), and Proyectos Monclova (2005) amongst several others. Each of these galleries represent international as well as local artists, and can be credited with providing a window on the global art. In an interview with Lord Poltimore, Deputy Chairman of Sotheby’s Europe, art market analyst Georgina Adam identified five key elements¹⁷⁹ that, according to dealers and auction houses, were factors in triggering collectors from ‘emerging markets’ (including Latin America) to make the leap into buying international rather than local art.

- A growing number of private art spaces started by high-profile collectors and their influence as ‘taste makers’
- The rise of the major art fairs
- The increasing internationalisation of dealers
- Supply
- Globalisation and the internet

In the same article, art dealer Adam Shaffer describes Eugenio López Alonso, founder of Colección Jumex, as a great influence in the region: ‘Eugenio was really a forerunner, he started collecting international artists from the 1990s’.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

¹⁷⁹ Georgina Adam, ‘Art Market Analysis: Are domestic collectors ready to take on the world?’, *The Art Newspaper* 08.06.2011

There is an energetic organization at the nucleus of many privately-funded creative projects in Mexico: Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo (PAC). This non-profit organization was founded in June 2000 by a group of museum professionals with the aim of coordinating private streams of funding for cultural initiatives all over Mexico. It is not tied to one particular institution, but facilitates financial assistance to artists, collectives and independent spaces. PAC is an umbrella organization of mentors and sponsors, and plays a key role in coordinating Mexico's largest annual contemporary art theory symposium, SITAC, an event which attracts international speakers and had a record attendance of 1,000 when Marina Abramovic gave a talk in 2005. PAC's advisory board is responsible for choosing the director of the symposium and developing the theme of the event. It also funds the important MEXARTDB project, which is a work-in-progress online database of all contemporary art-related events, exhibitions, projects, people and publications in Mexico. Its aim is to increase accessibility; the initial concept for the directory was developed by independent curator Ana Elena Mallet, who oversees a team of online editors. PAC is a unique organization in Mexico, and is responsible for stimulating a culture of collecting in a younger generation through a vibrant programme of social and cultural events. Funds are accrued through a variety of membership schemes, ranging from corporate sponsorship to volunteering. Past projects have included *unitednationsplaza*, an exhibition in the form of a temporary school in Mexico City; PAC sponsored artist Anton Vidokle to coordinate a month of seminars and workshops in March 2008, themed around 'artistic agency'. Contributors included Eduardo Abaroa, Minerva Cuevas, Adriana Lara, Damián Ortega and Eduardo Sarabia, and all events were open to the public without charge. In addition, PAC co-sponsors Festín del Arte Contemporáneo, an annual festival now in its fifth edition that takes places in several locations in Guadalajara including the Museo de Arte de Zapopan (MAZ) and Museo Taller José Clemente Orozco. Unlike Zona Maco, which is geared towards a commercial audience, the Festín is free to all and celebrates contemporary art in all its forms through a programme of workshops for families and students, as well as panel discussions and exhibitions.

Almost all of the curators, museum directors and critics I mention in this chapter have been affiliated with PAC at some point in their career, either as a former or current board member, or as a partner in one of its activity programs.

Curators behave as intermediaries in the intertwined network of collectors, artists and institutions, and are often responsible for introducing private investors to creative projects. Unlike critics or museum directors, the role of curator as it is now understood it did not exist in Mexico when mid-twentieth century art collectors such as Carrillo Gil or Dolores Olmedo were building their collections; curatorial practice has evolved considerably over the last three decades and has had a vital effect on how some private art collections communicate with their audiences. In terms of how they relate to the art market, analyst James Goodwin explains that ‘Museum curators will not give valuations, but by standing at the pinnacle of of the authentication process they allow the market to function, and by accepting new kinds of collections they enlarge the canon of accepted and marketable art. Works that enter museums usually remain there because of the rules laid down in bequests. There is no higher position for an artwork than for it to become part of a museum display’¹⁸⁰. The responsibilities of a curator relate to the selection of works for an exhibition. In general, the greater the volume of the collection the stronger need there is for a curator. This is because a trained and discerning eye is required to determine which works serve exhibitions best and to cultivate an overall acquisition strategy. Fundación Jumex, for example, has in-house curators as well as a guest curator programme. This allows the collection to build on its core archive as well as experiment with creating new dialogues from external proposals.

A plethora of jobs are now within the curatorial remit (‘producer, team leader, search engine, poser of questions’¹⁸¹) and the rise of the curator figure has been so accelerated that it led to a kind of cult status. All kinds of creative enterprise, not just art exhibitions, can now be ‘curated’ and the practice has gained a platform as a form of self-expression akin to creating itself. At times, a backlash has ensued,

¹⁸⁰ James Goodwin, *International Art Markets: The Essential Guide for Collectors and Investors* (Kogan-Page, 2009), 15

¹⁸¹ Ralph Rugoff, ‘Rules of the Game’, *Frieze Magazine* Issue 44 Jan-Feb 1999

with concerns that personality-driven curatorships are in danger of overshadowing the art they engage with. ‘Beyond academia’, curator and art historian Carla Stellweg remarks, ‘curatorial projects must have major “protagonists” [...] Do curator-driven projects play further into the purely monetary system of value?’¹⁸². Yet a good curator is not the artist’s rival, but an ally; he does not impose an idiosyncratic filter but instead offers a prism through which the art can be interpreted. While the art must speak for itself, the curator is able to enhance the way in which a visitor engages with the exhibition and this can be done via its installation (taking the visitor on a visual journey, for example) or active participation (such as interactive technology).

In 2009, the Tate Triennial celebrated ‘a new modernity’ by commissioning curator Nicolas Bourriaud to oversee a group exhibition (described as a ‘collective discussion’) with its own manifesto of so-called altermodern culture¹⁸³. ‘Multiculturalism and identity is being overtaken by creolisation: artists are now starting from a globalised state of culture’ Bourriaud claimed, ‘Artists are responding to a new globalised perception [...] and the artist becomes “homo viator”, the prototype of the contemporary traveller whose passage through signs and formats refers to a contemporary experience of mobility, travel and trespassing’¹⁸⁴. The concept of ‘homo viator’ could potentially be applied to all manner of cultural agents in the art world, including curators and collectors. Bourriaud’s proposed theoretical framework for the global art world is interesting but also problematic: his self-invented theme of ‘altermodern’ presented a series of provocative observations but also highlighted the curatorial ego. Creating a category for contemporary art that was, by definition, without boundaries was always going to prove a challenge, and this curator-led exhibition and its accompanying manifesto was a bold attempt to craft an academic response to the economic, political and cultural aspects of globalisation. The role of the curator in Mexico became established in the late 1980s, through the work of Ruben Bautista (-1990), a man who was described to me by Patrick Charpenel, collector and director of Museo Jumex, as Mexico’s first real

¹⁸² Carla Stellweg, ‘We are Here, They are There’, *Latin American Perspectives*, Guggenheim Blog 07.04.2015 <https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/map/we-are-here-they-are-there>

¹⁸³ *Altermodern*, Tate Britain 03.02.2009-26.04.2009

¹⁸⁴ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Altermodern explained: Manifesto* (Tate, 2009)

curator. Bautista had spent a great deal of time in Europe and the US, befriending artists including Gilbert & George and future art world figures such as Nicholas Serota, and managed a radical independent arts space in Mexico City during the 1980s, La Quiñonera. ‘He was a kind of Alfred Barr’, Charpenel explained. ‘What Alfred Barr was to the US – or mainly New York – Rubén Bautista was to Mexico. So when he came back to Mexico there was a radical change. He was not part of the political system, he was totally independent, and he started to put on the first exhibitions of contemporary art in Mexico. He was the first one to work with conceptual artists, who put on shows that were not about commercial painting or commercial sculpture’¹⁸⁵. Bautista co-ordinated a series of exhibitions at experimental art space La Quiñonera between 1988-1990, and his work was documented in *The Age of Discrepancies*¹⁸⁶. Following Bautista, a new generation of curators, of which Olivier Debroye (1952-2008) was one of the most prominent, was prepared to take risks with their exhibitions and rejected the official cultural policy associated with historical displays of Mexican art. *Modernity and Modernization in Mexican Art*, organised by Debroye, took place in 1991 at the MUNAL. Debroye’s collaborator Cuauhtémoc Medina described him as: ‘The inventor of the notion of the curator as a leftist cultural politician, a critical virus of globalization, and an agent of continuous intellectual effervescence’¹⁸⁷. As a curator, Debroye helped integrate Mexican modern art into the international exhibition circuit, coordinating numerous landmark shows in addition to *Modernity and Modernization in Mexican art*, *The Bleeding Heart/El corazón sangrante* at the ICA, Boston (1991), and *David Alfaro Siqueiros: Portrait of a Decade*, which traveled from Mexico City to Houston, Santa Barbara and the Whitechapel Gallery in London (1997). His curatorial projects also included the cross-border art show *InSITE97*, which saw artworks installed in public places in both San Diego and Tijuana, in addition to *The Age of Discrepancies*. Debroye’s compass for the avant-garde led him to challenge the curatorial stance of the owners of Galería de Arte Moderno (GAM), a commercial art gallery founded in 1935 and one of the most important hubs of art in

¹⁸⁵ Conversation with author April 2010

¹⁸⁶ *The Age of Discrepancies: Art and Visual Culture in Mexico 1968-1997* ed. Cuauhtémoc Medina and Olivier Debroye (Turner/UNAM, 2007)

¹⁸⁷ Cuauhtémoc Medina, *Black Hole: Olivier Debroye 1952-2008*, E-Flux 13.05.2008 <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/1952-2008/>

Mexico during the 1940s-1960s. The present owner, Mariana Pérez Amor, described how Debroise insisted that young artists wanted to be part of the global art world: ‘Olivier Debroise told me this over and over again, and it took me a long time to understand him. I felt that taking up that position meant forgetting the past. He told me that it was not about insulting the past, that the world had changed and that it still integrates the past. He wanted me to exhibition Francis Alÿs. Imagine that!’¹⁸⁸.

Debroise’s collaborator on *The Age of Discrepancies* was Cuauhtémoc Medina, an internationally known curator and former director of FITAC and SITAC. Key curating projects include Teresa Margolles’ exhibition for the Mexican Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale, as well as the seminal show *20 Million Mexicans Can’t Be Wrong* at South London Gallery in 2002. *Frieze* art magazine’s review diagnosed Medina’s curatorial style as ‘not happy to settle for an old school nation-state view of Mexican art, and his arguments are both nuanced and ambitious, showing the global reverberations of Mexican artists working in their local contexts’¹⁸⁹. Medina was chief curator of Manifesta 9 in 2012, held in Belgium, and in 2013 he received the Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement granted by the Menil Foundation. *The Age of Discrepancies* was an ambitious show featuring over 300 works by 199 artists and designed to give an academic legitimacy to a period in Mexican art history that was poorly documented: 1968-1997. This vast undertaking was a response to the burgeoning international success of many Mexican-born artists: ‘instead of weakening the need for a “national history of art” and its closed system, the new artistic circuits were producing a new mythology about local practices too often based on superficial and careless “instant histories” that had to be challenged. In fact, the insertion of those Mexican artists into a globalized territory was going to involve a renegotiation of peripheral genealogies, a rewriting of our art history’¹⁹⁰. At a time when the international art world was beginning to shine a spotlight on Mexican contemporary artists, a comprehensive survey of recent art history from that region

¹⁸⁸ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene* ed. Caroline Niémant (Peeping Tom’s Digest #2 Mexico, 2011), 98

¹⁸⁹ Andrew Gellatly, ‘20 million Mexicans can’t be wrong’, *Frieze Magazine* Issue 72, Jan-Feb 2003

¹⁹⁰ Olivier Debroise and Cuauhtémoc Medina, ‘Genealogy of an Exhibition’, *La Era de la Discrepancia* (Turner-UNAM, 2007) 26

was noticeably absent. This was the motivation for attempting such an immense project - one which would feature an exhibition of work taken from all creative disciplines (including poster design and poetry) and be accompanied by a catalogue filled with densely researched essays by leading academics, and illustrated with images from the show itself.

The catalogue was intended to be a revisionist history, but was also designed to provide a springboard for further debate from the artistic community. Medina described the text as ‘a curatorial intervention into the texture of cultural memory, and not as a mere exhibition’¹⁹¹. One of its more focused objectives was to create a curatorial model for a future museum of Mexican contemporary art. The title of the exhibition underlined the creative spirit of its artists: discrepancy, or disagreement, was not something to be feared or dismissed, but embraced and used as a stimulus. ‘[It] wished to be a catalogue of passions and productions that occurred *despite* Mexico’¹⁹², described Medina. The exhibition went on to tour South America, although not the US and Europe. Medina’s explanation of this limited world tour was that other countries were not willing to put on geographical show unless they reinforced local cultural stereotypes¹⁹³. At the time of publication, Medina believed that the gaze of the international art market would not continue to hover over Mexico, but move on after a period of four or five years of curiosity, seeking out the ‘next big thing’. He now suggests that one of the reasons why Mexican contemporary art has continued to capture the attention of the international art market is down to a new generation of patrons: ‘The reason the scene has stabilized and grown is, to a great extent, related to several structural transformations. There has been a complete change in the class inscription of art in Mexico. For the first time since the beginning of the twentieth century, the upper classes are interested in contemporary art and are backing the development of artists even if their work is critical of the social system. This is a completely new situation that is not uncommon in other parts of the world; there has been an extension of the interests of a new elite that sees in contemporary art a space for intervention, expression and a site of

¹⁹¹ Cuauhtémoc Medina, ‘Retroactive Vampirism: On the Age of Discrepancies’, *Manifesta Journal* #13 July 2013, <http://www.manifestajournal.org/issues/fungus-contemporary/retroactive-vampirism-age-discrepancies#>

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

prestige'¹⁹⁴. Medina's testimony to this shift in how and why contemporary art in Mexico has taken root is interesting because it identifies a new network of patrons, several of whom have taken their collections public. Since then, the practice of curating within cultural institutions has evolved, although it is still common to find this role fall within the duties of a museum director, who exerts control over collections and programming. 'With rare exceptions, there are no great curators in our public museums with decades long trajectories, as there are in the U.S.'¹⁹⁵ explains Mexico-based curator James Oles. As the contemporary art market matures, this might change; there have already been several curators who have helped shape important private and public collections (detailed further on in this chapter) and the gradual increase of state-sponsored involvement in contemporary art would indicate a demand for this particular role at an institutional level.

With such a youthful market, less confident collectors may feel that collaboration with art world professionals - particularly those from well-established museums and galleries - will add a certain credibility to their collections. Alternatively, an advisor might be engaged to provide assurance that the collector's choices are sound financial investments. It is not uncommon for a collector to want guidance in both circumstances. Even so, a collector who is self-sufficient in his or her acquisitions process may enjoy the intellectual challenges of collaborating with others once the decision is made to take the collection public. Curators, advisors and academics can be enlisted at any stage of a collection's development, depending on the ambitions and resourcefulness of the collector. Collector-led museums stand to benefit a great deal from a formalized relationship with a curator, be it in-house or external, due to the distinct perspective a professional can bring to a collection that may already be dominated by an individual taste and therefore promoting a single narrative. Curators are able to identify themes within a collection that might not have occurred to the owner, or present it in a way that introduces a specific

¹⁹⁴ Mariana Aguirre, 'Interview with Critic, Curator and Art Historian Cuauhtémoc Medina', *Art21 Magazine* 03.08.2012 <http://blog.art21.org/2012/08/03/interview-with-critic-curator-and-art-historian-cuauhtemoc-medina-part-1/>

¹⁹⁵ Personal correspondence with author, 13.10.2011

dialogue between the works. Such activity keeps a collection alive and relevant. Today, the function of a curator is to create meaning within a labyrinthine structure and as such is particularly relevant to the ambitions of collector-led museums.

Curators are the group of people who are most visible in all categories: their input to museum exhibitions, private acquisitions and contribution to Mexico's art historical narrative places them at a crucial axis of the art world. In the following pages I present a selection of curators, together with other key influencers, who have had a significant impact on the culture of collecting contemporary art in Mexico. Mexico City-based curator and critic James Oles, born in 1962 in the US, received a BA in Latin American Studies in 1984 and PhD in 1995, both from Yale University. He is Professor of Art at Wellesley College and Adjunct Curator of Latin American art at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center. Oles also contributed towards one of the most significant exhibitions in raising the profile of private contemporary art collections in Mexico. The show was *La invención de lo cotidiano*, a major presentation of works from the Jumex Collection displayed amongst a selection of paintings and sculptures from archives of the Museo Nacional de Arte in 2008. This large-scale exhibition purposely introduced a dialogue between contemporary and historical works of art, presenting the Mexican public with work from a private collection in an historical building with the backing of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA). Oles wrote an essay for the exhibition catalogue titled: 'Barbarians in the temple: contemporary art in the MUNAL [Museo Nacional de Arte]'. In this text Oles examines how the museum was not designed to include contemporary art in its acquisitions program - unlike other national cultural institutions elsewhere in Latin America. In fact until recently its mandate was 'to collect, conserve, study, exhibit, interpret and address Mexican art from the sixteenth century to the 1950s'¹⁹⁶. Yet contemporary art began to make an appearance inside the MUNAL towards the end of the twentieth century: in 1998 the museum hosted its first exhibition of contemporary art, installed by Robert Littman (who had until

¹⁹⁶ Graciela de Reyes Retana, 'Introducción', *Catálogo comentado del acervo del Museo Nacional de Arte*, Nueva España, vol 1 (Mexico City: Museo Nacional de Arte, 1999), 23

recently been the director of Televisa's Centro Cultural). Soon afterwards MUNAL put on a show dedicated to the representation of the body in both historical and contemporary art, integrating late 20th century works with its permanent collection. In 2001 and 2002 respectively, MUNAL invited FEMSA and Televisa to display a selection of pieces from their collections; at the time both archives were displaced from their original buildings, or indeed 'homeless'. In his essay, Oles describes how *La invención de lo cotidiano* juxtaposes two very different kinds of collections: 'One is old and the other new; one is an assemblage formed by many players over three centuries or more, while the other is the result (largely) of the efforts of a single individual engaged in serious collecting for just over a decade; one is part of an extended and complex historical web while the other fits within a much more specific historical moment; above all, one represents national patrimony and the other corporate wealth'. The different context of each collection was intended to be a stimulus for debate, it seems. The exhibition aimed to present insights into daily life from both historical works of art and cutting-edge contemporary pieces, tracing affinities that transcended art history. Parallel exhibitions are often determined to 'rejuvenate' the works within the more established collection, but the links can appear contrived if the pieces selected prove insubstantial to the theme. The curators of *La invención de lo cotidiano* needed to consider how the exhibition might live up to its conceptual framework, and the result was a compelling display of work across centuries enlivened by moments of rivalry, empathy, resistance and insight. 'Without this rejuvenation of national icons, we will be revisiting that same glorious history over and over again, getting nowhere fast,'¹⁹⁷ concludes Oles. In tandem with this process of revitalization, the contemporary works are 'legitimized' - they become officially associated with art history. The present becomes historicized and this reflects a certain status on the Jumex Collection as a whole: its avant-garde paintings and photographs have engaged with the establishment. This in turn raises the profile of the Colección Jumex, lending it gravitas of a kind, while accentuating its progressiveness.

Patricia Martín was Director and curator of Colección Jumex from 1997-2005. Martín supervised the construction of Jumex's gallery space and research facilities at the Ecatepec site and is widely

¹⁹⁷ James Oles, 'Bárbaros en el templo' *La invención de lo cotidiano*, INBA-MUNAL, 2008

recognised for shaping the collection's integration of work by both international and emerging Mexican artists. After returning from a period of working at the Lisson Gallery in London, Martín realized there was a 'lack of a good contemporary art collection, public or private, in Mexico, and the infrastructure supporting a sound art scene. When I came back to Mexico, I already had an idea of what I wished to do. I knew the government did not understand the importance of collecting and promoting contemporary art, and that it was not worth trying to convince them. It had to be private. I was very fortunate then to meet Eugenio López'¹⁹⁸. Martín was able to give a structure to the ambitions of the collection, and the responsibilities of the foundation. She established an extensive program of lectures, workshops and implemented Jumex's guest curator scheme, explaining that she and Alonso had 'a very precise idea of what we wanted to build: an important global contemporary art collection, that at the same time would promote and support the Mexican art scene [...] we wanted to build bridges in Mexico, to and from Mexico'¹⁹⁹. Itala Schmelz, former director of Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, described Martín's initial plans for Jumex as 'crazy, ambitious and unfeasible'²⁰⁰, but Martín delivered on her proposals. She realized that in order to make an impact at home and abroad, her 'generation of artists, gallerists, critics and curators needed to grow, to become more professional, more "international"'²⁰¹, and her program for Fundación Jumex aimed to satisfy these requirements.

Between 2006 and 2010, Martín collaborated with collector Moisés Cosío on non-profit cultural project, Alumnos47. Cosío's foundation functions as a contemporary art laboratory, sponsoring artist residencies and a mobile art library in Mexico City; 'It's an initiative that hopes to have a comfortable atmosphere to attract people from a wide social spectrum'²⁰². As of 2008, Martín has worked with AXA México to build their corporate art collection, focusing exclusively on work by Mexican contemporary artists. In 2014, Martín began working with Mexican artist Bosco Sodi on Casa Wabi, a non profit arts

¹⁹⁸ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene* ed. Caroline Niémant, (Peeping Tom's Digest #2, 2011), 180

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Itala Schmelz, *Escultura Social: A New Generation of Art from Mexico City* ed. Julie Rodrigues Wildholm (Yale University Press, 2007), 35

²⁰¹ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, 181

²⁰² Ibid, 82

organization based in Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca. The facility has a screening room and a sculpture garden, and offers residencies to artists. Interestingly, Casa Wabi receives both private and public donations, indicating the rise in binary funding for cultural organisations. Martín's sphere of influence extends beyond the art world: as an authority on corporate cultural philanthropy, she writes a regular column for Mexico's leading business newspaper, *El Financiero*, relaying her thoughts on independent spaces and private collections to a commercially-minded readership. Martín's successor at Jumex is Michel Blancsubé. Born in France in 1958, Blancsubé had no formal academic training and first came to Mexico when he was helping to install a work by Gabriel Orozco. Soon afterwards he took charge of the archive department at Jumex in 2001 when the collection was housed in the juice plant at Ecatepec. Blancsubé has, in some capacity, worked on every exhibition Jumex has produced since the very beginning, both in Mexico and abroad, as well as guest-curated at other institutions including the celebrated *Yāq* group show at the independent space La Planta in Guadalajara in 2007, and Carlos Amorales' solo show at Museo Amparo in Puebla in 2009.

Blancsubé's official job title is Registrar, and he explains how this role has informed his choices as a curator: 'When you spend all year monitoring the works that enter the collection there is a natural game that makes you imagine combinations between artworks. I'm not sure that this is curating, but since curating is far from an exact science I assume that what I have organized until now looks like curating'²⁰³. His observation is interesting as it prompts the question: would a more established museum be so flexible with its staff? It seems that López's receptiveness to new ideas allows him to take risks that public museums are unable to justify. Building a contemporary art collection on the scale of Jumex had not been attempted before, and López extended creative freedom to his curators: 'I have never felt censorship regarding my curatorial choices', explains Blancsubé. 'To curate at Jumex is pure luxury. Ask Dan Cameron, Douglas Fogle, Patricia Martín, Jessica Morgan, Adriano Pedrosa, Alma Ruiz, Guillermo Santamarina or Philippe Vergne if you think I'm joking'²⁰⁴. He has witnessed first-hand López's

²⁰³ Ibid, 155

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 156

trajectory within the art world: ‘What he did was fill a void. The Mexican institutions - until the UNAM decided to develop a contemporary art collection - never secured a contemporary art patrimony. The activities of Colección/Fundación Jumex include a curatorial and educational program, a sponsorship and a grants program and everything else that public institutions usually run’²⁰⁵. Blancsubé has been instrumental in building a philanthropic foundation from one man’s contemporary art collection.

Another trusted advisor in the Jumex stable was Victor Zamudio-Taylor (1956-2013), who had in-depth experience of working with private art collections in Mexico. He had previously curated projects for the Manuel Álvarez Bravo photography collection and Fundación Televisa’s contemporary art collection (CC/AC). A freelance curator and expert in Latin American and Chicano art, Zamudio-Taylor had a strong academic background and was a spokesperson for Fundación Jumex at conferences and art-related events. One of his most important projects was a major exhibition of work from Colección Jumex inside the Instituto Cultural Cabañas in Guadalajara in 2011, a world heritage site known for its murals painted by José Clemente Orozco.

Cuban-born curator Osvaldo Sánchez, who has previously held the post of Director at both Carrillo Gil and Rufino Tamayo museums and most recently Director of the Museo de Arte Moderno (2007-2012), is a key figure in the Mexican art world. A founder member of PAC, he has also worked as a journalist for *Reforma* newspaper and directed two editions of the FITAC art theory symposium (1995 and 1996). In March 2011, he participated in a discussion panel at The Getty Center in Los Angeles, the title was ‘Between Theory and Practice: Rethinking Latin American Art in the 21st Century’. In his talk, Sánchez discussed how private art collections can impact on our lives, including what has inspired the recent succession of younger collectors and how they interact with art world professionals. He credited one particular man for having paved the way for the current generation of art collectors in Mexico: Francisco Iturbe (1879-1951)²⁰⁶, describing him as ‘a man of vision’ and the country’s most important

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 154

²⁰⁶ A selection from Iturbe’s personal collection was exhibited at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City: *Francisco Iturbe, coleccionista: el mecenazgo como practica de libertad*, 12th July – 14th October

collector of the first half of the twentieth century. He was known for putting on small exhibitions in his own house - a practice adopted by modern day collector César Cervantes, profiled in Part Two. According to Sánchez, Iturbe believed that building a collection represented a kind of national cultural 'agency', acting as promoter and patron of the arts. He contributed an essay on the subject of private patronage of contemporary art for *Hablando en Plata: El Arte como Inversión*, crediting collectors and corporate sponsorship as 'decisive factors in the current boom of Mexican art in prominent places', concluding that 'The contemporary art collector is not going to reap many public rewards in his lifetime, and he knows it. He feigns attempting to discern the present, but what he is really doing is grasping for and piecing together fragments of a future yet to fail. This is the utopia of his true enterprise'²⁰⁷. Sánchez also curated one of Fundación Jumex's most ambitious exhibitions to date: *Destello*²⁰⁸, featuring work by Louise Bourgeois, Ana Mendieta and Wolfgang Tillmans, amongst others.

Patricia Sloane is another Mexico City-based curator who has seen a powerful shift in the way art collectors choose to display their collections. I interviewed Sloane in 2012 for the purpose of my research, and was struck by her near-exhaustive knowledge of the Mexican art world. She began her career in film production, before opening the Sloane-Racotta Gallery in Mexico City in 1980. Since 1994 Sloane has worked as a freelance curator, alongside positions including advisor to Head Office for Visual Arts at the UNAM and Adjunct Curator of MUAC. Sloane is also a founding member of Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo (PAC) and regularly contributes to their annual contemporary art theory symposium, SITAC. From 2000 to 2002 she was director of the Carrillo Gil Museum in Mexico City. Sloane worked with Osvaldo Sánchez in establishing PAC as a pioneering organization in funding visual

2007. This was the second time objects from his collection had gone on public display, the first exhibition was in 1959 at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, shortly after INBA had acquired his archive. The collection included work by several painters from the Escuela Mexicana and in particular by Manuel Rodríguez Lozano (1896-1971). Source: Reviews by Merry Macmaster in *La Jornada*, 12th July 2007 and Elena Poniatowska in *La Jornada*, 19th August 2007.

²⁰⁷ Osvaldo Sánchez, *Hablando en plata: el arte como inversión* (Landucci, 2002), 228

²⁰⁸ *Destello* Fundación Jumex 08.04.2011 - 30.09.2011
<http://www.fundacionjumex.org/es/exposicion/destello>

art programs, and she described to me how Sánchez was eager to create a board that represented every sector within the art world: collectors, museum professionals and other voices, such as art fair directors. Together with her friend and collaborator Magda Carranza de Akle, she decided that ‘it was not a good moment to give a lot of our energy to a state museum, because things were very unreliable. So what we preferred to do was get a board together and create something called Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo, and we could support MACG or another museum, or another initiative, or do whatever we wanted with this board’²⁰⁹. Although the reaction to the group was positive, Sloane claims it was not given any serious credibility until she introduced an annual symposium of contemporary art theory, SITAC, in 2002. PAC’s funding is sourced from its high net worth patrons as well as corporate sponsorship, but when pressed about its financial stability Sloane admits that ‘it’s kind of frail in the sense that it doesn’t have economic roots all over the place’. A lack of formal financial structure appears to be eclipsed by the strength of the committee members’ pledge to the group: ‘At times we have had up to three museum directors on the board. It makes the organization very, very versatile’²¹⁰. The most effective fundraising is based on personal relationships - whatever the institution - which are something PAC seems to be able to rely on. Since I last spoke to Sloane in 2012, PAC has started to use crowd-funding websites as another source of revenue. Successful projects funded in this way have included an installation in Mexico City and the publication of an artist’s monograph.

Yet it is not simply at the top level that museums and galleries in Mexico have been fortunate in finding the right team. The calibre of specialised technical staff has kept pace with the rapid combustion of the country’s contemporary art market, fuelled by the introduction of art fairs and the creation of collector-driven spaces. ‘For a condition report or installing a show, for example, [the execution] will be meticulous. It’s incredible to work with Mexicans at that level’ says Sloane. When I enquire about the role of the curator in the Mexican art world, her answer takes me by surprise: ‘After the market crash in 1984, the figure of the curator has become the support system for the art market, a kind of *accessoire*’.

²⁰⁹ Conversation with author, April 2012

²¹⁰ Ibid.

Sloane is referring to curators outside of Mexico, she clarifies, and does not believe that Mexican curators are 'conscious of this role'. Regarding the amount of publicity given to Zona Maco, Sloane believes that it has 'hit a spot in the Mexican ego and the Mexican idea of self. This VIP [art fair] international movement creates a network of new lifestyle interests. It's like a big fat club. It has something very obscene about it'.

Carlos Ashida (1955-2015) was an independent curator who also has strong links with Guadalajara's museum community as well as contemporary artists in Mexico and abroad. 'Ashida is the reason Francis Alÿs came to Mexico'²¹¹, said Patrick Charpenel, referring to the Belgian artist who relocated in 1986. Ashida held the post of Director at Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil in Mexico City, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Oaxaca and became the inaugural curator of contemporary art at the Instituto Cultural Cabañas in Guadalajara in February 2014, while retaining his position on the advisory board for the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City. Alongside his directorships, Ashida ran one of the most unusual creative production initiatives in the country: Taller Mexicano de Gobelinos, based in a 19th century townhouse in Guadalajara. Inside this building is a tapestry workshop, originally set up by the Austrian artist Fritz Riedl in 1968, who worked with looms to create cutting-edge designs based on geometric abstraction. Riedl's work has been displayed at the Venice and Sao Paulo Biennales as well as Documenta, and he was a visiting lecturer at the university of Guadalajara in the early 1970s. The Ashida family now owns the workshop, and Taller Mexicano de Gobelinos has produced tapestries for artists including John Currin, George Condo, Rufino Tamayo and Francesco Clemente. Although the tapestries are made by a team of 10 in-house weavers - several of whom were originally trained and employed by Riedl - the artist retains authorship. The majority of tapestries are taken from original paintings by the artist, although unique commissions are also possible; at present, the workshop receives no government funding. Ashida's Taller Mexicano de Gobelinos is a fascinating example of how traditional craft technique is being used to reinterpret contemporary art. In this sense Ashida's enterprise is very similar to

²¹¹ Charlotte Burns, 'Latin America Focus: The Rush to Get Things Made', *The Art Newspaper* 01.05.2011

that of José Noé Suro, who invites local and international contemporary artists to use his ceramics factory and its team of classically trained potters. In 2010, Ashida collaborated on collector Sergio Autrey's AKASO project, curating a selection of specially commissioned paintings for an exhibition at Museo de Arte de Sonora in 2010. As illustrated by the multifaceted careers of these *agentes culturales*, there is significant crossover between curators, critics, museum professionals and historians. Ana Garduño describes this integrated circuit as a consequence of the new status of the curator: 'There was a recomposition of the artistic field as a result, to a large extent, of the *curador* (curator) as the person in charge of the construction of visual discourses in art exhibitions. Thus most of the critics became curators, preservers or overseers, not only mediating between the work and the public, but also mediating between a crossroads of artists, work, audiences and institutions'²¹².

Aesthetic judgment plays a key role in the valuation of art and the duty of critics is to provide a connection between art and its audience, with the aim of offering an analytical context that sheds light on the nuances of the work. It is an intermediary role that has evolved over time; the 'classical' method of presenting a work within a historical narrative has matured into a tendency to evaluate art by more expansive criteria, such as aesthetic context or how the technique and materials relate to the intended message. Critics and historians fit into the art world ecosystem by writing academic papers, essays for exhibition catalogues, broadcasting their views in the media and generally participating in the debate about art. Many critics are also curators or take on curating projects at some point in their career, and this type of crossover activity is increasingly common. Cuauhtémoc Medina²¹³ is perhaps Mexico's most well-known example of a critic-curator: since 1992 he has been a full-time researcher at the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas at UNAM in Mexico City, between 2002-2008 he held the inaugural position of curator of Tate's Latin American Art Collections, in 2009 he oversaw the 7th International Symposium of Contemporary Art Theory in Mexico City, and in the same year co-founded Teratoma, a collective of critics and curators; Medina also writes a column, *El Ojo Breve*, in national newspaper La Reforma. One

²¹² Ana Garduño, *Art Criticism, Mexico Today: An Encyclopaedia of Life in the Republic*, ed. Ana Paula Ambrosi, Silvia D. Zárate and Alex M. Saragoza (ABC-CLIO, 2012), 56

²¹³ Medina is mentioned earlier in this chapter in his capacity as a curator.

of Medina's predecessors is Carla Stellweg (mentioned in her capacity as a curator in an earlier section of this chapter), an art historian with a special interest in Latin American art. She co-founded the seminal art history magazine *Artes Visuales* whilst living in Mexico City in the 1970s, a period where the art market as we now recognise it was gaining momentum: 'To internationalize local and national art markets throughout Latin America, we took into account the need to at least start and create hemispheric networks of curators, writers, artists, critics, academics, and other promoters such as philanthropists, collectors and art aficionados. Until then each one operated in their own local isolated territory. The magazine became the vehicle to get the conversation going in print and to circulate the edited results by regular mail or personal carriers'²¹⁴. The magazine ran from 1973 to 1981, shutting down abruptly due to 'a change in government and an editorial shift from international to national politics, and censorship'²¹⁵. Despite of its relatively brief run, *Artes Visuales* had a profound effect on art criticism delivered through a Latin American lens, owing in no small part to Juan Acha's radical essay imploring fellow critics and art historians to produce original theories²¹⁶. Another notable art historian from Stellweg's era is Berta Taracena (b.1925, Mexico City), a cultural researcher and art critic who studied under Justino Fernández, and later worked with curator Fernando Gamboa²¹⁷, who wrote several books on individual artists including Leopoldo Flores and Diego Riera²¹⁸, as well as a compendium of articles published in collaboration with Universidad Autónoma de Estado de México in 2006: *Estética del arte mexicano en el tiempo: pensamiento y obra*. Argentine-born Raquel Tibol (b.1923-2015) was Taracena's contemporary yet her oeuvre included journalism as well as broadcasting, with a focus on Mexican art. In 1969 Tibol published *Historia general del arte Mexicano, época moderna y contemporánea*.

²¹⁴ Correspondence with the author, 05.06.2015

²¹⁵ Carla Stellweg, 'We are Here, They are There', *Latin America Perspectives*, Guggenheim Blog 07.04.2015 <https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/map/we-are-here-they-are-there>

²¹⁶ Juan Acha, 'Hacia una crítica de arte como productora de teorías', *Artes Visuales* 13, Mexico City 1977

²¹⁷ Both Justino Fernández and Fernando Gamboa are profiled in Part Two, Chapter One.

²¹⁸ Luz García Martínez, 'Berta Taracena y la grandeza del arte mexicano', *Revista El Búho* Issue 82 February 2007 <http://www.reneavilesfabila.com.mx/universodeelbuho/82/82-lmartinez.pdf>

A later generation of influential art historians includes Jorge Alberto Manrique (b.1936), Teresa del Conde (b.1938), Rita Eder (b.1943), and Ana Garduño, amongst others, with blended careers as university faculty members, authors and researchers. In 1985 an official organisation of art critics was formed as part of INBA: El Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de Artes Plásticas (CENIDIAP) focuses on modern and contemporary Mexican art. A few years later, in 1991, a new 'critical space' called *Curare* was established in Mexico City, its community had its own magazine which featured history of art academic research by authors including James Oles, Olivier Debroise, Cuauhtémoc Medina and Magalí Arriola. A second art theory publication, *Poliéster*, came out in 1992. This bilingual magazine sought to reflect the increasingly global - or delocalized - nature of the art being produced, establishing 'a vision of Latin America produced from within Mexico, oriented towards promoting the region's art in the international market'²¹⁹. Whereas *Curare* focused on discussions based on creative output and philosophical discourse, *Poliéster* 'emphasized the biographical aspects and relationship of the artists with Latin America'²²⁰. In addition to these two specialist publications, reviews of contemporary art exhibitions and more general art criticism appears in the pages of national newspapers such as *La Jornada* and *Reforma*, and the magazine *Proceso*. The Cuban editor of *Poliéster*, Gerardo Mosquera, would go on to publish an anthology in 1995 called *Beyond The Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, a key text on the subject.

The critical symposium that ran in parallel to Expo-Arte in Guadalajara in 1992 had its own name, Foro Internacional de Teoría de Arte Contemporáneo (FITAC) and was coordinated by the curator Guillermo Santamarina. A fundamental purpose of the fair was to develop the links between local and global artists and dealers, but the seminars proved successful in their own right and attracted several international speakers; topics for discussion ranged from 'interdisciplinary work in alternative spaces' to 'teaching as creative discourse'. Cuauhtémoc Medina has described FITAC as highly influential in the world of contemporary art fairs: 'It was not common for commercial structures like art fairs to consider it

²¹⁹ Ana Garduño, 'Art criticism', *Mexico Today: An Encyclopaedia of Life in the Republic* ed. Ana Paula Ambrosi, Silvia D. Zárate, Alex M. Saragoza (ABC-CLIO, 2012), 58

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 59

necessary to add a theoretical annex to the marketplace. In fact, Guadalajara's example had an impact well beyond Latin America. The symposium programs at ARCO in Spain started in great part as a result of Guadalajara's model²²¹. Despite the recognition FITAC achieved, it disappeared along with the art fair when the economic crisis hit Mexico in 1998; it was temporarily revived and existed independently from a commercial art fair, but today the country's high-profile critical forum is SITAC, an annual international symposium on art theory based in Mexico City. SITAC was created in 2004 by a board of collectors and art world professionals operating under the name of Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo (PAC), and the symposium declared an interest in 'fostering debate about the functionality of institutions that document and promote contemporary art' while aiming to demonstrate a wider social relevance: 'An exchange of practices, experiences and theoretical reflections about the mission of specialists, museums, galleries, alternatives spaces, journals, news programs and the press, fairs and biennials, their forums and websites as a platform for interactions with increasingly diverse audiences, is an opportunity to analyse, compare and evaluate strategies, results and alternatives, in order to improve communications among all the actors of society that intervene in the processes of legitimizing and situating contemporary art and artists within the local, national or international network'²²². This affirmation points to a desire to use the forum as a tool to explore how contemporary art can reach a wider audience. Much like FITAC, SITAC attracts an impressive roster of international speakers which have included curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist, artists Liliana Porter and Hugo Hopping, and museum director Ole Bouman, who are joined by a broad selection of Mexican artists, curators, art historians and museum professionals. These symposiums are relevant to the art market in the sense that they stimulate debate on what constitutes an important work of contemporary art, providing a point of reference for collectors and their advisors. According to Medina, these forums have a direct connection to the Mexican art market because their existence 'seemed a requisite to set up a new art fair. This suggests that in a place like Mexico, the market still needs to grow

²²¹ Jennifer Teets, *Curatorial Practices: Interview with critic Cuauhtémoc Medina* LatinArt.com 19.02.2006 <http://www.latinart.com/aiview.cfm?id=117>

²²² SITAC 1: Exchanges in Contemporary Art - Chronicles, Controversies and Bridges. SITAC Archive <http://sitac.org/en/symposium/exchanges-in-contemporary-art-chronicles-controversies-and-bridges>

on the basis of promoting a wider and more complex contemporary art other than just a space to buy and sell artworks. This may be the only advantage of having a rather weak art market: it cannot work on its own, but needs to cooperate with alternative venues, open spaces for critical discourses and involve a process of cultural promotion²²³. For SITAC, the event itself is supported by a combination of individual philanthropists, corporate backers and public bodies including CONACULTA and Fundación Júmex; in addition it retains an extensive network of media partners. It is an attractive cause for sponsors because it functions in parallel to one of the most exciting areas of growth in Mexico: contemporary art.

At the FITAC conference in 1992, museum director Osvaldo Sánchez ‘blamed criticism of not only being incapable of questioning itself through the logic of the art market, but rather and to the contrary, to only serve as a support to curatorial practices in previous years, concluding that it was necessary to “claim for criticism to play an antagonistic role in the 1990s”²²⁴, inviting artists and critics to be unafraid of creating friction in exploring the complexities of contemporary art practice and theory. SITAC has since expanded its purview to include screenings, workshops and a series of gallery openings that coincide with the event. Its ambitions are not always successfully realised, however, and it has experienced poor reviews alongside positive assessments; *Artforum* magazine described the symposium as ‘bland’²²⁵ in 2011, but only the year before critics were shocked by Carlos Amorales’ presentation on feminism that involved his wife performing a striptease. As with most panel-based conferences, it is hard to predict how the participants will interact in a way that guarantees chemistry. Although the agenda for the 2011 SITAC - themed on ‘catastrophe’ - did not engage its audience as strongly as in other years, the overall program shows evidence of detailed research and a commitment to advancing critical theory.

As a forum for critical debate, SITAC is primarily concerned with art theory and the examination of art practice, yet the theme of private art spaces has cropped up in previous editions of the symposium and in 2008, was the subject of a panel discussion which explored ‘the role of cultural institutions and

²²³ Teets, *Curatorial Practices: Interview with critic Cuauhtémoc*

²²⁴ Garduño, *Mexico Today*, 58

²²⁵ Adam Kleinman, *Flirting with Disaster* ArtForum 02.11.11 <http://artforum.com/diary/id=27503>

cultural producers in a time where public spaces disappear, and public mandates getting transferred to the private sector²²⁶. One of the main reasons why art critics are relevant to the market relates to the power they wield: they are able to provide a critical context to a work of art and are capable therefore of inserting it into the art historical canon. Proffering wisdom and analysis, art critics act as an aesthetic compass in the midst of the self-promotion of the commercial art world. While a favourable review has a useful marketing application, a insightful academic critique of an artist's work lends a legitimacy to his oeuvre that is likely to have greater impact on collector investment.

The art market is now global and Mexico is an active participant both in terms of its number of internationally recognised contemporary artists and high-profile collectors. Uber-collectors such as Eugenio López Alonso are influencing the buying habits of fellow collectors and as a consequence have an impact on the marketplace. The force of a global market is generally positive for Mexico: despite the relative volatility of the peso, an international marketplace experiences fewer peaks and troughs. In an interview with *Art Business News* in 2002, Latin American and Mexican art specialist Mary-Anne Martin observed that 'As long as Mexico was the sole art market engine, every time the engine died, the art market went down too. Now it may not spike as dramatically, but it doesn't drop as dramatically either'. The country's cultural heritage and its world-class museums are a source of immense pride for many Mexicans. Individuals in possession of significant contemporary art collections are now able to connect with this positive identity and indeed help it evolve: a successful museum is a reflection on creativity, industry and talent, not just of the artists whose work hangs on the walls, but its staff, founder and community. In any country, an art market can perform as a barometer of the political, socioeconomic and cultural climate. Looking back to the state-endorsed murals of the 1940s and 1950s, it is clear that the government had an important role in shaping the early art market in Mexico, yet its reluctance to recognise the value of contemporary art until relatively recently is one of the key reasons why private art collections now dominate this cultural sphere. Each of the collections I refer to in my research hold a

²²⁶ SITAC program, 2008 <http://universes-in-universe.de/magazin/eng/2008/sitac/index.html>

substantial number of works by Mexican artists, although these are usually balanced with a selection of pieces by artists from abroad. A great deal of Mexican contemporary art carries a heavy socio-political content, a theme which can prove challenging for public museums, but is one of the ways in which private museums can offer a platform for art that is deemed to be too controversial for domestic settings or government-owned galleries.

Traditionally, collectors influenced the art market by creating a demand. More recently, they have developed new ways to interact with the art world such as collaborating directly with the artist, a popular alternative with the men and women featured in Part Two of my thesis. Another example is cultivating lateral partnerships with established art institutions, such as the NEON curatorial award which was created in 2012²²⁷. Prizes of this nature are usually based on a selection of curators (aspiring or professional) competing against one another to present the best proposal for an exhibition based on a private art collection. As today's global contemporary art market continues to grow, the ripple effect determines how creative trends are assessed as well as how the art produced can be accessed. 'Art works that have never before been exposed to an international audience are emerging blinking into the sunlight', explains analyst James Goodwin, 'the effect has been dramatic for artists and collectors alike'²²⁸. In Mexico, the art market has developed in tandem with a new culture of collecting art: there are more privately-funded contemporary art initiatives than ever before, with a significant number of patrons collaborating with artists at production level or building public exhibition spaces.

²²⁷ The Neon curatorial award is a collaboration between the D. Daskalopoulos Collection, which is made up of over 500 works by 170 international and Greek artists, and the Whitechapel Gallery in London.

²²⁸ Goodwin, James *The International Art Markets: The Essential Guide for Collectors and Investors* (Kogan-Page 2008), 24

Part Two: Building a Collection

This part is composed of two chapters, splitting Mexico's prominent collectors of contemporary art into mid-twentieth century personae and the 'new generation', born in the 1960s and 1970s. Collectors have been selected according to their commitment to civic engagement, the content of their collection and their vision for the future of the public display of art in Mexico.

(i) Twentieth Century Collectors

Carrillo Gil (1898-1974)

Collecting art in Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century was a purely personal endeavour in that buying a painting or sculpture was not regarded as a financial investment in the way it was in Europe or the US. As such, the links between the collector and his or her collection are particularly intimate and revealing. Each collection bore the stamp of the individual: their taste, identity - even their reputation. A physician by profession, Dr Alvar Carrillo Gil acquired work by artists including José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Gunther Gerzso and Luis Nishizawa to create one of Latin America's most important collections of modern art.

In 1972 he donated his personal art collection to the state on the condition that its permanence, uninterrupted display and preservation would not be compromised; in addition, the state was forbidden from dismantling the collection and selling off various works over time, so it would remain a complete entity for the Mexican public to enjoy. Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil (MACG) continues to be one of the most popular modern and contemporary art museums in Mexico, with a dynamic calendar of temporary exhibitions and creative workshops. The core collection consists of 1,775 works, 1,417 of which belong to Dr Gil's private collection and the remainder from private donations. MACG is also committed to

promoting emerging artists and there are currently over 350 works of contemporary art within the permanent collection. The success of the museum was secured, for the most part, by Gil's carefully considered model for what a public art space should be. This collection-based museum is of interest to my research as Gil's ambitions resonate with those of several current-generation collectors I profile in my thesis.

Carrillo Gil had bought drawings and watercolours since he was able to afford them as a young man, but it was not until the 1940s that he started to acquire paintings. He began by collecting works by artists affiliated with the Escuela Mexicana de Pintura, a movement that rejected traditional European themes and techniques in favour of 'New World' imagery and style. At the time, it was more fashionable for collectors to acquire European-inspired works by academy-trained artists; Gil was among the first to collect work by Gunther Gerzso (1915-2000) - whose career change from scenography to fine art had been encouraged by fellow collectors Jacques and Natasha Gelman - as well as the Japanese-born Mexican painter Luis Nishizawa (1918-2014). His model for collecting seemed to demonstrate a specific agenda: the promotion of Mexican art as equal to European art. Gil was intent on facilitating a dialogue between Mexican visual culture and the rest of the world, rejecting the stereotype of Mexican art (largely dictated by the muralists) and placing it within an international context. Art historian Justino Fernández (1904-1972) described Gil's legacy as follows: 'His collection of contemporary Mexican paintings is, as I understand it, the best in the country, and it's pleasing to see that it was built by a Mexican who genuinely loved art'²²⁹. Occasional purchases from more unconventional artists, such as Wolfgang Paalen (1905-1959) distinguished him as something of a zeitgeist. When buying work by more established artists, Gil would seek out their avant-garde pieces: by acquiring Orozco's controversial watercolour series *The House of Tears* (1912) depicting scenes from inside a brothel, Gil promoted the artist in a new light, drawing attention to themes that were distinct from those depicted in his famous murals. Part of this promotion involved publishing literature that would emphasize the artist's position in Mexican art history: 'Carrillo Gil sought to speed up Orozco's consecration, to which end he edited two catalogues featuring

²²⁹ Ana Garduño, *El poder del coleccionismo de arte* (UNAM, 2009), 258

pieces from his collection, in a publication that sought to establish an official chronology²³⁰ writes Garduño.

Gil intended for his collection to be uniquely representative of a vital period in Mexican art history, and the artist David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974) is represented by forty seven different works within MACG, including lithographs, woodcuts and works on paper. The two men became close friends, and after Gil's death Siqueiros remarked that: 'Every art critic recognised that his ability to choose art was the most visionary in the country. He undoubtedly accumulated the best selection of books in Mexico. He was a highly cultivated and cosmopolitan intellectual on the visual arts'²³¹. As his reputation grew, Gil took the opportunity to publicize his collection abroad. He frequently visited shows in the US as part of his strategy to promote Mexican art on a global platform, hoping to make as strong an impact on the international art scene as he had in Mexico, and in 1955 *Time* magazine named Gil as the 'number one collector in Mexico'. In his role as a collector, Gil spoke at conferences, wrote essays for exhibition catalogues²³², and collaborated with gallery owner Inés Amor on three exhibitions of work by Kishi Murata²³³. Maintaining a rapport to the artists Gil collected was important to him, so much so that the loss of a friendship would have consequences for his collection: curator Olivier Debroyse remarks in his essay for *Mexican Masters: Selections from the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil* that 'after a dispute with Olga and Rufino Tamayo, [Gil] immediately got rid of the works by that artist. Prestige did not interest him, nor did fame if he was not connected to the person. His relationships with his artists was strengthened by acquiring their works and through his unrestricted support'²³⁴.

In her biography of Gil, Ana Garduño describes how he became increasingly frustrated with European reviews of Latin American art, which he deemed disparaging and ill-considered. He

²³⁰ Ana Garduño, *Alvar Carrillo Gil: A Singular Collector* (MACG-INBA, 2014), 24-29
https://www.academia.edu/12250542/Alvar_Carrillo_Gil_A_Singular_Collector

²³¹ Garduño, *El poder del coleccionismo de arte*

²³² Gil worked as a professional art critic between 1949-1950, writing a column called *Páginas de Artes Plásticas* in the Mexico City daily newspaper *Excelsior*. Source: Garduño 2009

²³³ Ana Garduño, *Alvar Carrillo Gil: A Singular Collector* (MACG-INBA, 2014), 24-29

²³⁴ Olivier Debroyse, *Mexican Masters: Selections from the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil* (Oklahoma City Museum of Art Press, 2006), 62

occasionally responded to articles written by foreign art historians and journalists, including English critic Sir Herbert Read, who had described his difficulty in accepting *muralismo* as a genuine art historical movement. Even though Gil's private collection did not feature murals in favour of more abstract works, he argued that some one in Read's position would have been incapable of comprehending the Mexican reality that provoked such art: "None of them [foreign art historians] is able to understand that the Mexican muralist movement is one of the most important phenomena in art of this century. They don't seem to realize that from 1920 until present day, the most important muralists in the world are Mexican - not European or indeed from any other part of the world"²³⁵.

As a result of his friendships with artists, Gil was sent monographs, brochures and catalogues from all over the world. Every text was registered into his own personal library, which was to become the most comprehensive (and valuable) private art history library in Mexico in the 20th century, specialising in western contemporary art history and Mexican art show catalogues. The library is now one of the most important modern art history research archives in the country. Gil also developed relationships with Mexico's state-run museums and cultural officials, building what Garduño describes as a 'special connection with the cultural bureaucracy starting in the 1940s, essentially with officials at Mexico's Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) and the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA), through which he received recognition for his constant loan-outs to official exhibitions that at the time were made up solely from his holdings²³⁶ [...] This allowed him to act as an official representative in a number of international negotiations and inaugural ceremonies and even be named Mexican Pavilion General Commissioner at the 1955 São Paulo Biennial²³⁷.

The loans from Gil's collection were designed to contribute towards the state-run visual culture programs and not to replace them. He believed that in order for art to reach as many people as possible, new spaces needed to be built. Accessible display was of fundamental importance, an issue highlighted by Gil in a proposal for what would be the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes. Although the museum was

²³⁵ Garduño, *El poder del coleccionismo de arte*, 298

²³⁶ Example: an exhibition of Orozco paintings presented at the Mexican Book Fair in Havana in 1946

²³⁷ Ana Garduño, *Alvar Carrillo Gil: A Singular Collector* (MACG-INBA, 2014), 24-29

originally designed to be privately-funded, this decision was revoked and INBA would be created as a state-run enterprise. Ana Garduño asserts that this change in policy was due to pressure exerted by a group of artists and intellectuals, led by Carlos Chávez, who believed it was a governmental duty to promote the arts. Carlos Ashida, former director of MACG, described what the collector had hoped for in building a museum: ‘Carrillo Gil was totally aware of the communitarian importance of the works as a group and what they represented for Mexican society as well as what pleasure they provided, and it became his responsibility to safeguard their integrity. At the end of the 1950s, he laboriously sought an agreement with the Mexican government to guarantee the integrity and appropriate display of his collection’²³⁸. This initiative came to fruition in 1974, when the museum opened its doors to the public. MACG was the result of years of negotiation with the state and eventually opened a decade later than initially planned, as the government was initially wary of opening a public exhibition space bearing the name of a private collector: ‘Creating official museums in the nation’s capital has been perennially classified as State business. The final decisions necessarily came from the President himself [...] the double requirement that the collection not be broken up and that the museum bear the collector’s name placed further obstacles in the path to institution status’²³⁹, writes Garduño.

Gil’s approach to building a collection had been motivated by a desire to protect Mexico’s cultural legacy, often acquiring works that were not prioritized by the state, then loaning them to public museums as and when they were required for exhibitions. Gil was convinced this would prevent key paintings and sculptures from disappearing abroad, never to be returned. Unfortunately, this kind of involvement occasionally created tension with the government: state officials wanted to know more about private collectors’ objectives and how their efforts might undermine the nation’s museums. These concerns stemmed from a general mistrust of private initiatives: officials were not comfortable with the control this would give non-state bodies over cultural output and display, an apprehension that revealed the political climate and its paranoia related to national identity. Individuals who supported independent

²³⁸ Olivier Debrouse, *Mexican Masters: Selections from the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil* (Oklahoma City Museum of Art Press, 2005), 15

²³⁹ Garduño, Ana Alvar *Carrillo Gil: A Singular Collector* MACG-INBA 2014 p24-29

cultural initiatives were viewed with suspicion, and private collectors did not trust state museums with their collections, fearing that their donations would end up on the walls of private residences of government officials. In her biography of Gil, Garduño points out that a benefit of this tension was that private collectors were afforded a great deal of independence when it came to choosing 20th century art. The state did not invest in much modern painting or sculpture, other than *muralismo*, which left a vast selection of works available for purchase by private collectors. Furthermore, the state did not have an official acquisitions programme for modern art, nor a structure in place to build a national collection of modern art. Purchases were made on an arbitrary basis, unlike the strategies (commercially-minded or otherwise) of private collectors. Spanish writer Margarita Nelken (1894-1968) described how Mexico's cultural heritage was greatly indebted to Gil's generosity: 'Sadly there is no great history of cultural patronage in Mexico and the few collectors we can rely on deserve our unswerving loyalty. Dr Alvar Carrillo Gil is the leader of this group. His collections and library of art books - perhaps the only one in Latin America - indicate that for him, art was much more than an occasional pleasure'²⁴⁰.

The picture today is very different. Private collectors are able to realize their own foundations and institutes with little resistance from the state, which is a significant shift in Mexico's cultural development. Furthermore, creative partnerships between public and private cultural initiatives are increasingly common and are making a profound impact on the accessibility of contemporary art (I examine this in detail in my final chapter).

When I visited the MACG in February 2010, I was struck by the balance of modern and contemporary art. The main halls inside the museum were dedicated to temporary exhibitions of work by emerging artists, with several smaller rooms displaying a selection from its permanent collection. There was a well-stocked bookshop, research library and a variety of workshops and activities on offer to the visitor. 'Carrillo Gil sought to institute a climate of cultural alliances in a nation where authoritarianism on the part of the hegemonic political party that ruled Mexico for the better part of the twentieth century fought for precisely the opposite. He represents not so much a quest for power that might rival that held

²⁴⁰ Garduño, *El poder del coleccionismo de arte*

by art sector officials as he does the citizen who exercises his rights and cultural responsibilities'²⁴¹, writes Garduño. Gil's collection presents a landmark in Mexican art history by its consolidation of work by important modern artists coupled with the collector's determination to preserve it as a single entity.

Dolores Olmedo (1908-2002)

One of the more unusual museums I visited in Mexico was the former home of business woman Dolores Olmedo, a tycoon of the construction industry and dedicated art collector. Her eponymous museum is accommodated in Hacienda La Noria on the outskirts of Mexico City, a large complex of principally domestic buildings purchased by Olmedo in 1962. After extensive refurbishment, the hacienda was turned into an art museum and opened to the public in 1994. Peacocks paraded alongside Xoloitzcuintle dogs on the lawns in front of the main house, while gardeners tended to bougainvilleas on the drive. Museo Dolores Olmedo is not just a museum of a private art collection, but a shrine to the collector: paintings and sculptures were surrounded by family photographs and careworn furniture, with several interconnecting living spaces left in their original condition. I am including Olmedo in my research because she was a leading figure in the twentieth century art world, collecting work by her contemporaries and eventually deciding to put her collection on public display in a time when it was not common for wealthy collectors to share the artworks they had spent a lifetime collecting. Just as her fellow collectors Carrillo Gil and Jacques and Natasha Gelman developed important relationships with specific artists - Gunther Gerzso and José Clemente Orozco respectively - Olmedo cultivated a rapport with artist Diego Rivera that would lead to a strong connection with the art world in Mexico.

María de los Dolores Olmedo y Patiño Suárez was born just two years before the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, and was a pupil of the new Vasconcelos-sanctioned teaching system which placed national identity at the core of education. Her father was an accountant, and her mother a schoolteacher - a resilient woman to whom Olmedo was utterly devoted and credits with inspiring her museum. There is a

²⁴¹ Garduño, *Alvar Carrillo Gil: A Singular Collector*, 24-29

plaque on the public entrance to Hacienda La Noria that reads: *'My mother, Profesora María Patiño Suárez Widow of Olmedo, served as an example to me, when she said "Share what you have with your fellows". And so I leave this house and all my collections of art, product of the labour of a lifetime, to be enjoyed by the people of Mexico'* [translated].

In comparison with the other art collectors profiled in this chapter, I have found Olmedo's persona to be the least transparent and a tendency for self-mythologizing made it difficult for me to develop a full understanding of her motivation. In a book published by the Museo Dolores Olmedo, a great emphasis is made of her personal beauty as well as her professional triumphs, with numerous references to her social milieu. These are unusual observations in a book about a personal art collection, yet I found them in several independent sources²⁴² that did not have the bias of a self-published biography. It appeared that Olmedo was determined that her legend would continue to exist through her collection, and had enjoyed the attention it had brought her while she was alive.

As a young woman, Olmedo did not move in creative circles and her friendship with Diego Rivera was her only introduction to the art world. There is some dispute over the circumstances of their encounter, which was either in 1924 at the Ministry of Education (at the time when Rivera was working on a mural for the building) or through her marriage in 1935 to the English-born American publisher Howard S. Phillips, who commissioned Rivera to write for his magazine *Mexican Life*. The friendship was postponed for many years after Olmedo's husband discovered a nude portrait Rivera had given her, which was promptly returned. It was not until 1955 that Rivera formally resumed contact, which he did by sending back his painting with a note stating his honest intentions of companionship. Marriage to Phillips introduced Olmedo to a different social class: her husband's circle of friends included Nobel Prize winners William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway, the novelist John Dos Passos and the Hollywood actor Melvin Douglas. Although a man of diverse business interests, Phillips was trained as a journalist,

²⁴² Jonathan Kandell, 'Dolores Olmedo, a patron to Diego Rivera, dies at 88' *The New York Times* 02.08.2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/02/arts/dolores-olmedo-a-patron-to-diego-rivera-dies-at-88.html>; Chris Kraul, 'D. Olmedo Patino, 94; Avid Art collector' *The Los Angeles Times* 29.07.2002 <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/jul/29/local/me-olmedo29>.

and is recognised for editing *Mexican Life* magazine (copies of which were neatly shelved all over the house when I visited La Noria). The publication focused on local culture, Mexico's geographical landscapes, and promoted the country as destination for the sophisticated tourist and was distributed all over the world. Although Phillips engaged other writers to contribute articles for the magazine, he was responsible for its production, editorial and design. Painter Raúl Anguiano (1915-2006) claimed that '[Phillips] wrote all the articles, under his name and under pseudonyms'²⁴³. Such a degree of creative control might indicate a vanity project - an allegation which could also be levelled against his wife's museum. This assessment does not take into account the ways in which Phillips' magazine and Olmedo's collection pay tribute to Mexico and its artists, yet the legacy of both must be held up against the motivation behind each scheme.

Mexican Life gave Phillips - and by extension his wife - the opportunity to make connections with the country's cultural and political elite. In return for exposure in the magazine, the couple were able to forge new and useful friendships. Olmedo transformed herself into a society hostess, bringing together political dignitaries, captains of industry and intellectuals. Their marriage faltered, leading to a separation in 1948 and finalized with a divorce in 1957. In an extensive interview with journalist Elena Poniatowska published in *La Jornada* in 2002²⁴⁴, Olmedo described how her husband was uncomfortable with her desire to work outside the home. Once separated from Phillips, she went on to establish a successful career in the construction business, starting out with the purchase of a brickworks on the outskirts of Mexico City and growing into ownership of a group of companies which won major contracts with property developers. This was a time of rapid urban expansion within Mexico, requiring vast new housing projects and infrastructure to be built. This made Olmedo her fortune and increased her influence with government officials, fostering a close friendship with Miguel Alemán Valdés who was made president of Mexico in 1946.

²⁴³ de Lara Rangel, María Eugenia *Dolores Olmedo Patiño* Museo Dolores Olmedo 2003 p.55

²⁴⁴ Elena Poniatowska, 'He tenido tanto he querido', *La Jornada* August 2002
http://www.lainsignia.org/2002/agosto/cul_020.htm

Olmedo now had vast funds to pour into building an art collection. Her passion for painting was strengthened by her rekindled friendship with Diego Rivera, who painted Olmedo wearing traditional dress in his 1955 portrait, *La Tehuana*. Their bond was not a straightforward relationship between patron and artist, and involved many letters expressing gratitude and unwavering support from both sides. When Rivera was eventually diagnosed with cancer, Olmedo ensured that he had access to the most advanced treatments available and invited him to convalesce at her house in Acapulco. Rivera encouraged her to begin collecting pre-Columbian artefacts, adding to her by now remarkable collection of art featuring work by Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), Russian-born painter and Rivera's former wife Angelina Beloff (1879-1969) and American-Mexican artist Pablo O' Higgins (1904-1983), as well as a substantial number of paintings by Rivera himself - Olmedo purchased ten of his paintings in 1956 alone. Despite her appetite for Kahlo's art, the two women were not close, possibly due to the inconclusive nature of Olmedo's long-term friendship with Rivera.

Olmedo loaned works from her collection to temporary exhibitions within Mexico and abroad, lending major pieces by Rivera to his retrospectives at the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg in 1978, the Rufino Tamayo Museum in Mexico City in 1983 and at the Detroit Institute of Art in 1986. Her biographer María Eugenia de Lara Rangel describes how '[Olmedo] lent work by both Frida and Diego to the Venice Biennale. In reciprocity, the Center for the Arts and Culture of Italy sent thirty-four works by the most celebrated Venetian painters of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries for display in Lola's museum'²⁴⁵. This particular exhibition took place in 2002, the year that Olmedo died. She remained the museum director until her death. One of the most decisive parts of Olmedo's legacy was her campaign for Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco to be recognised by the government as 'historic monuments'. This meant that their creative output would be protected by the state and aimed to prevent further export of their works abroad. This status was granted to both artists in 1959. The Museo Dolores Olmedo remains privately owned and operated by the Olmedo family trust, which is also responsible for Casa

²⁴⁵ María Eugenia de Lara Rangel, *Dolores Olmedo Patiño* (Museo Dolores Olmedo, 2003), 67

Azul (also known as the Frida Kahlo Museum) and Museo Anahuacalli (designed by Diego Rivera to house his extensive collection of pre-Hispanic pieces and opened to the public in 1964). The trust also holds the intellectual rights over both artists' works and their archives. Alongside the permanent collection, Museo Dolores Olmedo puts on temporary exhibitions showcasing work by Mexican contemporary artists such as Flor Minor (b.1961) and international artists who have strong links to Mexico City, such as Irish painter Phil Kelly (1950-2010). More recently, the museum is working with internet search engine Google as part of an art project to create an online platform through which the public can access a museum's entire archive. This interactive service allows users to create and share their own selection of work from the museum, encouraging them to explore the collection with the aim of 'curating' a personalised online exhibition.

Dolores Olmedo had a very clear purpose for her museum: to facilitate the public display of an important collection of modernist Mexican art. She regarded her acquisitions as an exercise in conservation, allowing the works to remain in Mexico on a permanent basis in a single location. Museo Dolores Olmedo is a kind of national archive, devised by a collector who focused on a precise selection of artists rather than building a comprehensive survey of twentieth century Mexican art history.

The Gelman Collection

Within this chapter on the most prominent collectors of twentieth century art in Mexico, are all individuals apart from husband and wife Jacques (1909-1986) and Natasha Gelman (1912-1998). Not only is their collection regarded as one of the most significant private holdings of twentieth century Mexican art, it is also one of the most well-travelled, having toured museums all over the world. I am including the Gelman collection in my research as it is one of the finest of its time, characterised by a genuine passion for art created in Mexico and abroad, and by collectors who cherished their relationships with the artists whose work they acquired. They are of interest to my research project because they were determined not just to accumulate, but to share their collection with the public.

Compared to the other twentieth century collections profiled in my thesis, the Gelman collection is unusual in that it features several portraits of Jacques and Natasha, in commissions of some of the most influential artists of the time, including Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Rufino Tamayo. Nearly seventy years after these paintings were produced, the spectator is drawn into a conversation not just with the artist and his image but also the patron. What differentiates the Gelman collection further is its thwarted efforts to find a permanent home. As I have indicated in the introduction to my thesis, it is not uncommon for issues of funding or politics to hinder the foundation of a private museum, yet the Gelmans' struggle to establish a space where their collection would be on permanent public display has resulted in a prolonged legal battle. The dispute remains unresolved.

Jacques Gelman was born in St Petersburg in 1909. He set up an international film distribution company, a job which involved travel to Mexico, and in the late 1930s he met Natasha Zahalka, an immigrant from Czechoslovakia, while she was travelling in Mexico City. The Gelmans were both Jewish and the war prevented them from returning to Europe, so they remained in Mexico and became Mexican citizens, marrying in 1941. Jacques Gelman found considerable wealth in producing movies starring the popular comic, Mario Moreno, known as 'Cantinflas'. Together they ushered in the new wave of Mexican cinema, which brought them both recognition and a substantial fortune; Jacques Gelman's success in the film industry enabled him to accumulate a remarkable collection of both European and Mexican modern art at a time when there were very few collectors in Mexico. In addition to the portraits of the Gelmans themselves, the collection also includes self-portraits of artists whom the Gelmans befriended during the creative boom in Mexico following the Second World War. There are a total of twelve works by Frida Kahlo, including her highly prized *Self-Portrait with Monkeys* (1943). The largest number of works in the Mexican collection (29 of 98) are by abstract painter Gunther Gerszo (1915-2000). Works were acquired directly from the artists as well as from galleries and auction houses, and although the collection features important works from the Cubist period through to the neo-Mexicanist art of the 1980s, the Gelmans did not propose for their collection to be representative of a specific era in art history, Mexican or otherwise. They intended for their selection of works to serve as an extension of their taste and an

expression of their love of painting.

At the time, it was unusual for an art collector to enlist the help of an independent advisor, yet in the late 1970s the Gelmans developed an important relationship with Robert R. Littman, an American curator who became a trusted friend of Mrs Gelman, particularly in the later years of her life. Littman had abandoned a career in law to become director of the Grey Art Gallery in New York, and it was during his travels to co-ordinate an exhibition on Frida Kahlo that he made connections in the Mexican art world. Soon after relocating from the United States to Mexico City, Littman was made director of the Tamayo Museum in 1981, a post he held until 1986 whereupon he moved to the Centro Cultural / Arte Contemporáneo (CC/AC), a private art space funded by Fundación Televisa. In 1992 CC/AC housed the first exhibition of works from the Gelman collection. Littman continues to serve as the President of the Vergel Foundation, which oversees the Mexican Collection for the Gelman estate²⁴⁶. As I detail in the Part Two of my thesis, it is now very common for art collectors to engage the services of one or more experts to develop their acquisition strategy - for the purposes of creating a cohesive, rounded collection or simply to provide reassurance from an art world professional - yet this was not a widespread practice until the end of the twentieth century, when private and corporate art collections in Mexico adopted more professional structures.

Following Jacques' death in 1986, Natasha continued to acquire contemporary works to add to the permanent collection until she died in 1998. By the time of her husband's death, the couple had two quite separate collections: one of modern European masters, which was kept in New York, and one of paintings and drawings by the 20th century's most prominent Mexican artists, which was on display in Cuernavaca in Mexico. Their European art collection was eventually donated to Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, who subsequently put on a 'blockbuster' exhibition in 1990 featuring paintings, drawings and sculptures by Pierre Bonnard, Marc Chagall, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró and Fernand Léger, all of which came from their permanent collection. Mexican

²⁴⁶ 'The Passion Behind the Gelman Collection', *Seattle Post* 16.10.2002
<http://www.seattlepi.com/ae/article/The-passion-behind-the-Gelman-Collection-1098553.php>

cultural officials were reportedly disappointed with this decision, as Jacques Gelman had lived and made his fortune in Mexico. The Gelmans response was that as they had always displayed their European paintings in their New York residence, and believed that they should be kept in the same city. For the purpose of my research, I will focus on their collection of Mexican art, which is a separate entity.

For a brief period, part of the collection of Mexican art was housed in the Muros Museum in Cuernavaca - the town where the Gelmans lived - but in 2008 due to legal issues Littman left Mexico and as conservator of the art collection, took it with him. The Muros Museum closed down and is yet to reopen. A investigatory report in the *New York Times* points out that in 1993 Mrs Gelman wrote a Mexican will that bequeathed the Mexican collection to Robert R. Littman. He established the Vergel Foundation to oversee the collection, which travelled to museums around the world. 'Mr Littman used the fees from those shows to triple the size of the collection, filling gaps that he said Mrs Gelman had identified and adding pieces by younger contemporary artists'²⁴⁷. In 2004 he found a temporary home for the collection in a museum set up by the retailer Costco and its Mexican partner in Cuernavaca, where Mrs Gelman had a house and spent most of her final years. 'But two years ago a cousin of Mrs Gelman who had been fighting for a greater share of her estate brought his legal battle to Mexico City. The cousin, Jerry Jung, hired a team of lawyers who have used a technicality in Mexican law to mount a challenge to Mr Littman's control over the collection'²⁴⁸. One of the lawyers, Francisco Fuentes Olvera, bought the succession rights to Mrs Gelman's Mexican estate for \$20,000 from her half brother, Mario Sebastian, in 2007 just before he died. The transaction would give the lawyer the right to any part of the estate that was not clearly left to somebody else. The matter was taken to court and a lengthy legal battle ensued, including the Mexico City prosecutor opening a criminal investigation of Mr Littman's handling of the estate. Jung's legal team claimed that they were not interested in the paintings for what they are worth, rather 'This is a patrimony of the Mexican people'. In present day, the avoidance of this kind of legal and bureaucratic labyrinth can be a motivation for collectors to establish their own exhibition spaces while

²⁴⁷ Elisabeth Malkin, 'In Mexico, an Ownership Fight Sends an Art Collection into Hiding', *The New York Times*. 26.11.2008

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

they are still alive, in order to prevent the collection from being divided up between parties who may have no interest in preserving its legacy.

The report in the *New York Times* writes: ‘Mr Littman, in an email message, wrote that Natasha Gelman “would be disheartened and furious at this turn of events which, given the instruction in her will, she clearly never meant to happen”. According to her will, she wanted Mr Littman to ensure that the collection be shown - in a private museum, because she distrusted the Mexican government - and that it stay together’²⁴⁹. Natasha’s Gelman’s wish was to have it installed permanently in a Mexican museum. ‘She said that would be my problem’ said Robert Littman, ‘The ideal solution is a private museum that is not attached to the government, but there isn’t one’²⁵⁰. One possibility had been the Cultural Center for Contemporary Art in Mexico City (CC/AC), which opened in 1987 and which Mr Littman headed. But the center’s owner, the Televisa television group, closed it in November 1998. Various alternative sites were suggested, amongst which were the National Museum of Art, which was in the process of being restored by a group of businessmen, an old customs house in the Caribbean port of Veracruz suggested by the local governor, Miguel Aleman, and a space in the historic heart of Mexico City being renovated by UNAM [University]. ‘The collection will not be donated, but rather will be on deposit’, Mr Littman said. ‘It’s a tremendous collection and it deserves a good home. I’m even willing to entertain suggestions from the government. We’re in no rush’²⁵¹. Fifteen years later, following several legal battles, a court recently upheld the bequest to Littman, and the exhibition began its extensive tour of North American and European museums. In addition to sharing a selection of masterpieces overseas, the itinerary was designed to raise funds in order for the Vergel Foundation to add works to the collection and support Mexican artists, as the Gelmans had intended.

Pierre Schneider, curator and long term friend of the couple, recalls that ‘Jacques liked to say that he was not the owner, merely the link that carried the art from the studio to the museum. They were

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Alan Riding, Arts Abroad *The New York Times* 24.03.1999

²⁵¹ Alan Riding, ‘Arts Abroad’, *The New York Times* 24.04.1999

<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/03/24/arts/arts-abroad.html>

always discussing where the paintings should end up. Their greatest anxiety was to keep the collection intact. The Gelmans were completely obsessed by art. They couldn't have children, but the collection became their child. I met them in 1968 and in the years that followed I never heard Jacques discuss movies. He never reminisced. He only talked about art²⁵².

In 2011 I visited the Pallant House Gallery in Chichester to see the touring exhibition 'Masterpieces from the Gelman Collection', museum director Stefan van Raay told me that it had been one of the most popular shows during his tenure. Diego Rivera's striking 1943 portrait of Natasha Gelman was a centrepiece of the exhibition. The subject is immortalized as a glamorous beauty, reminiscent of the film stars that had made Jacques Gelman his fortune early in his career. The calla lilies are recurrent image in many of Rivera's works, yet in this painting they are not associated with social struggle or indigenous culture. Rivera had achieved fame through his highly political murals, but was not opposed to building mutually beneficial relationships with wealthy socialites with an appetite for modern art. The same year, Rivera's wife Frida Kahlo also painted Mrs Gelman, but her interpretation was far less whimsical: despite the fur coat, expensively coiffured hairstyle and cluster earrings, the subject's expression is sombre and her gaze unforgiving. Five years later, another giant of Mexican modern art was commissioned to paint her portrait: Rufino Tamayo. The artist's somewhat restrained portrayal might have rendered his subject as insipid, yet behind the trappings of sophistication so clearly depicted in the portrait - a cocktail gown, an heirloom chair - shines a mysterious twist. The sitter's face confronts the viewer, but her gaze is absent. In 1948, Tamayo painted a portrait of the Mexican comic actor known as Cantinflas, whose highly successful films Jacques Gelman produced.

Jacques Gelman's triumphs in the film industry introduced him to many creative professionals. Through his connections in motion pictures he made the acquaintance of one of the most interesting artists in his collection: Gunther Gerzso (1915-2000), an award-winning set designer who worked on

²⁵² Ibid.

numerous Cantinflas films. He eventually became friends with the Gelmans, who encouraged him to pursue a career in fine art. Gerzso's paintings were abstract in style, and much loved by Mr and Mrs Gelman who bought and were gifted a huge number of his works. The artist was awarded the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship in 1973, and the Gelman collection boasts the largest single group of paintings by Gerzso in existence. The Gelmans encouraged his career as a professional artist, supporting him from the beginning and investing in avant-garde paintings that went against the grain of illustrative art popular in Mexico at the time. In 1950 David Alfaro Siqueiros, by now regarded as another colossus of the Mexican art world, was approached by the Gelmans to paint Mrs Gelman's portrait, in which the artist used an industrial paint that would become a signature technique of his later, more abstract works. Mexican painter Ángel Zárraga's 1945 portrait of Jacques Gelman positions the subject in his professional milieu of the film studio, surrounded by on-set lights and crew.

In addition to the host of commissioned portraits of the Gelmans, the collection is also individual in that it holds the greatest number of self-portraits of any of the major art collections at the time. The most considerable of these belong to Frida Kahlo's oeuvre: *Self-Portrait as a Tehuana (Diego on My Mind)* and *Self-Portrait with Monkeys*, both painted in 1943, are jewels in the Gelman art collection, and Jacques and Natasha became two of the artist's most crucial patrons towards the end of her life when her finances were less secure. Although Kahlo is as well-known for her bloody representations of personal injury and loss as for her self-portraits, the Gelmans were drawn to the latter, and chose to buy the artist's more meditative works over her uncompromising depictions of pain and trauma. This omission indicates that the Gelmans did not aspire to create a survey of Mexican art within their own collection, but rather build a collection which to them represented beauty, imagination and self-examination. These themes are presented via the self-portraits of some of the boldest personalities in Mexican history - proto-feminist Kahlo and her socialist husband Rivera - as well as portraits of the collectors themselves. The Gelmans collection does not represent a comprehensive catalogue of mid-twentieth century Mexican artists, yet it remains a fascinating archive of some of the most valuable modern art created in Mexico.

Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991)

This chapter presents the art collections of a construction tycoon, a physician and a film producer. Rufino Tamayo is unusual in this group in that he came from within the heart of the art world, and as a highly collectible artist he is better known for his own creative output than his private acquisitions. Yet his collection is one of the most important of the twentieth century in Mexico, and I am including Tamayo in this chapter as the genesis of his museum serves as an interesting example of the friction between private and public cultural enterprise at this time in Mexican history.

Tamayo is often associated with the masters of muralismo - Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros - yet after the Mexican Revolution he distanced himself from that particular style of painting in pursuit of a singular, less-politicized creative identity. Tamayo did not recognise the revolution as an entirely positive phenomenon and his proclamations on this matter made him a controversial figure, leading to accusations of disloyalty to his country and the political cause. Such censures did not lead to exile, yet Tamayo believed they stifled his creativity to the extent that he decided to move to New York in 1926. This North American metropolis was for many artists a stimulating environment where they could experiment with new ways of self-expression. New York's urban landscape and its fascination with Modernism also presented Tamayo with fewer of the restrictions he experienced on Mexican soil. Whilst working in the United States, Tamayo created works of art in all media and invented a print technique called 'mixografía' through which the surface of a picture could be given a much deeper texture. During this period he produced some of his most highly-regarded paintings: *Rufino and Olga* (1934), *Animals* (1941) and *Lion and Horse* (1942) and the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City put on a major retrospective of his work in 1948. Tamayo's commitment to freedom of expression meant that he was occasionally viewed with suspicion by those political figures who were determined to promote a specific cultural identity abroad. Despite the exhibition's popularity, Tamayo moved to Paris with his wife Olga in 1949, where they remained for the next decade. Again, he was not officially exiled and the artist returned to Mexico on several occasions, even painting a vast mural inside the Palacio Nacional in 1952. Titled *Birth*

of Our Nationality, it depicted an original national identity through abstract brushwork and the use of allegory and symbolism. Tamayo's conceptual representation differed greatly to the more narrative techniques of other Mexican muralists, and his message resonated in a very different way at the time.

These extended periods of living abroad in both the USA and Europe greatly benefited his career:

Tamayo was one of the first Mexican artists to be recognised outside of his own country, and had several solo shows in New York whilst residing there from 1926. After decades of living abroad, the artist and his wife returned to Mexico permanently in 1959. They built a small art museum in Oaxaca, Museo de Arte Prehispanico de México Rufino Tamayo, designed to house Tamayo's collection of pre-Hispanic art and archeological objects. There was an aggressive trade in Mexican cultural artefacts at that time, and Tamayo was eager to protect their status and keep as many of them as possible in Mexico. This museum was handed over to the State upon the artist's death.

The Museo Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City had a distinct agenda: opened to the public in 1981, it was established to accommodate the artist's substantial private art collection as well as put on temporary exhibitions. The artist was involved in its planning and architectural design and the museum's displays include work by seminal artists including Pablo Picasso, Robert Motherwell, Max Ernst and Francis Bacon. It is this museum that is the focal point of the inclusion of Tamayo in my grouping of pioneering Mexican art collectors of the twentieth century: Museo Rufino Tamayo was the first art major museum in Mexico built with private funding, namely the media empire Televisa and Grupo Alfa, the largest petrochemical company in the country. Although Museo Rufino Tamayo was the first museum in Mexico to be built without state governance, since 1986 it has been operated by the government-funded Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA) in conjunction with the Oglá and Rufino Tamayo Foundation.

Tamayo's original plans to persuade the Mexican government to fund the opening of the museum were thwarted, although he was granted the land on which the Museo Rufino Tamayo now stands. This piece of property was formerly a golf club inside the scenic parkland of Chapultepec in Mexico City. Tamayo wanted to create an edifice that would do justice not only to his collection, but also to its surroundings. He engaged the Mexican architects Abraham Zabludovsky and Teodoro González de León, who were

celebrated for their sculptural constructions. Together they designed a multipurpose space to house Tamayo's collection and open areas for lectures and workshops, and the museum was awarded the Mexico's National Art Prize in 1982.

Although the museum was initially not obliged to adhere to official cultural regulations - by which I mean the state-approved selection and display of art - there were other obstacles in its path. External funding created a problematic relationship between Tamayo and his benefactors. The issue of ownership was at times a point of contention, with the artist expressing disappointment²⁵³ with Televisa's attitude towards the collection. In a conversation with Mexico City-based curator James Oles in 2011, Tamayo was described to me as wanting to build 'a temple of modern art in which he'd be the only Mexican'²⁵⁴. Under the directorship of Robert Littman (1981-1986) the museum experimented with exhibitions of art and design not pertaining to Tamayo's core art collection or indeed his individual works, which was a source of concern for the artist. Tamayo was determined that the museum should focus on ways to publicly display his own acquisitions and creations; he perceived this to be the primary ambition of the museum and regarded Littman's temporary exhibitions (which included Japanese design and a survey of European furniture-makers) to be extraneous to its original function. At the end of Littman's tenure, Televisa consented to hand over the administration of the museum to INBA, placing Museo Rufino Tamayo back under the government's control.

This transfer of authority represented a new chapter in the museum's history. Although Tamayo maintained his involvement via his own collection, in 1988 the museum's new director, María Teresa Márquez, introduced a bold new program of exhibitions featuring mid-career and up-and-coming Mexican artists such as Gabriel Orozco (b.1962) and Minerva Cuevas (b.1975). This proved a highly successful initiative with two significant outcomes: the museum became a much more dynamic entity, capable of reaching out to a younger generation whilst cultivating a stronger relevance to both local and

²⁵³ Roberto Ponce, 'Reabre sus puertas el Museo Tamayo en Chapultepec' *Proceso* 28.08.2012
<http://www.proceso.com.mx/318120/reabre-sus-puertas-el-museo-tamayo-en-chapultepec>

²⁵⁴ Email correspondence with author 17.04.2012

global audiences. The consequences of creating a distance between a ‘collection museum’ and acquiring or displaying new works of art are hazardous: the museum makes itself vulnerable to accusations of stagnation or even vanity. It becomes a dormant archive, holding intrinsic value yet risking its connection to modern visitors who seek a more vibrant and compelling museum experience. Museo Rufino Tamayo continued to develop its resources, opening an internet-linked study room in 2000 which enabled visitors to discover more about the museum and its contents online. Under the directorship of Ramiro Martínez (2002-2009) the museum expanded its exhibition program to include prominent international artists, in keeping with the tastes and interests of the museum-going public. In recent years, architect-designed extensions have been added to house the burgeoning collection. These building projects were privately funded by Mexican businessman Carlos Hank Rhon and businesswoman Angélica Fuentes Téllez. An additional auditorium was financed by Mexican film producer Moisés Cosío, who runs his own separate contemporary art foundation called Alumnos47 (profiled in the following chapter of my thesis).

In the foreword to the museum’s book *Maestros del arte contemporáneo en la colección permanente del Museo Rufino Tamayo*, published in 1997, INBA director Gerardo Estrada describes the Museo Rufino Tamayo as a landmark in Mexico City, but above all ‘a reference to the artistic and cultural lives of Mexicans’²⁵⁵. This lavishly illustrated catalogue of the finest works in the museum’s permanent collection features paintings by giants of modern art such as Pablo Picasso, Mark Rothko and Joan Miró, works by Mexicans Francisco Toledo and José Luis Cuevas, as well as important pieces by highly regarded international artists such as Wifredo Lam and Graham Sutherland. There is a carefully-considered balance of local and foreign artists within the collection, evolving from the tastes of Rufino Tamayo as a collector and placing works by Mexican artists within a global art historical narrative. Despite its historical disputes and complications, Museo Rufino Tamayo serves as one of the best examples so far of how a museum can successfully combine both private initiative and public governance.

²⁵⁵ Gerardo Mosquera, *Maestros del Arte Contemporáneo en la colección permanente del Museo Rufino Tamayo* (Américo Arte Editores INBA, 1997)

It seems that key to an auspicious collaboration is a willingness for the collector to understand when and how to participate with established museum professionals such as directors and curators. Also fundamental to a collection's maturation over time is its active patronage of a younger generation of artists. This responsibility can be mediated through a variety of channels beyond a direct acquisition: creating residencies for artists, funding art prizes and using the museum space to provide a platform for the artist's visibility. Despite previous and actual controversies of funding and ownership, Museo Rufino Tamayo remains at the forefront of contemporary art in Mexico. During my visits to ZonaMaco, the country's largest contemporary art fair, the museum was a cornerstone for social and creative events related to the expo and clearly embraced its role as one of the more well-established museums in the city. Recent curatorial programmes have invited artists as well as external museum professionals (including Raimundas Malasaukas and Magnolia de la Garza) to 'explore the history of the collection from a contemporary perspective'²⁵⁶. Museo Tamayo also has its own online journal, featuring videos of studio visits with local artists and essays by 'writers in residence'. The museum's development of cross-channel content helps to keep the institution both dynamic and relevant, and is testament to its commitment to a younger generation of art enthusiasts.

One of the main frustrations voiced by today's generation of contemporary art collectors is the bureaucratic process that can underline any public-private enterprise. There can exist a deep-rooted suspicion of official involvement in creative programmes, relating to a lack of transparency in the relationship or a wariness of interference. This friction is examined in the third chapter of Part One: Developmental Challenges. In many ways, Tamayo and his generation were more entitled to feel distrustful of government supervision of the arts: for many Mexicans who lived through the post-revolutionary society of twentieth century, public art meant looking at a government-endorsed message. The state was associated not only with the production of art, but also its display. Decades later, the politically-charged murals of the 1930s are still recognised as one of the most important periods in

²⁵⁶ Gabriela Jauregui, 'Mexico City Report', *Frieze Magazine* 01.01.2011
<http://www.frieze.com/article/mexico-city-report>

Mexican art history. These vast painted chronologies continue to resonate around the globe as a quintessentially Mexican means of creative self-expression and their powerful narratives remain on the walls of some of the most important public buildings in the country. As such, it can prove difficult to disconnect public art from urgent political statement.

A modest culture of collecting art had evolved amongst the cultural elite in Mexico over the twentieth century, yet the reasons why I have identified Dolores Olmedo, Rufino Tamayo, Carrillo Gil and Jacques and Natasha Gelman as the key figures in this pursuit are twofold: their commitment to the acquisition and presentation of modern art as well as their devotion to fostering relationships with artists of their own and younger generations. I believe it is these qualities which are echoed by the most dynamic contemporary art collectors in Mexico in the twenty first century. Although these are the traits which unite the men and women collectors at the core of my research, each one has his or her own process. The new rank of art collectors do not experience the same external pressures as their predecessors, yet are presented with a different and equally problematic set of obstacles which can be political, social and cultural.

Orbiting this selection of mid-twentieth century art collectors was a small but important assembly of men and women whose careers were focused on the commercial, academic or political articulation of the visual arts in Mexico. This group forged professional relationships with collectors and existed in the same cultural milieu, frequently advising on the development of private art collections and even guiding their orientation. Much like Mexico's *agentes culturales* of today, many of these art world professionals had an informal relationship with collectors that would have evolved from pre-existing social connections. As collections grew and investing in art became a more focused pursuit, however, these relationships often matured into a more structured communication. Similarly, as Mexico's art market evolved, it became popular for collectors to formally engage the services of independent curators, archivists and advisors. My selection criteria for this group of preeminent arts professionals relate to their

influence on the visibility of Mexican art, and their efforts to stimulate a culture of collecting in a country without a strong tradition of private investment in art.

The group is dominated by Fernando Gamboa (1909-1990), a man who dedicated his career to promoting Mexican art both at home and overseas. He pursued a multifaceted ‘portfolio’ career that simultaneously embraced the responsibilities of cultural official, curator and museum director at a time when it was unusual to do so. Gamboa is particularly relevant to my research because of his involvement with art collectors: he assisted in their acquisitions strategy and collaborated with Carrillo Gil on his plans to establish a new museum to house to his private art collection; there is also a room inside the Museo Dolores Olmedo dedicated to Gamboa in recognition of his achievements. As one of Mexico’s most committed promoters of modern art, Gamboa was appointed to oversee travelling exhibitions to North America and across Europe. He was a founder member of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA) in 1947 and named commissioner of the Mexican Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1950, where he presented works by Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros and Tamayo. Collector Carrillo Gil wrote that Gamboa’s exhibitions across Europe had been ‘so successful... that it will be practically impossible to accept all the offers from other countries to put on this display of Mexican art’²⁵⁷. It is important to remember that Gil was invested of course, as one of the primary collectors who loaned pieces for the touring exhibitions. Collector Kurt Stavenhagen, who settled in Mexico after fleeing Germany during the Second World War, owned most of the pre-Hispanic artefacts that were included in Gamboa’s itinerant exhibitions of Mexican art. Gil believed that these grand expositions ‘have opened the door for us to be treated with cultural equality with the most cultured countries on Earth, and through those doors we have distanced ourselves from the way in which we were regarded, until very recently, which was as a backward and uncivilised country’²⁵⁸. Here we see a strong rapport between collector and *agente cultural*, whose shared objectives and genuine passion for art is intended to benefit not only those personally connected with the work but society in general. This kind of philanthropic ambition was relatively unusual at the time, and

²⁵⁷ Alvar Carrillo Gil, ‘El arte mexicano en el mundo. Próxima meta: Moscú’, *México en la Cultura* supplement, *Novedades México*, 10.08.1958 [Translation RR]

²⁵⁸ *Ibid* [Translation RR]

out of all of the mid-twentieth century collectors I refer to in this chapter, Gil's aspirations for his own art collection mean that he resonates strongest with Mexico's most compelling contemporary collectors of today.

Gamboa was progressive in his attitude towards what is now described as the 'accessibility' of art: he believed it was important to decentralize urban museums away from the seat of the cultural élite, and in 1951 built a new museum (Galería José Clemente Orozco, re-named Galería José María Velasco in 1962) in the poor, unfashionable district of Peralvillo in Mexico City. In 1972 Gamboa was made director of the Museo de Arte Moderno (MAM), and two years later published *Artes Visuales*, a magazine associated with the museum that focused on modern art in Latin America. Gamboa was also responsible for overseeing the sale of Carmen and Alvar Carrillo Gil's art collection to the state in 1974, and its subsequent installation in Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil the following year. Towards the end of his life, Gamboa took on the role of director of cultural development at Banamex bank (1983-1990), signalling the move towards the corporate world's involvement in the visual arts that would expand rapidly in the 21st century. Whilst employed by Banamex, Gamboa edited twenty books on art²⁵⁹.

His influence continues into the 21st century: Guayaba Press, an independent publishing house based in Mexico City, will issue a series of books based on Fernando Gamboa in the Autumn of 2015. The publications in the first volume aim to 'activate' Gamboa's archive of texts and photographs, paying particular attention to his presence at the 1973 coup d'état in Chile, subsequent chapters will invite contemporary artists, curators and critics to respond to the archive with the intention of creating an exchange between 1970s cultural politics and Gamboa's unrealized aspiration to create a museum space where critical discourse was encouraged. The second volume of Guayaba's books on Gamboa will focus on his role as an exhibition designer and author. Fundación Jumex - one of the key private art collections in my research - made use of Gamboa's vast archive in 2013: *Las Ideas de Gamboa*²⁶⁰ was a three-part

²⁵⁹ *Fernando Gamboa, un futurista del arte* Informador, Agosto 2012
<http://www.informador.com.mx/cultura/2009/128484/6/fernando-gamboa-un-futurista-del-arte.htm>

²⁶⁰ *Las ideas de Gamboa*, Fundación Jumex, 19.11.13 - 30.03.14
<http://www.fundacionjumex.org/es/exposicion/las-ideas-de-gamboa>

exhibition co-produced by the Promotora Cultural Fernando Gamboa, accompanied by an event program featuring screenings and debates. The project was curated by Mauricio Marcin and its objective was to illustrate how Gamboa strived to professionalise the study and practise of museography in Mexico.

Four years previously, the Museo Mural Diego Rivera in Mexico City put on an exhibition that paid homage to Gamboa's life with particular attention to his abortive attempt to present a selection of Mexican paintings in Bogotá in 1948. Gamboa had travelled to Colombia for the 9th Pan-American Conference for the purpose of displaying Mexican art to the international visitors at the trade summit, a project commissioned by president Miguel Alemán Valdés and designed to showcase a modern Mexico arising from twenty years of violence and economic recession. It was hoped that *Obras Maestras* would be a blockbuster show that provided an optimistic new context for Mexico. However, extreme political unrest (known as 'El Bogotazo') following the assassination of presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on 9th April threw Bogotá into turmoil. When it became clear that the public riots were advancing towards the city's Palacio de Comunicaciones, where Gamboa had stored the artworks to be installed in his exhibition, he entered the building for fear of it being sacked by protesters. The unopened crates included over 100 paintings by Mexican painters including José Velasco, Diego Rivera and Joaquín Clausell, and were safely transported back to Mexico as a result of his intervention. This anecdote sealed Gamboa's reputation as a national hero and was reported with dramatic flourish ('he covered himself in a Mexican flag before walking through flames to rescue the paintings'²⁶¹) in the Mexican newspapers. He would find himself in similar circumstances twenty five years later, in Santiago de Chile: days after the inauguration of an exhibition of Mexican paintings at the capital's Museo de Bellas Artes, the Chilean president Salvador Allende was assassinated. Once again, Gamboa succeeded in repatriating the art to Mexico and escaped Pinochet's regime. Once more the hero, Gamboa was given a very deliberate platform by the Mexican government whose political officials recognised that he was able to communicate the country's cultural renaissance to audiences all over the world; a message that was an

²⁶¹ Source: <http://www.cultura.gob.mx/noticias/museos-galerias-y-arquitectura/1822-fernando-gamboa-salvo-mas-de-130-obras-del-patrimonio-cultural-de-mexico-durante-el-bogotazo-de-1948.html>

important part of the country's post-Revolutionary regeneration and its determination to be viewed on equal footing with United States and Europe.

Gamboa's carefully planned Bogotá exhibition was never realised, although owing to his carefully compiled register of where the works came from, the Museo Mural Diego Rivera was able to re-stage his selection 61 years later. Private collections including the Soumaya and Carrillo Gil were able to loan sufficient paintings and drawings for the museum to reconstruct Gamboa's exhibition for the first time since *El Bogotazo*. *Fernando Gamboa, El Arte del Riesgo* opened on 27th August 2009 and honoured its subject as the 'father of museum studies' in Mexico. Art historian Carlos Molina described Gamboa as being responsible for 'implementing a framework which established a deep and historic continuum of art, a national spirit, over the centuries'²⁶². This revival of Gamboa's planned exhibition was displayed in a state-owned building, which is interesting because it demonstrates a public recognition of his judgment that was previously lacking: although Gamboa's touring presentations were government-sponsored, the state actually acquired very few of the works he selected for display, preferring to purchase murals whose didactic message chimed with the official cultural position. That is, works which contained a strong socio-political narrative that reinforced Mexico's independence. This was an unfortunate oversight, as highlighted in an essay by Carlos Monsiváis in *Beyond the Turnstile - Making the case for museums and sustainable values*: 'The federal or state governments could have easily purchased major first-rate collections; this did not happen... Pressure was not brought upon museum administrators to acquire international twentieth century paintings [...] by Diego Rivera, Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, Frida Kahlo, María Izquierdo, Agustín Lazo, Juan O'Gorman, and so on [...] The persons in charge of acquisitions were still guided by the idea that there is no point in purchasing a painting if many viewers have already seen it'²⁶³. Monsiváis also states that government officials did not

²⁶² Carlos Molina, 'Fernando Gamboa y su particular versión de México', *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, Volúmen XXVII, número 87, 2005
<http://www.analesiiie.unam.mx/index.php/analesiiie/article/view/2194/2771>

²⁶³ Carlos Monsiváis, 'Museums (A Rapid View of Guided Tours): the Ruins of the Future Should Be in Shop Windows', *Beyond the Turnstile: Making the Case for Museums and Sustainable Values*, eds. Selma Holo and Mari-Tere Álvarez (AltaMira Press, 2009), 69

expect museum audiences to increase over the course of time, an assessment which illustrates the inflexibility of the state's cultural perspective at the time.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that towards the end of the twentieth century and moving into the current day, independent initiatives became increasingly popular with collectors who were frustrated by such rigid attitudes. 'The museographer Gamboa was putting something specific into practice - the idea that the art community would receive a boost if *the state* highlighted the quality of the artists. But the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Education disregarded this notion'²⁶⁴. It was decades after Gamboa proposed a symbiotic relationship between public museums and contemporary art that the state took on a more active role. In the interim period, several private collectors have taken the matter into their own hands and founded museums autonomously, unrestricted by state indifference or funding issues. I am especially interested in this group of collectors and my research examines the journey of these private art collections from their inception to their eventual public display. In the space of two generations, there has been a marked transformation in the way in that contemporary art is accessed by the Mexican public and I believe Gamboa is largely responsible for this development. His conviction that contemporary art should be considered an intrinsic part of a country's cultural heritage was visionary.

In 1969, Gamboa was selected by collector Carrillo Gil to help put together initial plans for a private museum dedicated to Gil's collection of modern art. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil eventually opened in 1974 under full state ownership, yet Gamboa laid the foundation for a new generation of museum professionals who work closely with collectors in order to produce compelling exhibitions of contemporary art in accessible spaces. Gregorio Luke, former Director of the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach and former Consul of Cultural Affairs of Mexico in Los Angeles, draws on Gamboa's commitment to the idea of art for all in his essay *Creating Cultural Bridges*: 'The most important mission of a museum' said Fernando Gamboa, 'is to become an active part of the life of the community. We must stimulate the imagination of the public so that they can enjoy and recreate works of art. Museums should transform our artistic legacy into popular participation. We must

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 70

fight against the idea that museums are elitist. We need to demonstrate that museums are a way of knowing and recognising each other'²⁶⁵. This was a progressive philosophy in a country where there was no discernible culture of philanthropy in contemporary visual arts. The concept of an artistic legacy excluded abstract and more alternative modern and contemporary art until very recently, and my case studies suggest that this adjustment is a direct result of the efforts of private art collectors and independently-funded programs and foundations.

Miguel Covarrubias (1904-1957), a Mexican artist and art historian, frequently worked with Gamboa on his touring exhibitions. Covarrubias left Mexico in 1924 and moved to New York, where he became famous for his caricatures and illustrations. His award-winning satirical drawings of high-profile politicians and artists were featured in *The New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair*. In 1933, Covarrubias was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship which enabled him to travel to Southeast Asia and write his most famous book, *Island of Bali*, published in 1937. This anthropological survey featured many of the author's own illustrations, paintings and photographs, accompanied by artwork from Balinese artists. Upon his return to Mexico City Covarrubias was appointed artistic director of Palacio Nacional de Bellas Artes. He continued his studies in ethnography, replacing Balinese society with Olmec culture, and went on to publish several books on pre-Columbian art of Mesoamerica. Covarrubias made a significant contribution to Mexican art history through his own paintings and illustrations, as well as written research, but it is important to acknowledge how he and Gamboa campaigned for Mexican art to be recognised by the fellow artists, museum professionals and philanthropists all over the world. In this sense their crusades effected a diplomatic function, promoting the cultural heritage of Mexico's past as well as the sophistication of their country's modern art. Gamboa and Covarrubias performed similar roles, yet they differ in their aesthetic approach: Molinas points out that Covarrubias favoured an 'ethnographic' and regionalised display while Gamboa focused on a carefully curated exhibition of more contemporary

²⁶⁵ Carme Gaitán, 'Fernando Gamboa: Embajador del Arte Mexicano' *CONACULTA* 1991 accessed via <http://www.gregorioluke.com/>

works with more austere installation²⁶⁶. In this sense, Gamboa's methods were considerably more modern and in keeping with the avant-garde art he selected for his exhibitions. From time spent assimilating the art scene in New York, he had been exposed to a new style of display pioneered by Alfred J Barr at the Museum of Modern Art: grand interiors were increasingly replaced by neutral spaces which allowed paintings and sculptures to be viewed objectively, unburdened by their environment. Gamboa recognised that modern art required a different kind of spotlight, an enlightened approach which resonated with the artists represented in his exhibitions. These two men left an important legacy in the field of museum studies, paving the way for a more collaborative relationship between the next generation's collectors and curators. I would like to add to this duo an important art historian called Carla Stellweg²⁶⁷ (1958-) who started working with Gamboa in 1965. 'Gamboa invited me to return to Mexico and propose a project, the first Latin American art collection museum in Latin America. This was a logical extension of the MICLA²⁶⁸ experience, and was not only sorely needed but also timely, innovative, and exciting. Still, after several meetings it became clear that this was not feasible, mainly due to institutional budgetary constraints²⁶⁹. When this project failed to take flight, Stellweg and Gamboa instead channeled their energies into co-founding *Artes Visuales*, the first bilingual magazine about contemporary visual arts in Latin America. At the time of the publication of its first issue in 1973, Gamboa was director of the Museo de Arte Moderno. The magazine was subsidized by the museum as well as INBA, and enjoyed a successful run until its demise in 1982. Stellweg's observations on issues of funding point to the tensions between public and private funding of the visual arts: 'By the eighth issue we began to sell advertising in an attempt to secure independence from governmental and cultural politics. Nevertheless, in 1981, with a

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ I mention Stellweg in her capacity as a curator in Part One, Chapter Four: Mexico and the Global Art Market. In this chapter I focus on her relationship with Gamboa.

²⁶⁸ Movimiento de independencia cultural latinoamericano (Movement of Latin American Cultural Independence), a splinter group separated from El Museo Latinoamericano in New York, 1969.

²⁶⁹ Carla Stellweg, 'We are Here, They are There', *Guggenheim: Latin American Perspectives* 07.04.2015

change in government and an editorial shift from international to national cultural politics, the magazine was censored and its offices abruptly shut down²⁷⁰.

It is fascinating to see how resourceful this magazine needed to be in order to pursue its goal of creating a forum for critical exchange between artists and arts professionals within Latin America. Stellweg explains that her time working with Gamboa on his touring exhibitions enabled her to make introductions with people who would then be invited to contribute articles. One of their more innovative ideas was to survey their readers in the form of a detailed questionnaire inside the pages of the magazine, raising issues such as the categorisation of Latin American art long before that particular theme became a focus for debate in other publications. ‘Implicit was the issue of the status of collectors and collections of Latin American art’ Stellweg writes, anticipating the upsurge of private art collectors and the consequences of their endeavours to create a distinctive art historical narrative. Her perspective intimates the shift in cultural dynamic over the course of a decade: ‘Whereas while working with Gamboa I saw art in terms of Mexican art history, in the 1970s at *Artes Visuales* I could advocate for internationalism through a Latin American lens²⁷¹. Stellweg had an aptitude for negotiating private sponsorship, securing Mexican funding for the Rufino Tamayo exhibition at the Guggenheim in New York in 1979. She was also responsible for mediating full cooperation from the artist and his wife Olga. Gamboa supervised the installation, surrounding Tamayo’s paintings with a selection of germane pre-Columbian and folk art, presenting a rich visual exploration of ancient and modern.

Art historian Ana Garduño writes that ‘[Commemorating Gamboa] gives us an excellent opportunity to continue a necessary reflection on the current role of the art curator which represents immense power, and is in permanent tension with the artists, the museum directors, the critics and the public²⁷². Today, this relationship between collectors and curators is slightly more formalized: loans for exhibitions are generally secured through official channels, in keeping with the defined staff structure at

²⁷⁰ Carla Stellweg, *We are Here, They are There* Guggenheim: Latin American Perspectives 07.04.2015 <https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/map/we-are-here-they-are-there>

²⁷¹ Ibid

²⁷² Ana Garduño, *El primer centenario de Fernando Gamboa* Artes Visuales July 2009 (Translation RR)

most contemporary art museums. Nor is uncommon for collectors to publicly engage the professional services of a curator to advise them on their acquisition strategy. Although some collectors wear it as a badge of integrity or taste that they do not use advisors, working with museum professionals does not point to a lack of confidence in one's own judgment. As identified in Part One, collaborating with curators is usually indicative of a dynamic and committed collector who is actively seeking to keep his or her collection relevant and compelling.

Today, there is an energetic and influential sphere of art critics and academics in Mexico, inhabiting a vibrant milieu that hosts a small but significant publishing community as well as an internationally-recognised symposium on art theory, SITAC. In the mid-twentieth century the pool of art historians was much smaller, and owed much of its register to the work of Justino Fernández (1904-1972), a professional researcher at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) before working for the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas and becoming its director from 1955 to 1968. Fernández wrote on several periods of Mexican art history, including key texts on muralism²⁷³ and the work of José María Velasco²⁷⁴. In 1958 he published a guide to Mexican art²⁷⁵ which covered more than twenty centuries categorised into four periods: ancient indigenous art, Novohispanic, modern and contemporary. Designed to be a scholarly yet practical handbook to students and tourists, its pages were generously illustrated with photographs of archeological sites and religious buildings as well as images of important paintings and murals. The book was eventually translated into several languages and published worldwide. In 1969 he received the Premio Nacional de Ciencias y Artes from the Mexican government, and is recognised today as making a considerable contribution to Mexican art history in the twentieth century. Carrillo Gil's biographer Ana Garduño notes that he was inspired by Fernández's pronouncements on Mexican art²⁷⁶, yet the connections between art historians and collectors at that time

²⁷³ Justino Fernández, 'Contemporary painting and sculpture in Mexico', from *The New Architecture in Mexico*, (The Architectural Record, 1937)

²⁷⁴ Justino Fernández, *José María Velasco* (Gobierno del Estado de México, 1976)

²⁷⁵ Justino Fernández, *Arte mexicano de sus orígenes a nuestros días* (Editorial Porrúa, 1958)

²⁷⁶ Ana Garduño, *La pasión de un coleccionista* (CENIDIAP, 2002), 19
http://www.cenidiap.net/biblioteca/addendas/1E-1-La_pasion.pdf

were very modest compared to today, where alliances between collectors, curators and academics are seen as arterial networks.

Within my selection of art world professionals Inés Amor (1912-1980) stands out for two significant reasons: as a gallery owner she had a commercial stake in popularizing contemporary Mexican art, and she was also the only one who succeeded in developing a genuinely reciprocal arrangement with the Mexican government. Amor was director of the Galería de Arte Moderno (GAM), which was founded by her sister Carolina in 1935 before being handed over to Inés shortly afterwards; the gallery was intended to create a profit-making showroom for contemporary Mexican art that would also operate as a *salon* for artists and intellectuals. There were other galleries in Mexico at this time, notably the Galería Central de Arte²⁷⁷ run by Alberto Misrachi (who had such a close relationship with his client, Diego Rivera, that Rivera's wife Kahlo was godmother to his daughter). Amor and Misrachi did not behave competitively towards one another; in fact Misrachi acted as a kind of mentor and even bankrolled the refurbishment of Amor's gallery²⁷⁸ when it first opened. As the gallery grew, Amor was able to foster strong connections with government officials, often via her brother in law Dr Raoul Fournier, a civil servant. In its first years of business, Galería de Arte Moderno also received logistical support from the government, and enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with INBA, which despite intermittent disputes, were 'complementary institutions' according to art historian Garduño²⁷⁹. In 1942 the Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho paid a visit to Amor's gallery in order to meet some of the country's most successful artists, including Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, María Izquierdo, the historian Miguel Covarrubias and two founder members of the Seminario de Cultural Mexicano (SCM)²⁸⁰, Frida

²⁷⁷ Alberto Misrachi opened a book shop opposite the Palacio de Bellas Artes in 1933; by 1937 he had converted the basement into a gallery space. Source: Alberto Misrachi, *El galerista más grande que ha dado México*, *Diario Judio*, 23rd November 2013 <http://diariojudio.com/comunidad-judia-mexico/alberto-misrachi-el-galerista-mas-grande-que-ha-dado-mexico/12612/>

²⁷⁸ Teresa del Conde, *Una mujer en el arte mexicano: memorias de Inés Amor* (UNAM, 2006), 111

²⁷⁹ Ana Garduño, 'Inés Amor: la galería soy yo', *Abrevian Ensayos* (CONACULTA, 2013), 10 https://www.academia.edu/7092292/In%C3%A9s_Amor_La_galer%C3%ADa_soy_yo

²⁸⁰ SCM is an institution founded by Manuel Ávila Camacho on 28th February 1942, designed to promote scientific and creative enterprise within Mexico and abroad. SCM continues to exist and is responsible for

Kahlo and Antonio M. Ruíz 'El Corcito'. The purpose of his visit was to strengthen the connection between the state and its cultural ambassadors²⁸¹, as part of an integrated campaign to give Mexico's leading artists, philosophers and scientists greater visibility. SCM provided a platform which was intended to promote the country's cultural identity at home and abroad, while stimulating creativity through a calendar of intellectual events.

In addition to this considerable support from the state, Mexico's most famous artist was eager to help Amor position GAM as the country's preeminent gallery: Diego Rivera, (undoubtedly motivated in part by commercial rewards) became a kind of mentor. He approached Amor - whose background was in journalism, with no experience of working in a gallery - and offered to show her how to evaluate a work of art. Ana Garduño suggests that Rivera instructed Inés in the kind of language to which customers respond best, with the aim of creating a 'buzz' around the work she had for sale²⁸². Rivera's desire to associate with the cultural élite was deliberate: calculated social connections enabled him to demand higher prices as well as lucrative private commissions. He also understood the power of the cult of the artist, particularly for those who were willing to buy their way into bohemian society. This strategy attached a certain prestige to activity of buying art that enabled the surge in interest in building a private art collection. Investing in a drawing or painting now carried a certain social cachet, which performed as a catalyst in generating curiosity in a hitherto mysterious pursuit. This growth in the pool of art collectors exposed connoisseurs such as Carrillo Gil for their genuine passion and judgment.

Galería de Arte Mexicano became one of the best-known galleries in Mexico, representing internationally recognised names such as Frida Kahlo, Rufino Tamayo, Leonora Carrington and Gunther Gerzso while acting on behalf of critically acclaimed but less commercially successful artists such as Carlos Merida and Eduardo Tamariz. In a letter to Mexican painter Federico Cantú (1907-1989), dated 1940, Inés Amor wrote that 'Since moving to [the new premises] we have had hordes of people, from

organising exhibitions, concerts and symposia. The institution is subsidised by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP).

²⁸¹ Ana Garduño, 'Intelectuales + proyecto avilacamachista = Seminario de Cultura Mexicana', *Discurso Visual* (CENIDIAP, March 2013) <http://discursovisual.net/dvweb21/agora/agonofana.htm>

²⁸² Inés Amor: *La Galería Soy Yo*, Ana Garduño, *Abrevian Ensayos CONACULTA* p6

here and abroad. Here [in Mexico] things seem to be moving quickly: there are a lot of exhibitions, a great demand for paintings [...] My gallery is without question the centre of all of this [...] Finally Mexico is awake, people are coming to see my exhibitions and they are writing reviews in the newspapers! I had thirty two reviews for my last show'²⁸³.

Amor's ambitions for her gallery were industrious but localized; she was focused on widening her clientele in Mexico but did not feel she was able to compete with the star gallerists of New York, which was considered the art capital of the world at the time. The fast-paced global art market of today is not subject to the same limitations, but at the time Amor was justifiably very proud of what GAM represented and its legacy of nurturing the commercial success of Mexican artists in the initial stages of their careers. Journalists and art historians often remark upon Amor's meticulous cataloguing of the gallery's business records and correspondence²⁸⁴, creating an archive of valuable information from a transitional period in Mexico's art market while revealing the practices of the country's nascent collector class.

In Part One, Chapter Four of my thesis, I do not identify one individual gallerist as part of the group of influential *agentes culturales* who work closely with the current generation of contemporary art collectors. The reason behind this is because today's art market is an entirely different beast: independent galleries or 'spaces' have multiplied and represent a broad spectrum of talent, from emerging to well-established artists. The buying habits of serious collectors have also changed: works are increasingly acquired direct from the artist, at auction or from galleries' booths at art fairs; that is not to say that relationships between collectors and dealers are not meaningful - they are hugely important, particularly when building a collection - but Inés Amor held a uniquely influential position in Mexico at a time when collecting art was a much less common pursuit. The gallery's connections with government officials were symbolic of the political climate at the time; a twenty-first century gallerist - or indeed collector - would most likely be wary of aligning him- or herself with official cultural policy. One of the gallery's current

²⁸³ Letter from Inés Amor to Federico Cantú, 10 March 1940. *Archivo Histórico GAM*

²⁸⁴ James Oles, 'Colecciones disueltas: sobre unos extranjeros y muchos cuadros mexicanos, Patrocinio, colección y circulación de las artes', *Memorias del XX Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte*, (México UNAM, 1997) 627-628
http://www.esteticas.unam.mx/xx_coloquio_internacional_de_historia_del_arte

directors, Alejandra Reygadas de Yturbe, observes that '[GAM] brought together the then most important of Mexican artists, but it did not have a structure like today - marketing, a relationship with curators [...] it wasn't influenced by museums. The gallery always functioned in an intuitive way, by learning from the artists. [Amor] would sit down with Rivera and Orozco and ask them to tell her what they knew. They made decisions about the gallery, together'²⁸⁵. At that time there was no contemporary art 'scene' to speak of, although Yturbe describes Amor's salon-style *tertulias* as providing a space for artists and enthusiasts to 'discuss and exchange opinions about art and politics. On Wednesdays, artists would meet to sketch live models'²⁸⁶.

Today, Mexico's cultural landscape is very different: Mexican artists are represented by galleries all over the world, just as international artists feature on the inventories of galleries based in Mexico. A new culture of donations exists - the erstwhile absence of which was lamented by Gamboa, while employed at INBA, who had to ask the head of the Bank of Mexico for a charitable loan in order to rescue forty paintings by Velasco²⁸⁷ - and this practice steers an art world now familiar with independently-funded museums and sponsored exhibitions. Private patronage is an important reason why Mexico counts as one of the most enthusiastic participants in today's global art scene; Zona Maco, Mexico City's heavily-promoted contemporary art fair, is a celebrated fixture on the international art calendar and attracts galleries, museum directors and collectors from all over the world. As in any other country, this also operates on a superficial level: engaging with cultural events is now viewed as a

²⁸⁵ Interview with Mariana Pérez Amor and Alejandra Reygadas de Yturbe by Patricia Martín *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene* (Peeping Tom's Digest #2, 2011)

²⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁷ Ana Garduño, 'Coleccionismo y Patrocinio en el Siglo XX', *Discurso Visual* (date not shown) <http://discursovisual.net/1aepoca/dvweb09/art08/art08.html>

lifestyle, and philanthropy as a social pursuit. Yet in the midst of this whirl of auctions, fundraising galas and vernissage parties, there is a determined group of collectors who wish to share their collections with those whose access to fine art is limited. I am interested in examining their motivation and long-term objectives for such initiatives, and how creative collaborations frequently lie at the nucleus of their strategy. My research explores the ways in which these individuals display their art to the general public, with particular focus on those whose ambitions demonstrate an interest in social responsibility. In the following chapter of my thesis, I explore how these private initiatives are changing the way contemporary art is presented to the public in Mexico, and what the consequences of these private art museums might be for a country whose cultural development is in the international spotlight. A recurring theme in my research is the impact of private contemporary art museums on the collective cultural identity of Mexico, and what the recent proliferation of these spaces signifies in a country with such a rich cultural heritage.

This group of mid-twentieth century *agentes culturales* was united in their commitment to galvanizing collectors into sharing their art collections with a wider audience, and their allegiance in raising the profile of Mexican contemporary art within the art historical narrative. The men and women that I have identified in this chapter are responsible for inaugurating a new wave of aestheticism that propelled Mexican art into the limelight; a group whose aspirations are being fulfilled by the current generation of contemporary art collectors and their colleagues.

(ii) The New Generation

Eugenio López Alonso: Fundación Jumex

Eugenio López Alonso founded the Colección Jumex in 1998, and opened it to the public in 2001. The collection and its cultural foundation is now one of the largest in Latin America and contains over 2,600 works of art from Mexican and international contemporary artists, as well as a research library holding 6,000 books on visual culture. The collection is funded by Grupo Jumex, the largest fruit juice company in Latin America with López now at the helm; although nominally a corporate art collection, López is very much the face of Fundación Jumex and the driving force behind its development. The metamorphosis of his collection is one of the Mexican art world's most remarkable success stories and López is greatly responsible for the spotlight that now shines on contemporary art from this region. My research is concerned with what inspired López to turn a private passion into a significant cultural enterprise, creating a foundation which now donates millions of dollars to underwrite Latin-focused museum programs in the United States as well as provide extensive scholarships to study art in Mexico and abroad. López is recognised as one of the most important art collectors in the world, and the scale of his initiatives is appearing to have an impact on Mexico's cultural identity. Over the following pages I examine how Fundación Jumex has built such a strong reputation within a relatively short period of time, and the role of curators, directors and collaborators in its trajectory. Finally, I will explore the breadth of influence of the foundation on the recognition of private art museums as places of genuine research, communication and collaboration.

Eugenio López Alonso was VP of marketing at Jumex when he started to acquire works of art for his personal collection, focusing on Mexican artists. In 1995 he came to London and visited the Saatchi Gallery, one of the largest private collections in the UK. Owner Charles Saatchi is an influential collector and credited with launching the Young British Artist (YBA) phenomenon via an exhibition of

controversial pieces from his collection at the Royal Academy in 1997²⁸⁸. It was after visiting Saatchi's private gallery that López described how he now understood the ways in which art could be collected; it did not need to be bought and then displayed at home, but one could collect art and then create a public space for it. The seed was planted for the idea to create a collection that was equally ambitious in its scope, with the aim to place Mexican art within an international context: 'When I first started collecting I already loved art. I went to see Saatchi's collection, and the idea came to me. I was reading Marjorie Jacobson's *Art and Business*²⁸⁹ and another book, *Art at Work*²⁹⁰, about the Chase Manhattan collection. They were about art in the workplace. Then this further idea came to me: no one is doing this in Mexico. We have the company and the money'²⁹¹.

Over the same period of time in Mexico, Guadalajara-based contemporary art fair Arte EXPO was growing in popularity. López became good friends with Isabella Mora, who ran the collectors' programme for the fair. 'He followed her advice and started doing his homework, following up on what the art scene was doing outside of Mexico, looking beyond the frontier'²⁹², according to Mexico City-based art historian Patricia Sloane. She recalls how he used to buy compulsively, putting Mexican and international artists on the same level; 'Before this, Mexican artists were seen as inferior. Eugenio attended conferences, and bought direct from the artists'. An interview with *Forbes* magazine reveals another mentor: 'In 1993, while visiting a gallery in Beverly Hills, he met an art dealer called Esthella Provas whom he invited to become his art consultant. "She turned my casual interest into something real", he says'²⁹³. For a while they co-owned an art gallery in Los Angeles called Chac Mool – its name referencing pre-Columbian Mesoamerican sculpture - selling contemporary Latin American art. The business when López decided to focus on building a private collection in Mexico City.

²⁸⁸ *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* Royal Academy, 18th September - 28th December 1997

²⁸⁹ Marjory Jacobson, *Art and Business: New Strategies for Corporate Collecting* (Thames & Hudson, 1993)

²⁹⁰ Marshall Lee, *Art at Work: The Chase Manhattan Collection* (Dutton, 1984)

²⁹¹ Louise Nicholson, *Collectors and Collecting: Creating a Scene* Apollo Magazine December 2008 <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-191014964.html>

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ Forbes 2005 Collectors Guide: Mexican Medici <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2004/1227/162.html>

In 1998 López engaged the services of art historian and curator Patricia Martín, to help him shape the collection and strengthen its direction; ‘Patricia helped me clarify the concept of the gallery’²⁹⁴. He initially gave her a budget of \$100,000²⁹⁵ to buy specifically contemporary British art. This was the first of several highly productive collaborations that have made the Fundación Jumex the leading contemporary art institution in Mexico. Martín had recently returned from working in London, where she came into contact with pioneering gallerists including Jay Joplin, Sadie Coles and Maureen Paley. This exposure to the world of the Young British Artists made her realize ‘the lack of a good contemporary art collection, public or private, in Mexico, and the infrastructure supporting a sound art scene’²⁹⁶. Believing that the government would show no enthusiasm for building a national contemporary art collection, Martín was confident that the Jumex was capable of making a serious commitment to the process of collecting art. Both she and López agreed that it needed to be global, simultaneously promoting Mexican contemporary art and creating links with the art world abroad. The foundation would focus on more than its acquisitions and offer first-rate learning facilities for contemporary art, including a library, a world-class program of exhibitions, the sponsorship of academic scholarships and eventually its own independent museum space. The motivation for creating such a range of pursuits was due to the paucity of similar initiatives in Mexico at the time: ‘There were very few and only small contemporary collections, few curators, no art magazines, no government support and museums had very little funds’²⁹⁷, says Martín. The relatively underground contemporary art scene in Mexican soon evolved into a multidimensional creative and commercialised environment, the most explicit example being the success of Zona Maco, one of the biggest contemporary art fairs in Latin America. Gallery spaces, artist collectives and stands promoting independent cultural publications compete for visitors’ attention; to attend this fair is to witness an art scene in full swing, its participants and their transactions important enough to generate column inches in the international art press.

²⁹⁴ Adam Lindeman, *Collecting Contemporary* (Taschen, 2006), 193

²⁹⁵ Nicholson, *Collectors and Collecting: Creating a Scene*

²⁹⁶ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene* ed. Caroline Niémant (Peeping Tom’s Digest #2, 2011), 180

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 181

One of Martín's more progressive strategies involved inviting prominent curators from abroad to collaborate with Colección Jumex, through 'reinterpretations' of the artworks that would culminate in a temporary exhibition and accompanying lecture: 'Bringing a curator to do a show gave us the opportunity to put him in contact with academics, public institutions, do studio visits with artists, visit galleries; thus we used his or her stay in Mexico to maximize their being here in the best interest of many, not just Jumex'²⁹⁸. The idea was that broader exposure would benefit the country's art scene in general. This approach swiftly paid off, with curator residencies hosted by the foundation becoming sought-after positions. Participating curators have included Dan Cameron (founder and artistic director of the US Biennial), Jessica Morgan (curator at Tate) and Adriano Pedrosa (Sao Paulo-based curator and one of Art Review's 'Power 100'). This process of reinterpretation by outsiders is now part of the collection's identity, and prevents it from being limited to a single, collector-led narrative. Of equal relevance to Jumex's success was Martín's decision to display work by Mexican and international artists alongside each other. Martín's presentation of Mexican and non-Mexican contemporary art together was visionary for its time, and fulfilled the collection's objective of making a strong case for the new generation of Mexican artists: 'It was important to start breaking this "exoticization" that "Mexican art" held. Until then, the shows in which Mexican artists participated were only of Mexican artists; it was very difficult for people or specialists to see the works of art in this context, without a sense of foreignness and otherness'²⁹⁹. In 2008 the foundation collaborated with the Museo Nacional de Arte in Mexico City for a groundbreaking exhibition, *La invención de lo cotidiano*³⁰⁰. This show featured important works from both museums' archives, displayed alongside one another in order to present a kind of dialogue between classical art dating back to the 17th century and contemporary art from Mexico and all over the world. Parallels - and questions - were drawn between artists as diverse as Mexican muralist Jorge Gonzalez Camarena (1908-1980) and New York-based installation artist Jim Hodges (b.1957). Although the

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. 182

³⁰⁰ *La invención de lo cotidiano*, Fundación/Colección Jumex, Museo Nacional de Arte (MUNAL) November 2008 - March 2009

MUNAL had previously hosted exhibitions of contemporary art³⁰¹, this was the first exhibition to integrate so many works from the museum's permanent collection with pieces from a private collection of contemporary art. In an essay written for the exhibition catalogue, curator James Oles stated that 'these uncanny juxtapositions between collections, confrontational or not, shaped by recent critical discourse on renovating curatorial strategies, do promise to break the rules and generate new ideas'³⁰². The collection's installation in one of Mexico's most established art galleries was an important step in bringing contemporary art into the public domain.

Two years later in 2010, a selection of works from Colección Jumex went on display in the US for the first time: *Where do we go from here?* was exhibited initially at the Bass Museum of Art in Miami and then the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati. The exhibition featured work by both contemporary Mexican artists and their international peers, focusing on 'cross-collection dialogue: across generations and across geographies'³⁰³, and included works by Donald Judd, Jenny Holzer, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Minerva Cuevas, Ed Ruscha, Ugo Rondinone and many more. The title of the exhibition indicates a quest for self-reflection; the collection appears to be questioning how it can stay relevant, an issue which all art collections must address if they hope to continue to engage public curiosity.

To commemorate the exhibition in Cincinnati, the Mexican Consul Juan Solana attended the opening and described the role art plays in breaking through barriers. This was not just a cultural exchange, it seemed, but a political one: contemporary art as a facet of Mexico's new visual identity, and instrumental in the kind of 'soft diplomacy' outlined in my earlier chapter on museums. The exhibition's co-curator, Victor Zamudio-Taylor, was initially invited by López to be in charge of acquisitions and international promotion at Fundación Jumex. He describes his boss as a 'visionary' and a 'risk-taker'³⁰⁴,

³⁰¹ *En crudo* curated by Robert Littman, 1998; *El cuerpo aludido* by artist Karen Cordero, 1998; *Texturas, tonalidades y resonancias latinoamericanas: una lectura de la Colección FEMSA*, 2001; *Lugar (es): la urbe y lo contemporáneo: acervo artístico Fundación Televisa*, 2002.

³⁰² James Oles, *Barbarians at the Temple: Contemporary Art in the MUNAL 2008*

³⁰³ Roundtable at Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, September 2010.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epFgWmV6Emc>

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

pointing out that Rudolf Stingel and Gabriel Orozco (both of whom had pieces in the show) were relatively little-known artists when López bought their work. According to Zamudio-Taylor, *Where do we go from here?* presents three main themes found in Colección Jumex:

- Social anthropology: artists who look at urban structures and life in big cities; how that kind of life influences who we are as human beings
- Art about art: there are many works by artists who appropriate, copy or directly reference other works, or engage with the discourse of art history in a very specific way
- Language-based work: text within the image

In the roundtable discussion, Zamudio-Taylor stated that although a private collection is subjective, it also behaves as a kind of cultural index: ‘It is telling us about that culture, at that time. Alonso frequently says that he is interested in his collection being a kind of time capsule for urban issues - as well as taste - 10, 20 or even 30 years before’. The only time a collector’s subjectivity can become problematic, in his experience, is when a ‘creative kind of stubbornness’ comes into play. An example of this is an occasional need, described Zamudio-Taylor, to curb López’s enthusiasm for acquiring work by American photographer Louise Lawler, whose oeuvre is already heavily represented within the collection. *Where do we go from here?* was accompanied by an online project where visitors were invited to upload opinions and personal photos of the exhibition. This focus on the show’s interactivity - now commonplace in museums, but a relatively new concept at the time - extends the question in the exhibition title to the museum visitors. The exhibition was conceived to pose questions and engage debate, rather than present a neat and restrictive view of contemporary art. ‘It is wilfully designed to be ambiguous and non-didactic’, explained Zamudio-Taylor. ‘Like a collection, the show is inconclusive, in the best possible sense’³⁰⁵.

Until Museo Jumex opened in Mexico City in 2013, visiting the collection was only possible by

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

making an appointment and required a journey to the Jumex juicing plant on the Ecatepec industrial estate, 20km outside the capital. There was no ‘foot-fall’ to speak of - visitors were either curators or tourists making a special pilgrimage to the collection, or local art students doing the same. Despite a determined outreach program, Ecatepec was simply too inaccessible to attract the kind of visitors the collection was intended for. But the foundation flourished: Jumex sponsored Mexican students to do a masters degree in curating at Goldsmiths College in London, for example, and Mexican artists received financial assistance in putting on shows abroad, including participating in biennials. The foundation also supported exhibitions from overseas that would otherwise be unable to travel to Mexico, such as *How latitudes become forms: art in a global age*³⁰⁶ which was transferred from the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and an important exhibition of El Greco in the Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City³⁰⁷, and many works from Colección Jumex are loaned out to small regional museums whose access to contemporary art is limited.

López also has an important influence on other patrons and is directly responsible for stimulating a culture of collecting art in Mexico: former director of the Museo Tamayo de Arte Contemporáneo, Ramiro Martínez, explains that having López on board ‘makes other people join’³⁰⁸. José Kuri of Mexico City-based commercial gallery KuriManzutto says that López ‘is critical because he looked at Mexican art in an international way’³⁰⁹. Gregorio Luke, director of Los Angeles Museum of Latin American Art, has compared³¹⁰ López’s campaign to that of Eli Broad, who popularized contemporary North American art by buying several hundred important works in the 1980s. Fundación Jumex is an active sponsor in a variety of independent cultural initiatives, including Oficina para Proyectos de Arte (OPA), a Guadalajara-based arts organization, and also financed the construction of a wing of Mexico’s first public contemporary art museum, MUAC, which opened in 2008.

³⁰⁶ *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age* 9th February - 4th May 2003 Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

³⁰⁷ *El Greco: Domenikos Theotokopoulos 1900* Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes September - November 2009

³⁰⁸ Nicholson, *Collectors and Collecting: Creating a Scene*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*,

³¹⁰ Dirk Smillie, *Mexican Medici* Forbes 2005 Collectors Guide

In November 2013, Fundación Jumex opened a new space in the centre of Mexico City. Designed by David Chipperfield Architects, the building accommodates over 4,000 square metres of gallery space, offices and auditoriums - twice as much as the Ecatepec site - and places the collection in a much more accessible location. The new Director is Patrick Charpenel, a respected curator and collector in his own right. 'I see museums as laboratories for experiences and centres for research and education, and I consider the Jumex Foundation and Collection a platform'³¹¹, says Charpenel. The Foundation expects to receive 300,000 visitors each year, and runs extensive outreach programs to schools, prisons and local communities. These include workshops with teenagers from the Lomas de San Carlos neighbourhood in Ecatepec, a collaboration with artist Ricardo Caballero on developing art workshops for rehabilitation centres for men and women in Tepepan, gallery tours for senior citizens and production workshops for families of Grupo Jumex employees including photography, silk-screen printing and animation.

Charpenel's agenda is clear: 'We have the complete conviction that these are social projects that need everyone's interest. We also need to create these alliances so that the projects are better planned and have a bigger impact so they can go further, reach a broader audience and have a wider social penetration'³¹². Sustainability is another key focus of the foundation's initiatives and Charpenel is overseeing a creative project that involves using bio-digestors to provide energy for rural areas; another project involved artists Ana Gómez, Gabriela Galván and Andrián Monroy studying urban integration in the Ecatepec neighborhood. The director has referred to the foundation's potential as 'a vehicle for change'³¹³ and has developed on López's ambitions to connect with an audience outside of the urban environment. A significant advantage of privately-funded exhibition spaces, as indicated in the third chapter of Part One, is their ability to take risks with acquisitions and commissions. Unlike a publicly-funded institution, which is beholden to state-endorsed cultural policy, a private museum has the opportunity to display more politically-charged contemporary art. Jumex has embraced this freedom and

³¹¹ Leslie Moody Castro, 'Interview with Patrick Charpenel', *Fluent Collaborative* Issue 192 June 2012 <http://www.fluentcollab.org/mbg/index.php/interview/index/192/128>

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

has promoted artists whose work touches on controversial socio-political themes. A recent example is the foundation's collaboration with an artist collective called Superflex for exhibition called *The Corrupt Show and the Speculative Machine*³¹⁴, which questioned 'the complex relation between art and society' via 'confronting the global economic system' and 'destabilizing institutions [...] to inspire reflection on the possibilities of sociopolitical transformation'. López has commented on the paucity of funds available to artists whose work is deemed unconventional or sensitive: 'In Mexico, if you ask for money for an exhibition of 500-year old Pre-Hispanic art, it's very likely that 40 companies will sponsor it. But if you say that you're an artist who needs a trailer to leave on a busy street and document this act'³¹⁵, only very few people or companies will support you. In this sense, the foundation has taken these sorts of "risks", since it understands the driving force behind these kinds of ideas'³¹⁶. López was also faced with the challenge of creating a museum that was monumental, yet inviting. Contemporary exhibition spaces are often described as hostile and intimidating environments, yet the response to the new Museo Jumex building has generally been favourable: 'As sleek as the museum is, there was a very relaxed feel to the exhibition. It was as if one were walking through a park or a playground, taking in the scenery and occasionally interacting on a swing-set or sitting on a bench to think, observe or read'³¹⁷ observed one visitor. The building features natural travertine flooring (more usual in domestic interiors) and much of the exhibition space is visible from the outside, removing a barrier between the public and the art on display. At the museum's inaugural reception, architect David Chipperfield referred to the 'voiceless client', the common citizen, and the potential for a museum to have an impact on culture at street level'³¹⁸; it is too early to consider the repercussions of the new Museo Jumex on its environment but the proportion of space allocated to educational and social activities within the museum manifests a

³¹⁴ *The Corrupt Show and the Speculative Machine* Fundación Jumex, Ecatepec December 2013

³¹⁵ López is referring to artist Santiago Sierra, who used a Jumex truck for a performance piece in Mexico City, 1998

³¹⁶ Adam Lindemann, *Collecting Contemporary* (Taschen, 2006), 193

³¹⁷ Melinda Santillan, 'A Place in Two Dimensions: A Selection from Colección Jumex + Fred Sandback' *Zero One Magazine*, November 2013 <http://zero1magazine.com/2013/11/a-place-in-two-dimensions-a-selection-from-coleccion-jumex-fred-sandback/>

³¹⁸ Ballesteros, Mario *The Museum as Platform*, Domus Architecture Review December 2013

deliberate level of engagement with its audience.

Fundación Jumex's commitment to the promotion of contemporary art is threefold: a scheme dedicated to providing finance for independent creative projects, a separate department to support art historians and theorists, and finally a program of educational workshops and community-based events. Contemporary art and creativity is at the core of each enterprise, and despite the diverse range of the foundation's initiatives, López is aware that the collection is the nucleus of all activity: 'My goal was for Mexico to have a collection it could be proud of'³¹⁹, he has said. López has succeeded in mobilising his social milieu to engage with art by catalysing a new interest in 'cultural capital', opening up new fund streams which are channelled towards external creative projects, as well as Fundación Jumex. By increasing the opportunities for production and display, López is making contemporary art more accessible for both artist and audience.

José Noé Suro Salceda: Cerámica Suro

This case study serves as an example of a collector collaborating with artists at production level: in the suburb of Tlaquepaque in the suburbs of Guadalajara is a medium-size ceramics factory. The owner is José Noé Suro Salcedo, a collector who invites artists to use his industrial equipment to produce art. The main warehouse of the factory is filled with wooden pallets holding samples including crockery and tableware and does not resemble a traditional exhibition space. Founded by Suro's father in 1951, Cerámica Suro supplies hotels, restaurants and casinos all over Mexico and the US with decorative ceramics, handcrafted in the traditional style of the region. The 12-strong team include kiln operators, local artists (each item is painted by hand) and administrative staff. José Noé is the director and oversees all operations, assisted by a floor manager and head of office.

The medium-size factory can manufacture products in the hundreds or thousands depending on

³¹⁹ Sarah P. Hanson, 'Collector Extraordinaire Eugenio López on Launching his Museo Jumex', *Blouin Art Info* 18.11.2011 <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/985982/collector-extraordinaire-eugenio-lopez-on-launching-his-museo>

the design brief and intricacy of the pattern, many of which are bespoke creations. Since 1993 Cerámica Suro has also worked alongside Mexican and international artists, helping them to create limited edition multiples not only from ceramic material but also bronze, aluminium, fibreglass, blown glass, wood, steel and digital printing. When I visited the factory in 2012, I noticed that amid the shelves and machinery there were casts of large scale works of art on the factory floor - pieces which seem to have no domestic purpose. These were the discarded proofs of sculptures created by contemporary artists, invited by Suro to use his factory as an extension of their studio. These pieces are interspersed between machinists' work stations, forming a natural part of the factory environment. The factory's mission statement is: 'to integrate a contemporary art collection produced with materials of our region, which are part of the "Cerámica Contemporánea Suro" culture'³²⁰.

I am interested in Suro's journey from acquirer to creative partner - how and why he embraced a more active role in the world of contemporary art, and his decision to involve his business in the process. When I asked Suro what motivated him to work with artists in this way, he explained, 'I started buying art when I was about 20 (the early 1990s) - back then it was affordable. Now, it's impossible for me to do that. I cannot buy [work by] these guys any more but I know them and I know they want to make work together'³²¹. Suro deployed a significant bargaining tool: the use of a factory in Mexico where artists could create large-scale works requiring specialist machinery (usually an edition of three, with Suro keeping one). Total creative freedom is extended to those artists who use the factory; Suro believes this drives the most interesting results for both artist and collector: 'I think that, like all the work we have here in the factory, it's very organic. Most artists don't know what they are going to make until they get here. Some come with a strong structure and arrive with perfect blueprints, but I think it is important to come here for the first time without the pressure to do anything, just come to the factory and see what you want to do'. Although artists are invited to create whatever they like, in whichever material, many make use of the same components and colours used in the factory's commercial ceramic products. In this sense,

³²⁰ www.CeramicaSuro.com

³²¹ Conversation with author, February 2012

Cerámica Suro operates as a kind of laboratory for creativity. Artists work alongside artisans and machinists using cutting-edge equipment, the likes of which they would otherwise have limited access to due to financial or geographical constraints. The workshop is used to creating a large number of items to the same standard, which artists find reassuring. When asked what he thinks is the main reason artists from all over the world come to his factory, Suro explains that it is ‘the possibility of having a factory at your disposal to execute specific projects’. He enjoys the highs as well as the lows of the creative journey: certain projects are a challenge to implement despite the technical expertise of his staff, such as the time a kiln broke down while filled with pieces made by John Isaacs. The work was ruined and needed to be recreated from scratch, a process of trial and error familiar to many artists and manufacturers working with brittle materials.

Suro’s interest in contemporary art began through working with his late brother, Luis Miguel, an artist who used the factory for his projects. Through his brother’s circle of friends, Suro came into contact with creatives who expressed an interest in working in his factory in order to make specific pieces. ‘Little by little, in a very organic and natural way, the number of artists and people of the art world involved with Cerámica Suro increased. We took advantage of the potential that the factory offered to generate art projects, and opened a new line of production in the workshop, which was very different from what we had been doing in the factory’³²². Suro’s first creative collaboration was with artist Jorge Pardo (born in 1963, Cuba and now working in United States). The factory created a series of small sculptures with the artist - a successful and symbiotic relationship that led to the production of work for Pardo’s installation at the Guggenheim for a group show in 2008³²³. This particular collaboration introduced Suro to Michael Govan, CEO and director of Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Art (LACMA). ‘That changed everything for me’, Suro explains. ‘Between us we came up with the idea that I would produce ten pieces every year for them as part of a long term project with the museum’; the proposal is currently in development.

³²² *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene* ed. Caroline Niémant (Peeping Tom Digest #2, 2011)

³²³ *theanyspacewhatever* Group Exhibition, Guggenheim Museum New York 24.10.2008 - 07.01.2009

This medium-sized factory in northwestern Mexico is now recognised internationally as a unique production centre for artists as well as commercial ceramics. Despite this new-found specialism and the renown it brought with it, Suro is determined to keep the frequency of the collaborations at a manageable level, telling me that ‘I won’t do anything I don’t feel happy or proud about, or if I feel there is no challenge or opportunity. I assume that we [the factory] are going to make a bit of art every year. Now, museums and artists are asking to get involved in big projects’³²⁴. These grander projects include architectural collaboration and civic design. In 2007³²⁵, Suro took part in a panel discussion on collecting at Art Basel Miami Beach. During the conversation, Suro revealed he was encouraging a social housing land developer in Guadalajara to collaborate with artist Liam Gillick in a new venture. The result was a residential building in a neglected area of Guadalajara whose facade of primary colours makes a strong impact on its neighbourhood. Gillick, a Turner-prize nominated British conceptual artist based in New York, is known for his structural pieces that form part of civic architecture, such as the canopy in the Home Office building on Marshall Street in London (completed in 2002). Gillick has since produced various pieces at Cerámica Suro and the collaborative nature of the relationship is ongoing. The title of this particular panel discussion was ‘Art Collections: Collectors as Producers’, featuring Swiss collector Maja Hoffmann and Italian collector Patrizia Re Rebaudengo. The conversation was steered by Richard Floor, chief curator of the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York; the panellists were challenged on the responsibilities they had towards artists and museums, and asked to describe the appeal of being involved with artistic production. In addition to the personal satisfaction of being involved in the creative process, Suro explained that there was also a practical and financial benefit: by inviting artists to produce highly technical works of art in Guadalajara, specialists workshops such as glass blowing studios and bronze forges ‘discovered a new way of making money. They [artisans] now work with artists and it has helped them to develop better quality and better design’³²⁶.

³²⁴ Conversation with author February 2012

³²⁵ Art Basel Miami Beach Conversations *Collectors as Producers* Transcript 06.12.2007 (since taken offline)

³²⁶ Ibid.

Suro intends to share his passion for art with his city: ‘I am now trying to push people in Guadalajara to produce public works for the city. This is the first time we are doing this. The pieces are now in the city and we hope that this project can be completed and expanded with more people in Guadalajara. Suro also rents an arts space from the local council, Laboratorio de Artes Variedades (LARVA), and manages the property. This recently refurbished building is used for a variety of performances and workshops, with a focus on contemporary art. He is eager to engage his peers in promoting creativity in his hometown, stimulating a culture of collecting similar to Eugenio López’s Alonso’s efforts in Mexico City: ‘There are four or five collectors now, and what I try to do is to encourage people to collect. The other thing that I’ve been working on lately is to start to collect in a very modest way with these people. For example, one of them is a developer, they do housing and new communities in Guadalajara, and I say: “let’s invite artists, let’s put some nice pieces on the streets where the people can enjoy them. This makes a difference.” It’s helping them to sell the land and the houses faster than the others, so they noted that it’s something that is profitable for them. They get very good reviews and people are going to see the pieces. That’s what I’ve been trying to make; that the artists who come to work with me, leave something in Guadalajara, not just in my collection or in another collection, but something for the people, for the public’³²⁷. Suro is among a group of collectors who believes in the regenerative capabilities of art and is actualizing a strategy to make contemporary art more accessible to the local community.

An important factor in Suro’s success is how the factory performs beyond its function as a production line. Work created by artists at Cerámica Suro are often exhibited in shows and locations that are the result of a direct connection with Suro himself. One notable example of this is his involvement with a group show in New York in July 2011, where he collaborated with Los Angeles-based artist Eduardo Sarabia to put on a show at Casey Kaplan contemporary art gallery, *Everything Must Go*³²⁸,

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ *Everything Must Go!* Casey Kaplan Gallery New York 30th June - 29th July 2011

which was reviewed in *The New York Times*³²⁹. The concept was simple: a garage sale-style event where works by artists including Renata Morales, Matthew Higgs and Jorge Pardo were available to buy at relatively modest prices (several pieces were available to buy for around \$500). Every piece was created at Suro's factory in Guadalajara. Beyond the creative experience, it was an opportunity for Cerámica Suro to demonstrate the strength of its connections within the art world; not just with the museum directors and advisors, but with the artists themselves. This lends Suro and his factory a different kind of credibility: he is not just a patron of the arts but also a collaborator with the young artists whose work he admires. For some artists the partnership commences during their 'residency' at the factory and evolves into something far beyond the original proposal. One example of this is the extended collaboration between Suro and artist Marcel Dzama (b.1974, Canada). Dzama arrived at Cerámica Suro in 2011 to make a series of pieces for an upcoming show in New York. A working relationship developed into a propitious alliance that would see Dzama stay on in Guadalajara to make work for separate projects. One such work was a 15 minute film, written and directed by Dzama called *Game of Chess* (2011) - an homage to Duchamp's obsession with the board game - filmed in Guadalajara. The short features a cameo from Suro, as one of the chess players. The film has since been shown at David Zwirner Gallery in New York and is one of Dzama's most valuable pieces. The artist gave an interview³³⁰ with visual art online resource M-KOS in 2011 where he described how the the idea for the film transpired:

I had a friend who had a ceramic foundry there. I was making ceramic sculptures. Originally I had the idea of shooting film at my studio in New York but my friend at the foundry said "shoot it here, I have all the connections of people here!". So I had the ballet company of Guadalajara perform in the film and I made these papier maché costumes there which was a lot of fun to be in Mexico instead of being in my studio making them. And a lot of people were helping me as well in making them.'

³²⁹ Holland Cotter, 'Art in Review', *The New York Times* 14.07.2011
http://www.fitzroygallery.com/uploads/press_item/file/55/ny_times__2011.pdf

³³⁰ Oli Sorenson and Miwa Kojima, 'Interview: Marcel Dzama', *M-KOS* 30.09.2011

The film was originally shown at Museo de Arte de Zapopan (MAZ), Guadalajara's contemporary art museum, housed in an imposing new building in the city centre. Suro curated the show³³¹ - titled *A Touch of Evil* - and helped with installing the pieces made in his factory. In the literature accompanying the exhibition, Suro describes how Dzama came to Tlaquepaque to make his first large-scale dioramas, which marked a new departure in the artist's work, having previously focused on drawing. 'I believe the dioramas are an intermediate step between his drawings and his films and I'm under the impression that, sooner or later, he will become a film director'³³². Describing his experience working with Suro's factory, Dzama said 'There is an unparalleled sense of freedom to produce whatever I want. Working in Guadalajara has introduced me to a rich and vibrant culture that has definitely made its way into my work'³³³.

In this case, Suro's involvement with the artist goes beyond the factory floor: post-production of ceramic and metalwork pieces for the show, Suro was invited to curate the exhibition and agreed to participate in one of Dzama's films. This level of collaboration between artist and collector is rare in the art world and demonstrates Suro's creative commitment to the artist. When I asked Suro if being part of the creative process influenced his decisions as a collector, he responded that it was inevitable. 'Over the years I have been losing interest in art - the fine art part. I have been losing myself in production. The object itself is getting less interesting for me. For me, the idea of helping the artist's process, discussing it with him, that's like a dream and I enjoy that part more and more. I still love collecting, but the story behind the process is what really interests and challenges me'³³⁴.

Some of the artists Suro has worked with do not come to the factory in Guadalajara, but communicate via correspondence. 'When I know an artist, and I know how they work, it is very easy for me to work from their sketches', he explains. To illustrate this point, he pulls out a sheaf of printouts from a desk drawer - blueprints for a site-specific tile installation by British-American artist Sarah Morris for

³³¹ *A Touch of Evil*, Museo de Arte de Zapopan, Guadalajara 26.01.2012 - 25.03.2012

³³² Verónica de Santos, 'Un Toque de Maldad', *La Jornada Jalisco* 17.04.2012

³³³ Burns, Charlotte *Latin America Focus: The Rush to Get Things Made* The Art Newspaper 01.05.2011

³³⁴ Conversation with author, February 2012

the Tulsa Convention Center in Oklahoma. Morris has work in the Guggenheim, MoMA and Tate Modern collections and her large-scale pieces require the kind of precision technology that is available at Cerámica Suro. Other site-specific installations include a ‘carpet’ of ceramic tiles designed by Mexican artist Artemio for display at the Los Angeles Art Contemporary fair in January 2010. These tiles were installed in the lobby of the Pacific Design Center where the fair is held. The tiles, so often associated with traditional Mexican domestic interiors, are subverted by the incongruous motif of guns and are a literal representation of ‘pattern of violence’ that dominates Mexican news broadcasts. Suro has also produced ceramic vessels for artist Eduardo Sarabia, who hand-paints symbols of Mexican narco culture (particularly drugs and weapons) disguised as traditional Talavera-style patterns on their surface. As an independent collector, Suro has the freedom to acquire much more provocative work than a public cultural institution.

Since Dzama’s exhibition in 2012, Suro has been involved in the installation of an exhibition of Maurizio Cattelan’s work from the Coppel art collection (CIAC) at Sala Juárez - a restaurant-cum-arts space in downtown Guadalajara - in October and November 2013. Suro is also responsible for bringing a solo show of Los Angeles-based photographer Walead Beshty to the Hospicio Cabañas in Guadalajara, a World Heritage Site which now houses a cultural institute. Cerámica Suro manufactured a series of sculptures for Beshty in 2012, which marked a departure for the artist as he usually works with film. The pieces made at Suro’s factory incorporated debris from the workshop floor - which consisted of dust and other industrial by-products, as well as remnants from past artists’ editions - and the colours corresponded to the frescos painted by José Clemente Orozco in 1939 inside the Cabañas. According to the gallery, *‘As viewers move through the space the glass will crack under foot exposing the residue of circulation and create an echo of the viewers to the historical site. The newspaper collages, installed on wooden spines, use local newspapers as a starting point: murders, rapes, and prostitution advertisements make up the bulk of the content. The depicted violence brings to mind the densely composed, allegorical subject matter*

*of the social realist murals painted by Orozco almost 75 years earlier*³³⁵.

Suro believes that the dialogue between modern and contemporary, Mexican and non-Mexican is critical in raising cultural awareness: ‘It is important to bring international artists to the region’, he says. ‘This is simply one way of doing it [...] It’s super conservative here [in Guadalajara] and for contemporary art that is difficult. But this museum [Museo de Arte Zapopan] will help. I have my own theory why there are no contemporary collectors here - there are many family businesses, but the money stays within those families for many years. Younger people don’t have enough money to collect’³³⁶. Collaborating at production level means Suro need not follow the traditional route of art collecting via carefully cultivated relationships with gallerists and dealers. His participation in the creation of a work that is the product of access to specialist industrial machinery means artists are more inclined to suggest a private arrangement. This unorthodox approach - usually an edition of three, Suro keeping one - is potentially unnerving for gallerists as it vaults the possibility of commission for the dealer. This kind of non-monetised exchange has, perhaps surprisingly, caused very few problems for Suro. ‘Sometimes galleries try to [take] control. But that was a couple of years ago when the market was stronger. Now the market is not so great, the artist has a little more freedom. The artists - as well as the galleries - know that they always get a good deal with me. I have a great relationship, for example, with [gallerist] David Zwirner. We know each other and we understand how to work together. It has been a good relationship for more than ten years’. Ales Ortuzar, from David Zwirner gallery, has said that for artists who work at Cerámica Suro, ‘It’s less a matter of cost than of skill and knowledge - things that have been lost in Europe’³³⁷.

In 2013 Suro collaborated with Oscar Murillo (born Colombia, 1986). The resulting oeuvre was used in Murillo’s show at South London Gallery in September of the same year. This was the first solo show for the young artist, whose prices had very recently taken a sharp escalation with work fetching in

³³⁵ *Walead Beshty: Fair Use*, Power Station Dallas 25.10.2013 - 16.12.2013

³³⁶ Conversation with author, February 2012.

³³⁷ Charlotte Burns, ‘Latin America Focus: The Rush to Get Things Made’, *The Art Newspaper* 01.05.2011

excess of £200,000 at auction³³⁸. The pieces created by Cerámica Suro were large alloy frames which supported Murillo's cement and felt installations. These pieces were manufactured in Tlaquepaque under Suro's supervision, working from the artist's plans and were later transported to London shortly before the show opened. Although this was the first time Cerámica Suro had helped to produce work for an artist's solo show in the UK, the factory had assisted British artist Jim Lambie in his installation for Tate Liverpool in 2009. Suro continues to work with Murillo and is preparing pieces for the inaugural exhibition for Los Angeles space The Mistake Room, an independent non-profit cultural institution with an international art program.

Curator, collector and fellow Tapatío Patrick Charpenel has credited Suro with promoting Guadalajara as a centre for creativity: 'José Noé pushed it to a new level. That was when artists began to understand that Mexico is a production paradise'³³⁹. Suro is one of the most important contemporary art patrons in the country because his approach to collecting benefits the local community while contributing towards the development of artists' careers. He plans to relocate the foundry to a different part of the city in July 2015, with a small exhibition space dedicated to pieces created on the factory floor and open to all by appointment.

César Cervantes

César Cervantes is a Mexico City-based contemporary art collector who made his fortune from Taco Inn, a chain of food outlets. Cervantes describes his trajectory from businessman to collector as a process of discovery. As a young man Cervantes considered becoming an artist himself, but the idea was dismissed in favour of focusing on his business studies. Looking back on his student days, he observes 'I didn't know about art but I could tell people with art in their homes were different'³⁴⁰. In 1990, Cervantes

³³⁸ Results via www.Christies.com

³³⁹ Burns, 'Latin America Focus: The Rush to Get Things Made'

³⁴⁰ Melinda Santillan, 'César's Palace', *Zero One Magazine* Issue 8 07.08.2013
<http://zero1magazine.com/article/cesars-palace/>

visited a major exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, *Mexico: Splendor of Thirty Centuries*, billed as an ‘unsurpassed survey of Mexican culture’. This ambitious show included more than 350 sculptures, paintings and objects. One painting in particular made a strong impression on Cervantes - a painting of (Mexican comedian) Cantinflas by Rufino Tamayo. However, he found the museum environment a hostile one and has since described the vast halls and hushed atmosphere as incongruous with the experience of engaging with art: ‘They were too cold, intimidating. They still are’³⁴¹.

In the same interview, Cervantes confesses that he was not previously conversant in contemporary art and only developed a serious interest after visiting Art Basel and FIAC (Paris) in 2000. Up until that point, he considered art to be something that involved traditional creative techniques - essentially painting. The world of conceptual art opened up after seeing work by Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco and Japanese artist On Kawara. One work which spoke to Cervantes in particular was Kawara’s date paintings, or the ‘Today’ series. Cervantes read a book on the artist’s techniques before purchasing one of his paintings, and the text inspired him to build a library of art history books, catalogues and periodicals, which now holds over 6,000 titles. His investment in the library has prompted him to admit he doesn’t know if the book collection is part of the contemporary art collection, or the other way around, ‘or simply that they are both part of my life’³⁴². By now Cervantes had committed to a specific aesthetic: he wanted art that would continue to inspire him in a domestic environment: ‘when [art] is comfortable you are more motivated to learn and explore’. His selection criteria relates to seeking out contemporary art that fits in - and yet remains provocative - within a functioning domestic environment: Damián Ortega’s *América Latrina* is in the bathroom, and Robert Filliou’s Fluxus collage hangs on the wall above Cervantes’ son Lázaro’s pre-school artwork. Cervantes does not employ advisors, preferring to build his collection on instinct: ‘My curatorial approach is my own life: what triggers me, what questions me, what awakens me, what worries me, what makes me happy, what makes me sad [...] In this sense my collection

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, ed. Caroline Niémant (Peeping Tom’s Digest #2, 2011), 44

is only a reflection of who I am or want to be'³⁴³.

His concept of what it means to share an art collection is very unusual in Mexico in that it shuns the archetype of the museum experience: the collection is displayed at home in Mexico City, where Cervantes extends an 'open house' policy to those who wish to visit. 'For me, opening my house is just like having a conversation with someone, and sometimes a stranger can be as interesting as my favourite friend for conversations'. The collection is open to visitors via contact with Cervantes, which means that this is, to some degree, a self-selected audience. He does not publicise or offer general opening hours but Cervantes is adamant the collection remains accessible to all who are curious: 'Remember, not long ago everywhere, including Mexico City, houses didn't have outside walls, my house originally didn't have one. Life was more communal before and worked better' concluding that 'Visitors never affect my family intimacy, probably to the contrary - they maximize it in reality'. To illustrate this connection between art and domestic life, he references a work by US artist Dan Graham that he would like to add to the collection: *Video Projection Outside Home* (1978) in which a large television on the outside wall or in the garden of a suburban home broadcasts what the family are watching inside. He rejects the idea that this home-cum-arts space is a hub for the well-connected: 'That it seems that my house is important for the art world is simply because art happens there'. Recalling his experience at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1990, Cervantes elaborates on why he believes traditional museums can occasionally feel like inappropriate places to engage with contemporary art: 'I like museums very much, but I'm far from thinking that they are the best or most democratic places to see or experience art [...] It is absurd how big museums are now, how disproportionate they are. Artists are making fun of them by making museum-sized works and people don't realize it. Art is and should be on a human scale, so in this regard I think there is no better place than a house for art, so this is also why it is as open as possible to the public'³⁴⁴. Nonetheless Cervantes concedes that when done well, museums do not have an alienating effect on their visitors, adding that they are cultural necessities as well as 'good for communities'. The prospect of

³⁴³ Ibid. 44

³⁴⁴ Ibid. 45

reformulating the museum experience is also something that appeals, as it would allow for private collectors to ‘prove to ourselves that we are not into art for morbid reasons like accumulating power or wealth, but for art itself’. Although several of the pieces in Cervantes’ collection are irreverent or playful (such as Adriana Lara’s *Banana Peel*, 2011 - a real banana skin, discarded on the floor and replaced daily), it would seem that one underlying motive of his collecting is entirely serious: to offer a visitor an alternative way of experiencing art. Outside Cervantes’ property in Mexico City is a sculpture by Jimmie Durham: a car, apparently crushed by a huge boulder, called *Still Life with Spirit and Xitle*, 2007. As an extension of this work, Cervantes sponsored the publication of Durham’s book *Amoxohtli / Libro de Carretera / A Road Book*³⁴⁵ which was published in náhuatl, Spanish and English and accompanied by a video. In an interview with *Arte al Día*, Cervantes explained that he found financing a publication of a book to be ‘a more democratic way of participating in art’³⁴⁶.

In the event that works from Cervantes’ collection leave the house, it tends to be for modest or experimental exhibitions that do not relate to the grand touring shows of CIAC or Jumex. In 2013, Cervantes collaborated with a New York-based non-profit arts organization called Collectors Space³⁴⁷, resulting in a temporary exhibition in Istanbul. The purpose of Collectors Space is to bring private collections into public view through a programme of off-site events and publications with the aim of ‘creating reference points’. Cervantes selected a work from his collection (Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster’s *Untitled/Bolaño*, 2011) to travel to a dedicated exhibition space in Turkey; Collectors Space would film its installation and splice the footage with an extended interview with Cervantes about his collecting practice. Finally, the film is broadcast online and viewers are invited to submit responses to the artwork. This particular piece by Gonzalez-Foerster consists of a copy of Roberto Bolaño’s 1998 book *The Savage Detectives* on top of a mound of sand in the corner of the exhibition space. The book is left open at the pages featuring a ‘poem’ of three drawn lines: straight, wavy and broken; the wavy line is

³⁴⁵ Jimmie Durham, *Amoxohtli / Libro de Carretera / A Road Book* Walter (König, 2011)

³⁴⁶ ‘Promoters of Latin American Art 2010/2011’, *Arte al Día* 07.06.2011

³⁴⁷ The Savage Detectives at the Cervantes Collection, 11.09.13-09.11.13
<http://collectorspace.org/?p=3991>

replicated in the sand underneath the book. *United/Bolaño* is representative of Cervantes' collection of contemporary art in that it relates to his fascination with time, history and the ready-made; the nomadic themes within the novel itself are echoed in the migratory context of the artwork.

Cervantes' approach to display is not groundbreaking yet it remains unconventional in Mexico. His perception of a private collection as an entity that is without boundaries - in both literal and figurative senses - offers a potentially very democratic means of experiencing contemporary art: *anyone* can open up their home and invite fellow art-lovers inside, without the funds required for a private museum and its staff. As an art collector, Cervantes may belong to a cultural elite, although he is eager to distance himself from the Mexican establishment: 'Soon this very Mexican "art civil war" as I call it, will soon be over. At least these people don't seem to have more fictitious enemies to fight with in order to call attention to themselves'³⁴⁸. His frustration with the system informs his judgment of public museums in Mexico, which he believes wasted funds on creating new cultural institutions such as MUAC while older creative spaces - the University art school, he suggests - suffered from financial neglect.

Looking towards the future, Cervantes is hopeful: 'There is plenty of energy and youth in this country, in the art scene'³⁴⁹. His unconventional approach to sharing his collection with a wider audience makes him an interesting case study, yet it remains to be seen whether its relative inaccessibility will prevent any meaningful engagement with the public.

Agustín and Isabel Coppel: CIAC

Agustín Coppel (b.1961 in Culiacán, Sinaloa province), together with his wife Isabel, has built an extraordinary contemporary art collection – Colección Isabel y Agustín Coppel (CIAC)' - that has toured all over the world. The foundation of this collection is work by Modernist painters, mainly from Mexico, such as Gunther Gerzso (1915-2000) and Saturnino Herrán (1887-1919); work by Enrique Gúzman

³⁴⁸ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene* ed. Caroline Niémant (Peeping Tom's Digest #2, 2011), 46

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

(1952-1986) also features heavily. Amongst the first pieces they collected were works by American artist Gary Hill, and Mexican artists Lilia Carrillo and Cordelia Urueta³⁵⁰. From 1991 onwards, the Coppels decided to focus on Mexican and international contemporary art and developed a programme to share their collection with the general public through a variety of channels, including touring exhibitions and sculpture parks (more of which later) as well as public screenings³⁵¹. In recognition of his efforts in the field of visual culture, Agustín Coppel received the 2013 Montblanc de la Culture Arts Patronage prize, previously awarded to fellow Mexican collectors Eugenio López and César Cervantes. Since 1992 these awards have recognised those art patrons who have contributed time and energy to artists and their work, whilst also committing to benefit the wider public. The winner receives 15,000 Euros to be donated to an arts programme of their choice.

It is imperative to collaborate in order to build a collection, believes Agustín, who terms this particular process ‘retro-alimentation’³⁵². That is to say, he feeds off exchanges with art world professionals which allow him to ‘get to know other ways of thinking, new artists, or tendencies that turn out to be valuable for the collection’³⁵³. The Coppels were introduced to the art world by Miguel Esparza Blancas, a Mexican painter whose work was strongly influenced by abstract expressionist artists of the 1950s. Blancas experienced limited professional success in his lifetime, but moved in artistic circles and was familiar with the art scene in New York, and shared his knowledge with the Coppels. Similarly, Vita Podesta, a businesswoman and friend, inspired the Coppels to begin building their own collection. She owned paintings by Pablo Picasso and Diego Rivera; Agustín recounts how these works became ‘something very meaningful in her life’³⁵⁴. Agustín also enjoyed the cerebral application of understanding a market which was new to him - and arguably relatively new to Mexico: ‘Why a certain object was valued so much was a challenge. For me, understanding the meaning of these things was some sort of

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ The Blockbuster cinema project, curated by Jens Hoffman in 2011, was a travelling program of avant-garde videos paired with classic movies by directors including Orson Welles and Steve McQueen.

³⁵² *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, 18

³⁵³ *Mexico: Expected / Unexpected* Interview, (Fagé Editions + Maison Rouge, 2004)

³⁵⁴ Ibid.138

intellectual mystery: what were other people seeing that I could not see?’.

Having amassed a fortune in the family business of department stores - Coppel SA generates \$4.6 billion in annual sales and has the widest profit margin of any major Latin American retailer³⁵⁵ - Coppel was eager to build an art collection filled with pieces that would resonate beyond their time. ‘I belong to the world of business one hundred per cent - art is really a change of mentality, a rest, a space of freedom, a great passion that I have been able to apply and use in many things - in working with groups, in human teams, in different strategies, in having an eye to know what is worth something and what is not’.

Coppel’s response stresses the impact it has had on more practical areas of his life. Building a collection has been a process of discovery: on the few occasions the couple have bought for investment purposes, the piece inevitably ends up being sold soon after acquisition: ‘Somehow, having things we do not like deep down just because they are a “must” contaminates the collection’³⁵⁶. The Isabel and Agustín Coppel Art Collection now features works by key figures from the Mexican contemporary art scene, including Damián Ortega, Gabriel Orozco, Melanie Smith, Francis Alÿs and Abraham Cruzvillegas. In addition there are works by high profile international artists such as Lygia Clark and Ed Ruscha.

In the collection’s mission statement, the Coppels emphasize that they do not try to impose their own personal definition of art, but instead hope to create a collection that makes a ‘coherent universe’ of artworks that are representative of 21st century ideas. Furthermore, they state their hope of being able to build ‘a bridge between art and people’³⁵⁷, and of sharing part of Mexico’s cultural history with future generations. The collection’s most ambitious project to date is a site-specific installation at the botanical gardens in the city of Culiacán, in Sinaloa state. Spread over seven acres of land, the gardens are filled with 1,000 specimens of flowers and plants donated by Carlos Murillo Depraect in 1986. Depraect was an engineer by profession, but also a dedicated botanist who wanted to help create a protected green space in the city. Coppel had a long-term working relationship with Depraect and, as president of the Botanical and Zoological Society of Sinaloa, was able to ensure this project managed to launch. The site

³⁵⁵ Alexander Cuadros, ‘Mexico’s Coppel Brothers Emerge with \$16bn Fortune’, *Bloomberg* 15.11.2012

³⁵⁶ *Mexico: Expected / Unexpected* Interview (Fagé Editions + Maison Rouge, 2004), 143

³⁵⁷ www.coppelcollection.com

encompasses three buildings for educational purposes as well as a small outdoor auditorium, and the sculpture park (opened in 2012) is home to a vast contemporary art installation coordinated by curator Patrick Charpenel. This project involved commissioning 35 international contemporary artists to create site-specific work to be displayed in the gardens; the pieces needed to represent an aspect of their environment and reflect local issues or social history. In this sense the Coppels were hoping to create a more contemplative space than a conventional sculpture park, presenting a visual interpretation of local life to families, tourists and commuters who walked in the park. Charpenel was charged with selecting artists whose creations would enhance the natural environment as well as offer the visitor a unique aesthetic experience. The regenerative potential of reclaiming a public space is something that chimes with Charpenel's curatorial philosophy: 'Since Culiacán is a very complex city, in which organized crime has important cells, it becomes interesting to create critical experiences that absorb economical and cultural problems'³⁵⁸. The importance of the artworks relating to their environment - and how this parallel would affect the visitor experience - was a crucial concern for Charpenel; 'This is the reason why the project is focused on making the public a fundamental part of the work and not just by imposing a product as a symbolic element of the place'³⁵⁹, explained Coppel. Amongst the artists with work in the Botanical Gardens are Tacita Dean, Richard Long, Jorge Pardo, Pedro Reyes and Melanie Smith.

Working with Charpenel was advisor and long-term friend of the Coppels, Mireya Escalante: 'She has co-ordinated the projects, the acquisitions and public relations. Her participation in the collection and in other projects is very valuable, and at the same time it is the reason and the cause of many of the things that happen', explained Agustín. Like fellow collector Eugenio López, the Coppels have surrounded themselves with a select group of advisors and curators who are able to shape the Coppels' collection and propose how it becomes visible to the general public. A work by Francis Alÿs is placed on the side of a path running through the gardens. Titled *The Game is Over*, the artist offered the following explanation: 'On 20 March 2011, I left Mexico City in my VW Beetle and drove up north to Culiacán.

³⁵⁸ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, 187

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 186

Upon arrival, I crashed my car into a tree in the Botanical Garden. Nature will do the rest'³⁶⁰. Some artists, such as Olafur Eliasson, took a more literal approach to the commission and created work using actual botanical plants. Eliasson used five aromatic shrubs to express an idea about the relationship between geometry and aesthetics. This 'living museum' is a work in process, with pieces by artists including James Turrell expected to be added to the garden in the future. Coppel has spoken of his delight at being able to provide the citizens with 'an unexpected contact with contemporary art, which is almost non-existent in Culiacán. The Botanical Garden is very important for many [locals]; they go there for a walk every day, they meditate, reflect and witness the transformation of that space'³⁶¹. The sculpture park is a regenerative project, in that it aims to improve a neglected area of the city, while placing contemporary art in a more welcoming environment than a conventional 'white cube' gallery space.

The Coppels also display works from their private collection at their homes in Culiacán, Mexico City and San Diego. The pieces are on continuous rotation due to several being on loan to institutions at any one time, and Agustín compares the feeling of being at home as being inside a small art gallery with temporary exhibitions: 'We can no longer place the works because they look nice here or there', he admits, adding that they receive curatorial help with these decisions. The Coppels have consulted advisors Yvonne Force Villareal and Mireya Escalante, as well as curator Pedro Alonzo, on building their collection; relationships with dealers including Marian Goodman and David Zwirner also play their part, but the Coppels' most valuable partnership may be with Carlos Basualdo and Mónica Amor, who helped put together a touring exhibition of 100 works from their private collection in 2008. *Mexico: Expected / Unexpected* took a selection of collection highlights to countries including France, Holland the U.S. and was described by its curators as 'a series of short stories that echo each other with no aspiration to a climax or conclusion'. Similar to Jumex's *Where do we go from where?* exhibition, attention is drawn to the incompleteness of the collection, indicating it is a work in progress. In fact, some of it does not yet

³⁶⁰ Alejandro Hernández Gálvez, 'The Engineer, The Gardener and The Architect', *Domus Architecture Magazine* 06.02.2012 <http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2012/02/06/the-engineer-the-gardener-and-the-architect.html>

³⁶¹ Interview from *Mexico: Expected / Unexpected* (Fagé Editions + Maison Rouge, 2004), 146

exist: one piece featured in *Mexico: Expected / Unexpected*, will not take place until 2017³⁶². The title of the exhibition puts Mexico's cultural identity at the core of the project, and Agustín Coppel described its intention to 'underline the role of the collection as a sort of epistemological tool'³⁶³. The purpose of this exhibition was to transcend an internal dialogue: the curatorial decision to include works which do not fit into neat categorizations of art demonstrates how Mexico defies similar classification; the selection of work on display is designed to reveal without proselytizing. The curatorial selection revealed an open-endedness within the collection, underlined in their statement: 'It is up to collections and collectors to relinquish nostalgia and forge new, inconsistent and ever-incomplete archives of contemporary culture'³⁶⁴. CIAC also goes on display closer to home: in the following year, a selection of work was exhibited at Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte (MUCA) in Mexico City followed by a show at Galería de Arte Contemporáneo in Puebla in 2009; both were curated by Cuban-born Taiyana Pimentel, who was Director of the Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros in Mexico City at the time. Coppel hopes that in time, part of his collection will be on permanent display in the University in Guadalajara, although there are no plans in place at the moment.

In December 2010, Agustín Coppel took part in the Art Basel Miami Beach 'Conversations', a series of panel discussions at the fair. He was invited to talk on the topic of 'Latin America: the collector as catalyst' and shared the stage with Ella Fontanals-Cisneros (founder of the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation in Miami) and Rodrigo Moura (curator at Inhotim Museum in Brazil). The group conversation touched on themes including the effect of private collections on the Latin American art market, how Latin American contemporary art had accessed a broader segment of society through private collections, the implications of the practice of collecting and the reactions of public institutions to private museums. When Coppel was asked at what point his passion for collecting art 'gave way to a sense of duty' that he had to show the collection to the public, he responded by saying that CIAC had been created

³⁶² South African artist Kendell Geers creates work that relates to meeting the collector at a location, time and date of the artist's choosing. Amor and Basualdo state that the rendez-vous is potentially fulfilled by the purchasing of the piece.

³⁶³ Interview from *Mexico: Expected / Unexpected* (Fagé Editions + Maison Rouge, 2004)

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

for the public: ‘We have many pieces and we are always thinking about the question how it will be shown and where’³⁶⁵. Coppel is swept up in the current wave of enthusiasm directed towards contemporary art in Mexico: ‘MUAC has changed our vision of what a museum is, PAC [Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo] is a central reference. Zelika García’s [Director of MACO] work for the annual art fair has better results each year. Kurimanzutto gallery is internationally renowned and has been a springboard for the careers of young Mexican artists whose works are now in top collections. Thanks to them, among others, the world knows and appreciates Mexican creativity. This is an excellent moment for Mexican contemporary art’³⁶⁶.

Unlike the majority of collectors profiled in my thesis, the Coppels usually prefer to maintain a distance from the artist. ‘I feel, at this moment, collectors are seen with very good eyes by artists; that is, they are very open and try to explain their ideas and pay attention to us. I am not particularly fond of being contaminated with the artist’s personality, because it works better to have a certain idea of an artwork and some references’³⁶⁷. The Coppels’ more reserved approach is reminiscent of historical patron-artist relationships, yet there are exceptions: Mexican artists Sofía Taboas and Pedro Reyes are close personal friends of the Coppels and their work features in the CIAC collection. ‘Good art tries to ask questions and generate ruptures’³⁶⁸, Coppel has said. His decision to display art from CIAC in open civic spaces as well as conventional galleries is an important step towards engaging a wider public with contemporary visual culture.

³⁶⁵ Art Basel Miami Beach Conversations *Latin America: The Collector as Catalyst* Transcript 04.12.2010

³⁶⁶ *An exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, 19

³⁶⁷ Interview from Mexico: *Expected / Unexpected* (Fagé Editions + Maison Rouge, 2004)

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p.141

Patrick Charpenel

Born in Guadalajara in 1966, Charpenel is a collector, curator, critic and in 2012 was made director of new Museo Jumex in Mexico City, one of the most influential positions in the Mexican art world. He is also a member of the board for the Centre-Pompidou-Latin America in Paris, and coordinated Focus Latin America section of ARCO contemporary art fair in Madrid, 2012. I met Charpenel for the first time in Mexico in May 2010. Having heard that he was passionate about bringing contemporary art into the public domain, I wanted to know more. ‘I think that the purpose of every serious art collection should be for it to become public’, he explained. ‘It’s important to share your own research and your own process of collecting. By displaying it in public, it becomes part of a discussion’³⁶⁹. This commitment to engaging wider audiences has been the motivation behind myriad collaborations and professional appointments throughout Charpenel’s career. Since completing his graduate degree in Philosophy, he has worked with public academic institutions such as UNAM and the University of Guadalajara as a researcher and curator, and co-ordinated shows at Museo Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City and the Moore Space in Miami on artists including Franz West and Gabriel Orozco.

It is evident that Charpenel enjoys the academic rigor of research and amongst collectors he is the most dedicated to the scholastic platform of contemporary art, as he considers education to be a key focus for all his projects. He has also contributed essays to many catalogues and journals³⁷⁰, believing critical debate to be essential to the experience of contemporary art. I was curious to find out if his more academic background influenced his decision as a collector: Charpenel’s response touched on the importance of research in his method: ‘We are constantly evolving, and with art it’s very difficult to work with an *a priori* idea. I think it is always through an *a posteriori* experience that we modify our approach to art’. This translates to his process of collecting by creating two distinct phases of response: the

³⁶⁹ Conversation with author, May 2010

³⁷⁰ Examples relating to Charpenel’s interest in the function and display of contemporary art include, amongst others, *Crónicas del Paraiso: Arte Contemporáneo y Sistema de Arte en México* Ephemera Press 2004; *History of the World: Eduardo Sarabia* Other Criteria Press 2012; *Superflex: The Corrupt Show and the Speculative Machine* Fundación Jumex 2014; *Guy de Cointet* Walther König 2014

‘hedonistic experience’³⁷¹, as he describes, of finding personal stimulation in an artwork, to ‘a more detached and analytical posture’ which occurs when the work in question is transferred to a social domain, such as a museum or public exhibition. At that point it is able to generate a more collective discussion, Charpenel believes. He grew up witnessing his father buy works in the early 1970s by artists including Gunther Gerzso, one of the first abstract artists in Mexico, and Chucho Reyes, who moved in the same circles as poet Octavio Paz and German-born Mexican painter Mathias Goeritz. Charpenel himself started building a collection from the relatively young age of eighteen, buying work from local artists. Shortly afterwards Charpenel expanded his ambit to include artists from abroad. ‘Back then it was really cheap! You could buy important things for almost nothing. In that sense it was good for me because I felt much more relaxed about the market. In general I now buy from galleries. I don’t try to buy directly from the artist because I respect the rules - the market rules. I only buy directly when it’s a very young artist and he doesn’t have representation yet’³⁷². Despite the general popularity of art fairs, I have found that serious collectors rarely buy in that environment: ‘I go [to fairs] because it’s an important meeting point for the art community, but I don’t enjoy the rush. I prefer to take my time when I have to make a decision. But as a curator, I really enjoy having conversations [at the fair] with other curators, artists and art critics - with everyone who likes to think about art and the aesthetic experience’.

Charpenel believes that one of the most influential ‘actors’ in the Mexican art world was Ruben Bautista (d.1990)³⁷³, an artist and curator who is most famous for his work from the late 1980s. After visiting Europe and befriending rising stars of the art scene such as Gilbert & George, Nicholas Serota and Joseph Beuys, Bautista returned to Mexico with ‘a very different background to any other Mexican curator’, according to Charpenel. Not only was Bautista the first person to use the actual word ‘curator’ in the country, Charpenel explained, his approach was so revolutionary that he was to Mexico what Alfred Barr (art historian and the first director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York) was the United States. ‘When Bautista came back to Mexico there was a radical change. He was not part of the political

³⁷¹ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, 186

³⁷² Conversation with author May 2010

³⁷³ I refer to Bautista in his role as curator in Part One, Chapter Four

system but totally independent, and he started to put on the first exhibitions of contemporary art in Mexico'. Bautista became the first person to work with conceptual artists in the country, putting on shows that were resolutely not about commercial painting or sculpture.

Charpenel is equally committed to seeking out vanguard artists whose work expresses the human condition in new and challenging ways. He has often remarked on the power of art to respond to socio-political experience, believing that 'contemporary art has the capacity to show us the skeletons of capitalism in globalization'³⁷⁴. Does this postulation impact on the way in which he collects, as well as curates? 'What has been a constant for me these past few years is working around social problems in which the economical, political and cultural context plays a part in the significance and value of a project', he claims. This is evident in his programs for Museo Jumex, where he was made director in 2012; as outlined in the case study for Eugenio López Alonso, recent Fundación Jumex projects include sponsoring renewable energy systems and providing educational workshops in prisons. This perspective promotes Charpenel as one of the more civic-minded of his collector peers, treating an art foundation as an untapped source capable of considerable social change: 'I believe that only by conducting an exercise in analogy-based comparison one can achieve a certain critical dimension respecting the work and products of our society'³⁷⁵. Charpenel has a specific personal philosophy for the purpose of a museum, and how it should operate: at the Art Basel Miami Beach talks in December 2013, he described how he was inspired by the 'university' model for Museo Jumex, rather than other private art institutions. What this means in practice is prioritizing learning experience above all else. He understands that in terms of visitor demographics, there are many kinds of public: student, tourist, professional, online community and so on. 'I believe that cultural institutions are social institutions', he explained, referencing a project currently underway at the Jumex Museum: a tool which generates electricity in rural areas, working with organic material. Charpenel intends to bring this machine to the mass market within the next year. 'We

³⁷⁴ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*, 186

³⁷⁵ *Ibid*

are building new narratives'³⁷⁶, he told the audience, an aspiration which is accompanied by a museum program strongly focused on social issues, such as the forthcoming Speculative Machine series of talks. These discussions will focus on emerging economics, corruption and social movements - themes frequently linked to artistic activity in Latin America, but rarely given their own platform in private art museums. As Director of Fundación Jumex, Charpenel is bringing Eugenio Lopez's vast art collection up to date with a dynamic social agenda.

'I started [working at Jumex] because I consider it to be a social tool to transform the world specifically with art. I don't see art only as a species for fun or as a product within a specific location. I see museums as laboratories for experiences and centres for research and education'³⁷⁷, explained Charpenel, whose unconventional, socially-engaged proposals are one of the reasons why his skills as a curator are so in demand. Many of the collectors I spoke to for my research told me that they were uncomfortable with the idea of pressurizing the state to provide more money for public museums when there were many more social problems requiring urgent priority. As friend of many leading Mexican art collectors, Charpenel's vision as a curator - as well as personal experience of collecting - is leading the contemporary art scene in Mexico into a much more self-sufficient phase of development: 'Through this, art can be a vehicle for change that provides an opportunity to think about our present political, economic and social conditions, as well as seeing what types of conversations can emerge and which changes will permit us to make our world better for the future'³⁷⁸.

Mexico presents a more challenging political landscape than many other countries with world-class cultural institutions, an issue which Charpenel will need to address in his role as museum director. His determination to open up the exclusive world of contemporary art to Mexicans via an accessible program of events is one of the most ambitious in the region. It will be interesting to see how Jumex measures the success of his initiatives; as indicated in the first part of my thesis, traditional methods of

³⁷⁶ Art Basel Miami Beach Conversations 06.12.2013, video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aW_WqMbjKEw

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Leslie Moody Castro, 'Interview with Patrick Charpenel', *Fluent Collaborative* Issue 192 June 2012 <http://www.fluentcollab.org/mbg/index.php/interview/index/192/128>

monitoring the impact of a museum by its visitor numbers are losing relevancy, and the lack of similar socially-minded cultural initiatives in Mexico at this stage means that it is difficult to draw a comparative analysis. In this sense Charpenel is at the vanguard of the contemporary art world in Mexico; depending on the execution of his plans for Jumex, he could have a pivotal influence on the role of private patronage in the future.

Moisés Cosío: Fundación Alumnos47

Film producer Cosío is the youngest of the contemporary art patrons profiled in my research and the most specific example of collector-as-impresario. His focus is on the learning experience provided by contemporary art, rather than acquiring actual works made by artists, and he decided to build a foundation in order to provide greater access to books about visual culture: ‘The books that I was reading couldn’t be found in Mexico, either in libraries or bookstores. Alumnos47 emerged out of this need in the landscape. I hope that by addressing it we can open these conversations up to more people [...] It’s amazing for us when people engage with our programs who have never gone to galleries, never gone to museums or openings’³⁷⁹.

In 2012, Cosío sponsored architect firm Productura to create a mobile art library inside a freightliner truck, with the intention of filling it with 1,200 contemporary art books. The design of the interior allowed for it to be put to a variety of uses, including small-audience screenings and workshops. The project, co-ordinated by his non-profit arts foundation Alumnos47, involved driving the vehicle around areas of Mexico City with limited access to cultural resources. The aim of the enterprise, and the foundation as a whole, is to foster creative learning opportunities within local communities, and is symbolic of the move towards building for collection-free exhibition spaces. In the arguments for cultural sustainability outlined in the first part of my thesis, I indicate two main directions that patrons can follow:

³⁷⁹ Bettina Korek, ‘Patronage 2.0 in Mexico City’, *Huffington Post* 29.01.2014
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bettina-korek/philanthropy-20-in-mexico_b_4691394.html

to create an itinerant, ‘homeless’ collection, displayed to the public via loans or travelling exhibitions, or the provision of a cultural space (such as a sculpture garden, or arts centre) that is able to host a variety of arts-related activity. Focusing on either one greatly reduces the overheads involved in building an independent art museum to house a private art collection. Jumex is perhaps the only foundation that has succeeded (so far) in shouldering both responsibilities; for almost all other patrons, this would be prohibitively costly. With this in mind, Cosío is in the process of building an operational base for Alumnos47, due to opened in 2016. It will not be a private museum but instead as a cultural centre, offering artist residencies, a library and an area for contemporary art workshops. ‘Anybody can build a collection’, explained Cosío in 2014, ‘It’s not about the works themselves, it’s just that the biggest collection will belong to the guy that has the most money, period. So I don’t think that’s profound at all. It’s much better to have a place where anyone can go to read about art and architecture, and the many ways they affect our lives’³⁸⁰. The foundation also travels to book fairs across Mexico and the United States to promote independent publishing in Mexico. In the winter of 2015, Alumnos47 will publish what promises to be an insightful book on Mexican contemporary culture, *Hans Ulrich Obrist: Conversations in Mexico*, based on a series of talks by curator Obrist, starting from 2002 to present day and covering politics, literature and art.

In 2012 Cosío financed the construction of a new wing of the Museo Tamayo in Mexico City, a public museum that is increasingly collaborating with private benefactors and corporate sponsorship. My research suggests that partnership is fundamental to the stability and dynamism of cultural spaces in Mexico, and Cosío has spoken of wanting to explore ‘the opportunity to experiment and test ideas for new models of arts organizations’³⁸¹ via collaborating with other foundations in the future. Cosío is promoting a specific public engagement with contemporary art through its literature, by implementing a sustainable model for development.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

Sergio Autrey

Mexican businessman Autrey is similar to collector José Noé Suro in that he is using his commercial specialism to help artists produce exciting new work. With decades of experience in Mexico's satellite communications sector, Autrey has connected with artists at a manufacturing level, providing opportunities to use industrial materials that are usually expensive or difficult to procure. To celebrate Mexico's bicentennial in 2010, he commissioned 26 'post-Ruptura' artists to produce paintings that expressed their experience of independence or a personal narrative of the Mexican Revolution. This is, of course, in stark contrast to historical cultural patronage from the state who commissioned muralists including Diego Rivera and to portray an official version of political events. The 26 paintings commissioned by Autrey were then shown to 21 video and animation artists who were invited to respond to the art by creating work of their own; Autrey's idea was to stimulate a dialogue between two generations of artists and record the entire process for a documentary film; he named the project 'Akaso'. Painters had the option of working in their studios, or painting in front of an audience at Museo del Chopo, a public museum in Mexico City. In 2010, the Akaso collection of paintings went on display at the Museo de Arte de Sonora in Hermosillo, installed by respected curator and art historian Carlos Ashida. 'I think art can change many things', Autrey said in an interview in 2014. 'It can change people's views. Some of the art is not what it first appears to be. There's a lot of violence behind some of the paintings. You look and say, what a beautiful thing! But underneath there is darkness'³⁸².

Autrey is now working with a group of Mexican artists to create one of the world's first 'art satellites'³⁸³. The project was conceived by Juan José Diaz Infante, and represents his response to what he describes as 'the chaos and social disruption caused by Mexico's drug war'³⁸⁴. Diaz Infante founded the

³⁸² Deborah Peterson, 'The Art of Collecting and the Business of Art', *Stanford Business Review* 21.02.2014 <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/art-collecting-business-art>

³⁸³ Kerry A. Dolan, *Sergio Autrey: Mixing Science and Art in the Satellite Business* *Stanford Business Review* 16.09.2013 <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/sergio-autrey-mixing-science-art-satellite-business>

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

Mexican Space Collective, whose artist members created messages that would be relayed by the satellite once it was launched. The apparatus was named Ulises Carrión (1941-1989), after a Mexican artist whose work relates to communication, and a touring exhibition presenting its development has toured museums in the United States, Mexico and Europe. Once launched, the satellite's messages will be broadcast via medium wave radio and its own dedicated website. The collective claims the exercise is designed to 'rupture thoughts', with Diaz Infante explaining that 'Mexico is a poor country, and it's in the middle of a drug war'³⁸⁵, insisting that 'reality can be changed' if a group of artists is able to execute such a technical project. Autrey, with his background in satellite communications and reputation as one of Mexico's leading art collectors³⁸⁶, was an obvious choice for an advisor on the project. Similar to the other art collectors profiled in this chapter, he is unafraid to take risks: 'We have to see ourselves in the future, and see Mexico as part of the space industry. This is how we start, by taking risks'³⁸⁷, adding that Mexico's Space Agency has since been reactivated while UNAM in Mexico City now offers a space program to students. In an interview with *Stanford Business Review*, Autrey drew a parallel between artistic and scientific experiment, declaring that 'science becomes art in the satellite business', citing 19th century French physiologist Claude Bernard, who said "Art is I; Science is We". 'An artist is usually just one person, and science is more a collaboration between people [...] I think that when you launch a satellite, at that moment all the people that worked on the mission become as one person, and that is art'. In 2011 Mexico's National Sound Library offered artist residencies relating to the Ulises mission, a project that was partly sponsored by Mexican government arts council CONACULTA.

Autrey is an interesting case study as he represents the collector as a production pioneer, patron, and middle man, linking academic institutions (including the faculty of engineering at UNAM) with private cultural initiatives, as well as taking on more official responsibilities such as presiding over Fundación INBA. He serves as an example of the inclination for art collectors to collaborate with public

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Sergio and Marinieres Autrey were included in the ARTnews 200 top collectors in the world in 2003

³⁸⁷ Dolan, *Sergio Autrey: Mixing Science and Art in the Satellite Business*

organizations, while demonstrating the degree of risk feasible for independently-funded creative initiatives.

Analysis and Findings

'The museum functions as the prime location at which our ideas about art take shape'³⁸⁸

- Johan Idema

The collector-led museums and cultural initiatives profiled in my research are examples of entrepreneurship combined with a genuine passion for contemporary art. As both tastemakers and mobilisers, this group of patrons has a significant influence on the way the public engages with visual culture. This is a departure from the way art was promoted for much of the early to mid twentieth century, which was often linked to a state-endorsed cultural policy³⁸⁹. One of the key shifts of the last two decades has been a growing trend for symbiotic partnerships between public and private contemporary art museums and initiatives, representing a new phase in Mexico's cultural development. These partnerships manifest through a variety of channels, the most successful being those which prioritize the accessibility of art - in its creation or visitor experience. I argue that the two principal factors in determining the impact of a collector-led museum or cultural enterprise are sustainability and social engagement. In this final chapter of my thesis, I present the evidence for each category, drawing attention to overlapping determining factors such as urban regeneration or hybrid funding models. I then present an assessment of how best to measure public response to these cultural initiatives. In conclusion, I specify the functions, potential and limitations of privately-funded exhibition spaces and collector-led projects within the context of Mexico's changing cultural landscape.

³⁸⁸ Johan Idema, *How to Visit an Art Museum* (Bis Publishers, 2014)

³⁸⁹ Mary K. Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture: Murals, Museums and the Mexican State* (Duke University Press, 2012)

Sustainability.

My research reveals that patrons of the arts are increasingly focused on using their collections, facilities or foundations to make a positive difference to artists and local communities. One of the main ways in which this is deployed is through collaboration, with public cultural institutions and / or independent arts professionals. As indicated in the first part of my thesis, collaboration between public and private sectors on cultural initiatives has historically proved problematic. Issues relating to ownership, funding and censorship have prevented efficient partnerships from developing between collectors and the state on several occasions, yet the current generation of collectors is choosing to collaborate with government-sponsored museums in a way that promises greater opportunities and long-term security for the public display of contemporary art. To recapitulate, two significant examples of this are found in collector Patrick Charpenel's donation of 150 artworks to the permanent collection of Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC) and Moisés Cosío's funding of a new wing at the Museo Tamayo. Although my investigation indicates that collector-led initiatives are broadly responsible for the promotion and exhibition of contemporary art, the recent move towards more open collaboration with public exhibition spaces is an progressive means of pooling resources that, crucially, will benefit the public by making contemporary art more accessible while enabling the preservation of Mexico's visual culture. The escalating costs of buying art mean that state-owned museums are increasingly reaching out to collectors for loans or sponsorship; similarly, the fundraising required for public museums can be accelerated by combining forces with the private sector. In turn, the expense of building and running a foundation or exhibition space means that partnering with public museums provides collectors with an opportunity to share their collection on an established cultural platform.

The traditional museum strategy of 'collect, preserve and interpret' is being replaced by a more sustainable model that prioritizes visitor experience: the future of the exhibition space will be a shared enterprise whereby site-specific temporary installations, public workshops, artist residencies and guest curators breathe new life into a permanent collection. This cycle of activity keeps an institution dynamic

and relevant by presenting multiple narratives to its audience; the Fundación Jumex, in particular, appears to behave as a modern *kunsthalle* rather than a traditional museum space. Professor Robert R. Janes has written extensively on the sustainability of museums and believes ‘there is a lot of redundant collecting going on. There are many institutions that hold several of the same or similar objects, which costs a lot of money and does not benefit the public. There needs to be more discussion of the creative use of collections as well as limits to collecting. Endless acquisitions seems rather unprofessional’³⁹⁰. I share this view and would also add that by working together, rather than in competition, public and private cultural initiatives are able to complement one another by providing broader access to a more diverse selection of exhibitions and events. To own a private art museum while supporting external cultural institutions and projects does not dilute the collector’s objectives, and will ultimately only bring further benefit to the public. Furthermore, ownership may not always be coherent with a collector or institution’s long-term goals of bringing art to the public: the needs of the visitor must be aligned with a museum’s acquisition strategy if the purpose of the space is to engage with its audience through art.

A deciding factor in the sustainability of the collector-led initiatives profiled in my research is the development of a culture of collecting, by which I mean the creation of an active community of patrons united in their interest in promoting and investing in contemporary art. My investigation reveals three principal parties who are responsible for this phenomenon: PAC (Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo) has proved an invaluable resource in stimulating both a public interest in cutting-edge contemporary art projects as well as building a community of corporate and individual sponsors. The non-profit organization coordinates a range of cultural events, the most influential being SITAC, an annual symposium for artists, curators and critical theorists. Eugenio López Alonso has also contributed towards this new culture of collecting by promoting Mexico as a country with an innovative tribe of contemporary art collectors. His development of Fundación Jumex as a multidimensional arts organization with a public commitment has set a standard for his fellow collectors as it continues to pioneer new ways of engaging with local communities through contemporary art. Zélika García, co-founder of contemporary art fair

³⁹⁰ Conversation with author 06.08.2015

Zona Maco, must also be recognised for her efforts in cultivating a network of collectors, gallerists and advisors who invest their time, money and expertise into Mexico's burgeoning contemporary art scene.

The current generation of contemporary art collectors represents a new cultural infrastructure in Mexico which has more freedom of expression than its predecessors. Museologist Rene Cepeda described to me how his generation, 'now in our thirties, were the first generation that was exposed to a new world via the internet; we noticed that there are things outside of Mexican culture. We are not at the age where we are running Bellas Artes or CONACULTA - those are run by people with a more traditional view of Mexican art. As soon as my generation starts taking over within the next decade, we are going to see a transition in how art is understood. Ideas that break from traditional museum spaces, such as mobile galleries, seem a good way to go'³⁹¹. In addition, my research indicates that the freedom of younger independent institutions such as Museo Jumex (or organisations such as PAC) to commission more experimental projects will enrich Mexico's visual culture by providing greater access to works that might have been considered unsuitable for public funding. Private arts patronage is not bound to adhere to conventional cultural policy and as such is able to attract artists whose work demonstrates a more adventurous or challenging aesthetic.

Social Engagement.

One of the more revealing ways of assessing the long-term commitment of private cultural initiatives is by looking at the level of involvement they have with the local community. The social imprint of collector-led museums, residencies and libraries are as relevant to a collector's legacy as his acquisition strategy; ideally, consideration of the benefits of social engagement should be integrated into initial plans for development, rather than an afterthought. One of the most meaningful ways of achieving this connection is by providing an educational programme or resource that offers the visitor a valuable

³⁹¹ Conversation with author 05.08.2015. The mobile gallery Cepeda refers to is Moisés Cosío's Alumnos47 art bus, described in a previous chapter: *The New Generation*.

learning experience. Knowledge-based exchanges between visitors and museum staff facilitate a more open communication than conventional lectures or guided tours, and help to dissolve the view of a museum as a hostile environment. The energy of a public exhibition space comes from its audience rather than its permanent collection - the art is simply the resource: ‘We must realise that the halls and art objects are but the container, whose content is formed by visitors’³⁹² observed Georges Bataille. By placing the visitor experience at the nucleus of museum activity, enduring connections can be made between the art on display and the public.

A key step in using art as a tool for social engagement relates to understanding how it can benefit the local community. The collectors included in my research have developed distinctive methods of sharing their love of art with a wider audience, through building libraries (Cervantes, López, Cosío), collaborative workshops (Suro, Ashida), public exhibition spaces (López, Coppel) and pioneering creative partnerships (Charpenel, Autrey). My findings reveal that these individuals used contemporary art as an effective channel to connect with local communities, reaching a cross-section of students, artists, museum professionals, families and tourists; contemporary art has a power to capture the public imagination through its immediacy and dynamism, its potential to ‘point to the future as a place of imminence’³⁹³, explains cultural critic Nestor García Canclini. These entrepreneurial collectors are rejecting conventional means of arts patronage or display, instead seeking out innovative collaborations that democratize the way in which art is experienced. For some, the desire to make a civic contribution is a primary incentive for building a collection, while for others it is a secondary outcome. Fundación Jumex, in particular, is concerned with using art to build links with communities outside its museum: ‘I consider it a social tool to transform the world specifically with art’, director Charpenel said in 2012. ‘It has a social character, and that is concerned with opening a space for reflection. Through this, it can be a vehicle for change that provides an opportunity to think about present political, economic and social

³⁹² Georges Bataille, ‘The Museum’, *Documents Magazine*, 1930

³⁹³ Nestor García Canclini, *Art Beyond Itself: Anthropology for a Society without a Storyline* (Duke University Press, 2014)

conditions³⁹⁴. Independent curator Patricia Martín shares Charpenel's vision for art as a transformative power: 'I believe in the power of art to chart our worldwide view'³⁹⁵ she has said.

In the third chapter of Part One, I identified a series of obstacles that can prevent collector-led initiatives from being accepted as authentic cultural resources. There can be considerable amount of doubt targeted towards patrons whose philanthropy generates a public profile, and these allegations tend to revolve around the exploitation of visual culture as an opportunity to display power. While it is necessary to evaluate the motivation of wealthy collectors who claim to act in the service of public good, I have found that by assessing their long-term objectives (specifically sustainability and social engagement) it is possible to determine the integrity of their proposals. In her analysis of museum culture and citizenship, Carol Duncan describes how 'vanity and the desire for social status and prestige among nations and cities as well as among individuals are motives for founding or contributing to art museums, as they were in the creation of princely galleries. But such motives easily blend with sentiments of civic concern or national pride'³⁹⁶, an analysis which resonates with the verdict presented in my research.

Urban Renewal

There are interesting parallels between Miami's regeneration through its cultural sector (specifically contemporary art) and what is happening in Mexico. The success of privately-funded arts foundations in Miami, such as those owned by Don and Mera Rubell, Martin Z. Margulies and Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz, together with the phenomenal success of contemporary art fair Art Basel Miami Beach are emblematic of their city's cultural progression. In particular, each private art collection represents the conversion of personal wealth into a source of public culture and this has had a profound impact on the city's landscape and its reputation as a platform for contemporary art; the city is a success story of urban

³⁹⁴ Leslie Moody Castro, *Interview with Patrick Charpenel* Fluent Collaborative Magazine Issue 192 15.06.2012

³⁹⁵ *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art*, 182

³⁹⁶ Carol Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship' from *Exhibiting Cultures* ed. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Smithsonian Inst., 1991), 91

renewal. Miami also has important links with Latin American culture and behaves as a ‘corridor’ between the U.S. and Mexico for many collectors and contemporary artists, and I believe this cross-pollination is one of the reasons why certain models of private arts patronage have developed amongst Mexico’s collector class. There are, of course, significant economic and social differences between the two cities: a fundamental challenge for Mexican collectors will be in delivering on their social-engagement programs in a country where wealth is highly polarized. Although several of the privately-funded arts projects mentioned in my research are concerned specifically with reaching people who typically do not have access to contemporary art (Alumnos47’s mobile art library, the CIAC sculpture garden in Culiacán, Fundación Jumex’s outreach programmes), it is unrealistic to expect these enterprises to be responsible for an arts-led urban regeneration on a wider scale. The weaving workshop Taller Mexicano de Gobelinos and ceramics factory Cerámica Suro in Guadalajara, while not defined as regeneration projects, are interesting commercial and social enterprises in that they employ local artisans in connection with producing contemporary art projects, and are partly responsible for promoting the city as a ‘production paradise’³⁹⁷ that offers fine artists the opportunity to work with unusual materials and skilled practitioners.

Through the way they are using their collections, Eugenio López Alonso, Patrick Charpenel and Agustín Coppel are promoting contemporary art as a social investment as much as a cultural one. This is one of the more propitious outcomes in my study of the evolution of the private art museum in Mexico because it demonstrates how collector-led initiatives can be of wider social benefit. What the current generation of collectors is doing is significant because their activity is shaping Mexico’s cultural identity as well as changing the way the public engages with contemporary art. However, it is difficult to assess the full impact of their enterprise because there is at present no quantifiable data relating to my research project. This limitation is linked to the comparative youth of programmes and patron-collaborations profiled in *The Current Generation* chapter of my thesis, none of which can count longer than 15 years in development.

³⁹⁷ Charlotte Burns, ‘Latin America Focus: The Rush to Get Things Made’, *The Art Newspaper* 01.05.2011

Going forward, it will be more beneficial for cultural institutions to measure their impact by gathering information on core values, calibre of staff and emphasis on educational programmes, while harvesting knowledge acquired from attendance figures, visitor feedback and focus groups. My research demonstrates that privately-funded cultural enterprises are increasingly taking the opportunity to implement a business model management strategy alongside curatorial expertise in the running of their exhibition spaces, residencies and programmes, which is a refreshing strategy for non-profit arts organisations. My investigation also revealed that in Mexico, visiting contemporary art museums is in general not yet considered a 'leisure activity'; however, I believe that by focusing on social engagement, education and sustainability, the new wave of collector-led museums will succeed in repositioning the gallery experience as more accessible and rewarding. For many collectors, the ultimate expression of their passion for contemporary art is the decision to open a public 'space'. My investigation demonstrates that Mexico has established itself as an incubator of artistic talent through a variety of collector-led initiatives, ranging from manufacturing and display to publishing and education. Today, independently-funded exhibition spaces are being developed as civic resources and creative laboratories, and this represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of the private art museum in Mexico. The response from local communities will shape the direction of their progress and legacy.

Bibliography

- Ades, Dawn. *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era 1820-1980*. Yale University Press and South Bank Centre L London, 1989.
- Ambrosi, Ana Paula, Saragoza, Alex M. and Silvia D. Zárate (eds.). *Mexico Today: An Encyclopaedia of Life in the Republic*. ABC-CLIO, 2012.
- Fernández, Miguel Ángel. *Coleccionismo en México*. Museo del Vidrio, 2000.
- Baddeley, Oriana and Fraser, Valerie. *Art and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Latin America*. Verso, 1989.
- Becker, Howard S. *Art Worlds*. University of California Press 25th Anniversary Edition, 2008.
- Benítez Dueñas, Issa. (ed.). *Crónicas del paraíso: arte contemporáneo y sistema del arte en México*. Ephemera, 2002
- Beverly, John and Oviedo, José (eds.). *The Postmodern Debate in Latin America*. Duke University Press, 1995.
- Chase, Gilbert, *Contemporary Art in Latin America*. Free Press, 1970
- Franco, Jean. *The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist*. Penguin, 1970.
- Georges Bataille, "Museum," in *Encyclopedia Acephalica: Comprising the Critical Dictionary and Related Texts*, eds. Georges Bataille, Isabelle Waldberg, and Robert Lebel, trans. Iain White. Atlas Press 1995
- Belk, Russell W. *Collecting in a Consumer Society*. Routledge, 2001.
- Becker, Howard S. *Art Worlds*. University of California Press, 1982.
- Blom, Philipp. *To Have and to Hold: An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting*. The Overlook Press, 2002.
- Brett, Guy. *Transcontinental: Nine Latin American Artists*. Verso London, 1990.
- Brooksbank Jones, Anny. *Visual Culture in Spain and Mexico*. Manchester University Press, 2007.
- Buck, Louisa and Greer, Judith. *Owning Art: The Contemporary Art Collector's Handbook*. Cultureshock Media, 2006
- Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Ethnography, Literature and Art*. Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Coffey, Mary K. *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture: Murals, Museums and the Mexican State*. Duke University Press, 2012.
- de Lara Rangel, María Eugenia. *Dolores Olmedo Patiño*. Museo Dolores Olmedo, 2003
- del Conde, Teresa. *Una mujer en el arte mexicano: memorias de Inés Amor*. IIE-UNAM, 1987
- del Conde, Teresa. *Una visita guiada: breve historia del arte contemporáneo de México*. Plaza Janés, 2003.
- Debroise, Olivier and Medina, Cuauhtémoc (eds.). *The Age of Discrepancies: Art and Visual Culture in Mexico 1968-1997*. Turner / UNAM 2007
- Doroshenko, Peter. *Boutique Museums: Private Art Spaces and Personal Visions*. Gestalten Verlag, 2009
- Edwards, Steve. *Art and Its Histories: A Reader Yale*. University Press, 1998.
- Elsner, John and Cardinal, Roger (eds.). *The Cultures of Collecting*. Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Falk, John H. *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*. Left Coast Press, 2009.
- Frank, Patrick. *Readings in Latin American Modern Art*. Yale University Press, 2004.

- Garduño, Ana. *El poder del coleccionismo de arte: Alvar Carrillo Gil*. UNAM, 2009.
- Gallo, Rubén. *New Tendencies in Mexican Art: The 1990s*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- García Canclini, Nestor. *Art Beyond Itself: Anthropology for a Society Without a Storyline*. Duke University Press, 2014.
- García Canclini, Nestor. 'Cultural Reconversion'. *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, 1992.
- Garrigan, Shelley E. *Collecting Mexico: Museums, Monuments and the Creation of National Identity*. University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- Gerlis, Melanie. *Art as an Investment?* Lund Humphries, 2014.
- Goldman, Shifra M. *Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Goldman, Shifra M. *Contemporary Mexican Painting in a Time of Change*. University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Goodwin, James. *The International Art Markets: The Essential Guide for Collectors and Investors*. Kogan Page, 2009.
- Greenblatt, Stephen J. *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*. Routledge, 2007.
- Guggenheim, Peggy. *Out of This Century: Confessions of an Art Addict*. André Deutsch, 1979.
- Henning, Michelle. *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*. Open University Press, 2006
- Herrmann, Frank. *The English as Collectors: A Documentary Chrestomathy*. Norton, 1972.
- Higonnet, Anne. *A Museum of One's Own: Public Collection, Private Gift*. Periscope Publishing, 2009.
- Holo, Selma and Álvarez, Mari-Tere (eds.) *Beyond the Turnstile: Making the Case for Museums and Sustainable Values*. AltaMira Press, 2009.
- Idema, Johan. *How to Visit an Art Museum*. Bis Publishers, 2014.
- Jacobson, Marjory. *Art and Business: New Strategies for Corporate Collecting*. Thames & Hudson, 1993.
- Janes, Robert R. *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?* Routledge, 2009.
- Janes, Robert R. *Museums and the Paradox of Change*. Routledge, 2013.
- Jimenez, José. *Al final del eclipse: el arte de América Latina en la transición al siglo XX*. INBA 2001.
- Kandell, Jonathan. *La Capital: The Biography of Mexico City*. Random House, 1988.
- Karp, Ivan and Levine, Stephen (eds.). *Exhibiting Cultures*. Smithsonian Institute, 1991.
- Keens, W. et al. (eds.). *Arts and the Changing City: An agenda for urban regeneration*. British American Arts Association, 1989.
- Lindeman, Adam. *Collecting Contemporary*. Taschen, 2006.
- Lucie-Smith Edward. *Latin American Art of the 20th Century*. Thames & Hudson, 1993.
- McGuigan, J. *Culture and the Public Sphere*. Routledge, 1996.
- Mosquera, Gerardo. 'Against Latin American Art'. *Contemporary Art in Latin America*. Artworld / Black Dog Publishing, 2010.

- Mosquera, Gerardo. (ed.) *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*. London Institute of the International Visual Arts, 1995.
- Mraz, John. *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity*. Duke University Press, 2009.
- Muensterberg, Werner. *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*. Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Niémant, Caroline (ed.) *An Exploration of the Mexican Contemporary Art Scene*. Peeping Tom's Digest #2, 2011.
- Oles, James. *The Gelman Collection of Mexican Art*. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1996.
- Pearce, Susan M. (ed.). *Interpreting Objects and Collections*. Routledge, 1994.
- Peters, Tom and Waterman Jr Robert H. *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*. Profile Books, 2004.
- Ramírez, Mari Carmen (ed.). *Collecting Latin American Art for the 21st Century*. MFAH ICAA, 2002.
- Ramírez, Mari Carmen. 'Beyond "The Fantastic": Framing Identity in U.S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art', *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*. Ed. Gerardo Mosquera. Iniva, 1995.
- Razo, Vicente. *The Official Museo Salinas Guide*. Santa Monica: Smart Art Press, 2002.
- Rochfort, Desmond. *Mexican Muralists*. Laurence King Publishing, 1997.
- Rodrigues Wildholm, Julie. *Escultura Social: A New Generation of Art from Mexico City*. Yale University Press, 2007
- Sánchez, Osvaldo. 'Mejor cómprate otro avión: dilemas del coleccionismo de art contemporáneo en México'. *Hablando en plata: el arte como inversion*. ed. Arturo Galán de la Barreda. Landucci, 2002.
- Segre, Erica. *Intersected Identities: Strategies of Visualization in 19th and 20th Century Mexican Culture*. Berghahn Books, 2007.
- Serota, Nicholas. *Experience or Interpretation: The Dilemma of Museums of Modern Art*. Thames and Hudson, 1996.
- Snyder, C. R. and Fromkin, Howard L. *Uniqueness, the Human Pursuit of Difference*. Springer, 1980
- Stewart Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Duke University Press, 1993.
- Theran Newton, Susan (ed.). *Leonard's Price Index of Latin American Art at Auction*. Mass. Auction Index, 1999.
- Traba, Marta. *La Pintura Nueva en Latinoamérica*. Librería Central Bogotá, 1961.
- Vaessen, J. 'The inflation of the new: art museums on their way to the 21st century', *Art Museums and the Price of Success*. Boekman Foundation, 1993.
- Vergo, P. (ed.) *The New Museology*. Reaktion Books, 1989.
- Wagner, Ethan and Wagner, Thea Westreich. *Collecting Art for Love, Money and More*. Phaidon, 2013.
- Watson, Sheila (ed.). *Museums and their Communities*. Leicester Readers in Museum Studies-Routledge, 2007.
- Winter, Jay. *The Legacy of the Great War: 90 Years On*. University of Missouri Press, 2009.
- Wood, J. N. 'Citizens or consumers: today's art museum and its public'. *Art Museums and the Price of Success*. Boekman Foundation, 1993.
- Wynne, D. (ed.). *The Culture Industry*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1992.

Yúdice, George. *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Duke University Press, 2003.
 Yúdice, George. 'Postmodernity and Transnational Capitalism in Latin America', *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

Articles (links where available)

- Adam, Georgina. 'Art Market Analysis'. *The Art Newspaper*. 08.06.2011
- Aguirre, Mariana. 'Are There Any Good Contemporary Art Museums in Mexico?'. *Art21*. 10.08.2012
<http://blog.art21.org/2012/08/10/are-there-any-good-contemporary-art-museums-in-mexico/>
- Aguirre, Mariana. 'Interview with Cuauhtémoc Medina'. *Art21*. 10.08.2012
<http://blog.art21.org/2012/08/03/interview-with-critic-curator-and-art-historian-cuauhtemoc-medina-part-1/#.V2WQmiMrIk8>
- Anderson, Maxwell L. 'Metrics of Success in Arts Museums'. *The Getty Leadership Institute*, 2004.
<http://cgu.edu/pdf/files/gli/metrics.pdf>
- Anderson, Maxwell L. 'Gather, Steward and Converse'. *The Art Newspaper*. 08.06.2010
- Arts Council of England. 'An Urban Renaissance: The Role of the Arts in Urban Regeneration. The case for increased public and private sector cooperation'. *London: Arts Council of England*, 1998.
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160204101926/http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/documents/publications/393.pdf>
- Baddeley, Oriana. 'De-Frocking the Kahlo Cult'. *Oxford Art Journal*. Vol 14 no. 1 (1991) pp10-17
- Baddeley, Oriana. (ed.) 'New Art from Latin America'. *Art and Design* 37, 1994
- Baniotopoulous, Evdokia. 'Art for Whose Sake? Modern Art Museums and their Role in Transforming Societies: The Case of the Guggenheim Bilbao'. *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies* Ubiquity Press, November 2001. <http://www.jcms-journal.com/articles/10.5334/jcms.7011/>
- Bonami, Gabriel. 'The Early Adventures: Gabriel Orozco'. *Tate Etc* Issue 21 Spring 201.
<http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/early-adventures>
- Buck, Louisa. 'Art Basel Miami Beach: Let the bright lights shine'. *The Daily Telegraph* 06.12.2013
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/art/18033/art-basel-miami-beach-let-the-bright-lights-shine.html>
- Burns, Charlotte. 'Latin American Focus: Where Public Meets Private'. *The Art Newspaper* Issue 24 01.05.2011.
- Calvert-Hollis, James. 'Understanding the Visitor Experience: Collecting Experiences'. *University of Lincoln*, 2014.
<https://ulincoln.academia.edu/JamesCalvertHollis>
- Ceballos, Miguel Ángel. 'Coleccionismo, la otra vocación artística'. *El Universal* 02.04.2006.
<http://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/cultura/48350.html>
- Cuevas, José Luis. 'The Cactus Curtain'. *Evergreen Review: The Eye of Mexico* ed. Barney Rosset and Donald A Allen. Grove Press Vol. 2 Number 7, 1959.

- Garduño, Ana. 'Naufragios del coleccionismo de arte'. *Discurso Visual*, June 2005.
<http://discursovisual.net/dvweb04/confrontacion/confgarduno.ht>
- Garduño, Ana. 'Museums and Collections in Mexico since 1800'. *World Scholar: Latin America and The Caribbean*. Gale Cengage Learning, 2011.
https://www.academia.edu/5681201/_Museums_and_Collections_in_Mexico_since_1800_
- Garduño, Ana. 'Alvar Carrillo Gil: A Singular Collector'. MACG-INBA, 2014
https://www.academia.edu/12250542/Alvar_Carrillo_Gil_A_Singular_Collector
- Genocchio, Ben. 'The Discourse of Difference'. *Third Text* #43, 1998, 3-12.
- Green, Tyler. 'Turning Museums into a Vanity Space'. *The Art Newspaper*. Issue 207 November 2009.
- Hershaw, Eva. 'In Mexico, Artists Can Pay Taxes With Artwork'. *The Atlantic Magazine* 11.04.2014.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/04/in-mexico-artists-can-pay-taxes-with-artwork/360519/>
- Heyman, Stephen. 'A New Status Symbol for Billionaires: Art Museums'. *The New York Times* 19.11.2014.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/20/arts/international/the-new-status-symbol-for-billionaires-art-museum.html>
- Jarrett, Christian. 'Why Do We Collect Things?'. *The Guardian* 09.09.2014.
<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/nov/09/why-do-we-collect-things-love-anxiety-or-desire>
- Jauregui, Gabriela. 'Mexico City Report'. *Frieze Magazine* 01.01.2011.
<http://www.frieze.com/article/mexico-city-report>
- Kliment, Alexander. 'FT Report: Latin America, Social Enterprise and Philanthropy' *Financial Times* 01.12.2011
<http://www.ft.com/latin-america-philanthropy-2011>
- Korek, Bettina. 'Patronage 2.0 in Mexico City'. *Huffington Post* 29.01.2014.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bettina-korek/philanthropy-20-in-mexico_b_4691394.html
- Lozano, Ivan. 'La Planta: Contemporary Art in Guadalajara' *Glasstire* January 2008.
<http://glasstire.com/2008/01/03/la-planta-contemporary-art-in-guadalajara/>
- Malkin, Elisabeth. 'In Mexico, An Ownership Fight Sends A Collection into Hiding'. *The New York Times* 26.11.2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/27/arts/design/27gelm.html>
- Mauk, Ben. 'The Rise of the Private Art "Museum"'. *The New Yorker* 28.05.2015.
<http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/the-rise-of-the-private-art-museum>
- Menezes, Carolina. 'Pinta: The Latin American Art Fair'. *Studio International* 03.06.2011.
<http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/pinta-the-latin-american-art-fair>
- Molina, Carlos. 'Fernando Gamboa y su particular versión de México'. *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* XXVII , número 87, 2005.
<http://www.analesiie.unam.mx/index.php/analesiie/article/view/2194/2771>
- Moody Castro, Leslie. 'Interview with Patrick Charpenel'. *Fluent Collaborative* Issue 192 June 2012
<http://www.fluentcollab.org/mbg/index.php/interview/index/192/128>

- Nicholson, Louise. 'Collectors and Collecting: Creating a Scene'. *Apollo Magazine* December 2008
<https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-191014964.html>
- Oles, James. 'Coleccionar a la mexicana'. *Reforma* 22.09.1999
- Oles, James. 'Bárbaros en el templo'. *La invención de lo cotidiano* INBA-MUNAL 2008
https://www.academia.edu/14466225/B%C3%A1rbaros_en_el_templo_el_arte_contempor%C3%A1neo_en_el_MUNAL
- Plattner, Stuart. 'A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Market for Contemporary Fine Art'. *American Anthropologist* 100 1998.
- Poniatowska, Elena. 'He tenido tanto he querido'. *La Jornada*, August 2002.
http://www.lainsignia.org/2002/agosto/cul_020.htm
- Preston, Julia. 'A Museum in Mexico Suddenly Shuts Down'. *The New York Times* 23.09.1998
<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/23/arts/a-museum-in-mexico-suddenly-shuts-down.html>
- Riding, Alan. 'Arts Abroad'. *The New York Times* 24.03.1999.
<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/03/24/arts/arts-aabroad.html>
- Rosenbaum, Lee. 'Should We Be Cynical About International Museum Franchises?'. *Apollo Magazine* December 2014. <http://www.apollo-magazine.com/forum-cynical-international-museum-franchises/>
- Santillan, Melinda. 'César's Palace'. *Zero One Magazine* Issue 8 07.08.2013.
<http://zero1magazine.com/article/cesars-palace/>
- Enriquez, Mary Schneider. 'Silvia Pandolfi: History and High Tech'. *ARTNews* April 1996.
- Smillie, Dirk. Mexican Medici Forbes 2005 Collectors Guide 12.27.2004.
<http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2004/1227/162.html>
- Stellweg, Carla. 'We are Here, They are There'. *Guggenheim: Latin America Perspectives* 07.04.2015.
<https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/map/we-are-here-they-are-there>
- Teets, Jennifer. 'Curatorial Practices: Cuauhtémoc Medina'. *LatinArt.com* 19.02.2006
<http://www.latinart.com/aiview.cfm?id=117>
- Urquizar Herrera, Antonio. 'El coleccionismo en la formación de la conciencia moderna del arte: perspectivas metodológicas'. *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)*, Spain.
<http://www2.uned.es/artepensamiento/texto%20urquizar.pdf>

Museums:

Museo Amparo

Calle 2 Sur No. 708, Puebla.

www.museoamparo.com

Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil (MACG)

Av. Revolución 1608, San Ángel, Mexico City.

www.museodeartecarrillogil.com

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey (MARCO)

Zuazua y Jardón, Centro, Monterrey.

www.marco.org.mx

Museo de Arte Moderno (MAM)

Av. Paseo de la Reforma, Bosque de Chapultepec, Mexico City.

www.museodeartemoderno.com

Museo de Arte Zapopan (MAZ)

20 de Noviembre, Zapopan.

www.mazmuseo.com

Museo de los Artes

Juárez 975, Guadalajara.

www.musa.udg.mx

Museo Diego Rivera de Anahuacalli

Museo 150, Coyoacán, Mexico City.

www.museoanahuacalli.org.mx

Museo Dolores Olmedo

Av. México 5843, La Noria, Mexico City.

www.museodoloresolmedo.org.mx

Museo Franz Mayer

Av. Hidalgo 45, Centro Histórico, Mexico City.

www.franzmayer.org.mx

Museo Nacional de Antropología
Av. Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City.
www.mna.inah.gob.mx

Museo Nacional de Arte (MUNAL)
Tacuba 8, Centro Histórico, Mexico City.
www.munal.mx

Museo Rufino Tamayo
Paseo de la Reforma 51, Bosque de Chapultepec, Mexico City.
www.museotamayo.org

Museo Soumaya
Plaza Loreto, Av. Revolucioón y Río Magdalena, Mexico City
Plaza Carso, Lago Zúrich, Mexico City.
www.soumaya.com.mx

Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC)
Av. de Los Insurgentes sur 3000, Coyoacán, Mexico City.
www.muac.unam.mx

Collections:

Akaso / Sergio Autrey
www.akaso.com.mx/proyecto

Colección Isobel y Agustín Coppel (CIAC)
www.coppelcollection.com

Colección / Fundación Jumex
Museo: Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra 303, Mexico City
Biblioteca: Vía Morelos 272, Ecatepec de Morelos, D.F.
www.fundaciónjumex.org

Cerámica Suro / José Noé Suro
Cuauhtémoc 157, Rancho Blanco, Tlaquepaque. www.ceramicasuro.com

Colección Femsa
www.coleccionfemsa.com

Fundación Alumnos 47 – Moisés Cosío
www.alumnos47.org

Fundación Televisa
Av. Vasco de Quorioga 2000, Santa Fe.
<https://www.fundaciontelevisa.org/tag/arte/>

Art Fairs:

ARCO Madrid
http://www.ifema.es/arcomadrid_06/

Art Basel Miami Beach
<https://www.artbasel.com/miami-beach>

Frieze London
<https://www.frieze.com/fairs/frieze-london>

PINTA London
<http://www.pintalondon.com/>

Zona Maco
<http://zsonamaco.com/>

Academic Research:

Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas
Calle Mario de la Cueva, Coyoacán, Mexico City.
www.esteticas.unam.mx

Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de Artes Plásticas (CENDIAP)
Torre de Investigación Nacional de las Artes, Río Churubusco 79, Coyoacán, Mexico City.
www.cenidiap.net

Discurso Visual

www.discursovisual.net

Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes de México (CONACULTA)

<http://www.cultura.gob.mx/>

International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA) at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston

5100 Montrose Boulevard, Houston TX. USA

<http://www.mfah.org/research/international-center-arts-americas/icaa-about/>

Simposio Internacional de Teoría sobre Arte Contemporáneo (SITAC)

www.sitac.org

List of interviews:

Patrick Charpenel May 2010

James Oles October 2011

Patricia Sloane February 2012

José Noé Suro February 2012

Gregorio Luke May 2015

Carla Stellweg June 2015

Rene Cepeda July 2015

Robert R. Janes July 2015

Miscellaneous:

Galería de Arte Mexicano (GAM)

Gobernador Rafael Rebollar 43, San Miguel Chapultepec, Mexico City.

<http://www.galeriadeartemexicano.com/>

MEXARTDATABASE

www.mexartdb.com

Oficina para Proyectos de Arte

Av. 16 de septiembre 730 piso 23, Guadalajara

<http://www.opa.com.mx/>

Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo (PAC)

Paseo de Las Palmas 820, Mexico City.

www.pac.org.mx

Sotheby's (auction house)

Campos Eliseos 325-5 Planco, Mexico City

www.sothebys.com

Morton Subastas (auction house)

Monte Athos 179, Lomas de Chapultepec, Mexico City.

www.mortonsubastas.com