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# Mexico's two biggest collectors join forces to form new cultural compound in Mexico city

Eugenio Lopez Alonso's Jumex Collection is to open a building near Carlos Slim Helú's new Soumaya Museum

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The two biggest art collectors in Mexico are joining forces to show their holdings in a new museum complex in a park in the centre of Mexico City.

The cultural compound, part of which is already under construction, will include a major display of the Jumex Collection of contemporary art assembled by the Jumex fruit-juice heir Eugenio Lopez Alonso. This will be near the Soumaya Museum whose holdings of old masters, Spanish colonial and Mexican folk and modern art belong to telecommunications magnate Carlos Slim Helú, whose estimated fortune of more than \$50bn makes him the second richest man in the world after Bill Gates.

The two museums will face one another across a landscaped park in the capital's Colonia Irrigación neighbourhood adjacent to the affluent Polanco district.

The projects are part of a 50,650 sq. m area being developed by Grupo Carso, a company owned by Mr Slim. His 1,600-piece art collection includes paintings by El Greco, Murillo, Zurbarán, Titian, Cranach, Brueghel the Younger, Hals, Van Dyck and Rubens, plus many impressionists and post-

impressionists, more than 130 sculptures by Rodin, and numerous Mexican modern and Spanish colonial pieces. Since 1994, it has been displayed in the Soumaya Museum (named after Mr Slim's late wife) in the San Angel district of the city. Its new home, now under construction, has been designed by his son-in-law Fernando Romero, an architect who worked with Rem Koolhaas. Mr Romero has designed a five-level glass-and-steel tower that narrows in its middle. It will have 6,000 sq. m of galleries including 1,500 sq. m for temporary exhibitions, five times the space of the existing Soumaya Museum which is expected to close when the new museum opens in 2010.

Earlier this year Grupo Carso sold 2,500 sq. m of adjacent land to the Jumex Foundation which plans to build a new museum for Mr Lopez's 1,700-piece collection of contemporary art which includes work by Olafur Eliasson, Andreas Gursky, Doug Aitken, Gabriel Orozco, Francis Alÿs, and many other blue-chip and emerging artists. Rotating selections and loan shows have been displayed in a warehouse-like gallery at the Jumex factory north of the city since 2001, but in 2005 Mr Lopez announced plans to build and operate a second museum in the city centre. The foundation's director, Abaseh Mirvali, says an architect will be selected this month from a shortlist that includes major international figures; she would not disclose who they are.

The new building will provide space for the permanent collection and temporary shows, as well as project rooms for commissions of emerging artists not possible at the existing space. Educational programmes will expand with classrooms and a 6,500-volume library, with office space for the foundation, the country's leading sponsor of contemporary art. The budget and timetable for the project are yet to be determined. "We need to be up and going in late 2010 because Soumaya officials predict that is when they will be ready and we want to open our museums together," says Ms Mirvali.

Mr Lopez, 39, has been acquiring significant works for several years, most recently purchasing a Jeff Koons Elephant (part of an edition of five) from Gagosian Gallery, two paintings and a painted-plaster work by Richard Prince, as well as a range of emerging Mexican artists.

He sits on the board of the New Museum of Contemporary Art whose new building in Manhattan (p16) has a floor named in his honour, and also the

Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art where he created a fund to acquire Latin-American art. His foundation launched an initiative to send the collection to the Mexican provinces, with an inaugural show in Puebla early this year. The Jumex Foundation also co-commissioned a work by Mexican artist Carlos Amorales shown last month at the Performa in New York, and a Santiago Sierra piece loaned to the new University Cultural Centre Tlatelolco in Mexico City (right).

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