

Mexico's MACO remains a modest fair but draws major dealers

Exhibitor numbers are up 50%, with a few big names such as Hauser & Wirth

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The third Mexico Arte Contemporaneo fair (MACO)—held in Mexico City last month was a respectable effort by a city gradually catching up with the burgeoning international art market. With 77 galleries, up almost 50% from 53 last year, the scale and casual atmosphere are closer to the Nada fair (held in Miami) and Pulse (held in Miami and New York) than to the high-end glamour of Art Basel and Frieze.

The rough-hewn multi-storey Expo Reforma convention centre, which lacks air conditioning, is just off Paseo de la Reforma. Galleries are scattered on five floors with the top level reserved for emerging dealers: the consensus is that the fair should relocate to posher quarters. About a third of the dealers were from Latin America, such as Mexican mainstays OMR and Nina Menocal, plus a handful of international heavyweights such as David Zwirner and Hauser & Wirth.

Attendance at the five-day event was hampered by traffic-clogging Labour Day demonstrations and the exodus of collectors for holiday-weekend getaways. Mexican First Lady Marta Sahagún de Fox came to the opening, though some dealers were dismayed that her security team closed the first floor to collectors for several hours.

Sales proved uneven, with foreign gallerists complaining that customs fees were excessive and the 15% value added tax too high, though the \$150 per sq.

ft stand fee provided an affordable opportunity to meet new collectors.

The fair was founded in Monterey in 2002 by Zelika Garcia, and moved to Mexico City a year later. Ms Garcia organises the fair with her husband, Spot magazine publisher Enrique Rubio. She says she turned away as many galleries as she accepted, and expects the fair to continue growing.

A VIP programme included museum shows of Ed Ruscha, Jesus Rafael Soto, Francis Alys and Thomas Glassford. There were also visits to the private collections of Taco Inn owner Cesar Cervantes and Eugenio Lopez, who was showing Los Angeles and Mexican artists from his Jumex Collection at the company's warehouse north of the city.

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