



Photos by Dante Barrera

The National Print Museum

Where World Graphics Meet

The National Print Museum occupies a late nineteenth-century neoclassical building in Santa Veracruz Plaza in Mexico City's Historic Downtown Area. Created in late 1986, its

object is to research, promote and disseminate graphic work of all styles by contemporary artists from Mexico and abroad, including work that goes beyond traditional prints. Print is defined in this case

as the production of multiple originals from a single matrix, be it a plate, a stencil or another medium.

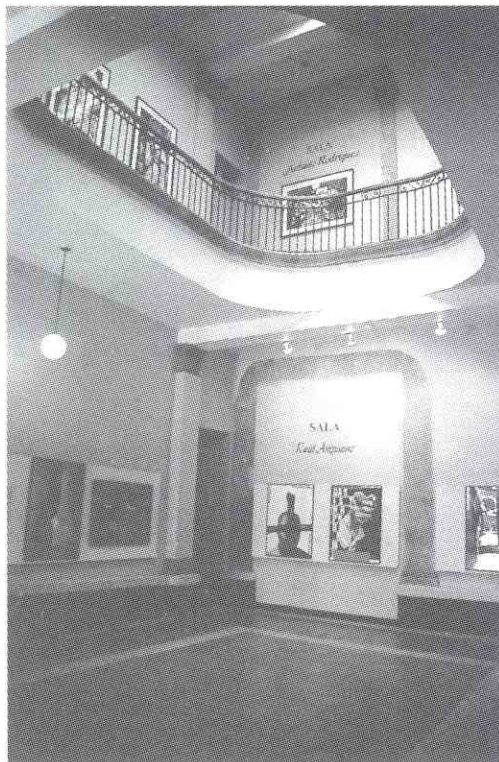
The museum is managed under the auspices of the National Council for Cul-



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ture and the Arts (Conaculta) and the National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA). Its permanent collection numbers approximately 40,000 works, including every kind of print: woodcuts, metal engraving, lithography, serigraphy and neographics (new, non-traditional techniques such as photocopying, computer printing, mimeographing), among others.

The museum does more than simply put on exhibits. It also has an educational aim: before mounting each exhibit, it does extensive research into the work and the context in which it was produced. It also contributes to the dissemination of printing history and techniques and their place in the visual arts in general



through guided tours, consulting services, courses and lectures.

The two-story building that houses the museum is divided into two vestibules (named after Raúl Anguiano and Antonio Rodríguez) and four rooms (named for José

Guadalupe Posada, Pablo O'Higgins, Francisco Díaz de León and Francisco Moreno Capdevila).

To give the public a panorama of what the museum holds, the art history department has arranged the exhibits in chronological order.

The permanent exhibit is an introduction to the nature of printing and its techniques, where visitors, particularly young people, can observe and familiarize themselves with the tools used by master engravers.

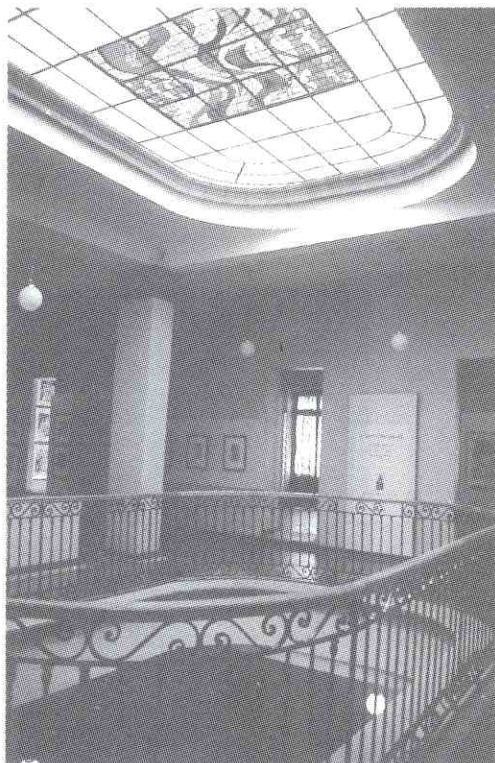
The impossibility of showing all the works in the museum's collection means many are awaiting exhibition in the different shows planned throughout the year. The plan is established on the basis of an



Art History Dissemination Program prepared by museum authorities in coordination with international cultural bodies and foreign governments through their embassies to bridge the gaps between the different periods of printing and the public. The program also includes the celebration of important events in world art and organizing fora to pay homage to artists, like the retrospective of Francisco Moreno Capdevila's work or the 1998 commemoration of 60 years of the Popular Graphics Workshop.

The museum holds approximately 30 shows a year with samples of artists' work from around the world, but mainly from Mexico, representative of centuries of print work, from pre-Hispanic engraving, done with seals and *pintaderas*,¹ to twentieth century works exhibited in the national print rooms, including those from the last INBA Biennial, contemporary graphics—or neo-graphics—and the production of printed graphics abroad, in Europe, the United States, Canada, the former socialist countries, Asia and Central and South America.

Special mention should be made of the revolutionary period, represented by the engravings of José Guadalupe Posada and others like caricature artist Constantino Escalante and engraver Manuel Manilla, and of print in the 1920s because of its relationship to the founding



of the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists; the work of the Free Schools, the National School of Plastic Arts (formerly the San Carlos Academy), and the birth of the School of Painting, Sculpture and Engraving. Those were times when print was at the service of social struggles with the creation and development of the

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Popular Graphics Workshop from 1937 to 1960.

The National Print Museum was the second of its kind to be founded in the world and the first in Latin America. To take its collection to more and more members of the public, the museum participates in cultural decentralization efforts by sending exhibits around the country, as well as gathering prints made in the rest of the republic and promoting them in

Mexico City.

It holds two yearly contests open to the general public: "A Modern Interpretation of Don Quixote de la Mancha" and an Annual Miniprint Room. Also planned are international exhibits about new alternatives in print, more lectures and round table discussions to accompany some exhibits, research about new techniques, projects for recovering graphic works, and even children's summer workshops to sensitize possible future artists, beginning by teaching them to look at a work of art.

All this is a means to an end: establishing an even closer link between artistic practice, its representatives and research and teaching of art history. **NMM**

NOTES

¹ A utensil consisting of a small notched wheel connected to a handle that allows it to spin used for making engravings. [Editor's Note.]