

Two Art Museums

Juan Manuel Ramírez Palomares*



Cuauhtlaxtlan State Tourism Office

Main entrance to the People's Museum.

The city of Guanajuato is renowned as the birthplace and scene of important events in Mexico's history, for its particular urban layout and architecture, for its mineral wealth and for its contributions to art and culture.

This small city, home to university teachers and students, is both traditional and cosmopolitan, with many little corners just right for contemplation and enjoyment. Its museums are outstanding. Here we feature two of them.



Daniel Munguía

Facade of the Baroque Chapel, People's Museum.



Daniel Munguía

José Chávez Morado mural, Baroque Chapel interior.

PEOPLE'S MUSEUM OF GUANAJUATO

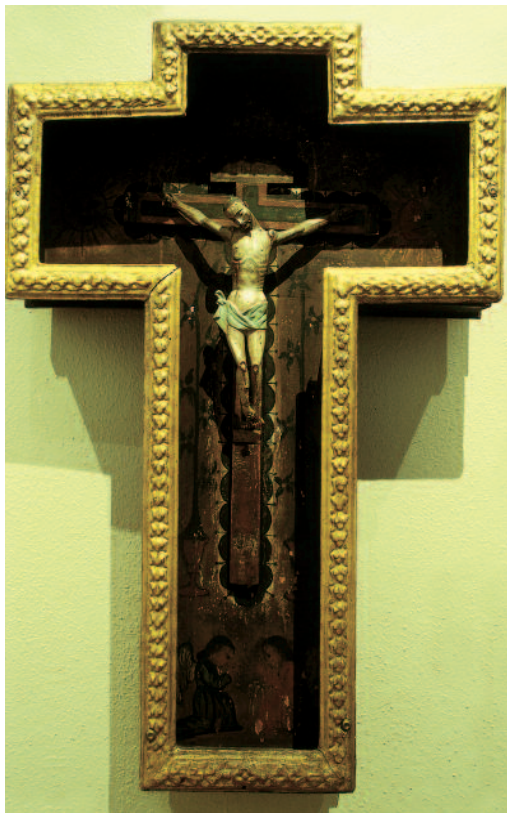
The Museo del Pueblo de Guanajuato (People's Museum of Guanajuato) is housed in what was the seventeenth-century home of the Marquis de Rayas, the oldest noble mansion in the city.

The Marquises de Rayas were great promoters of change in this mining town, contributing

to its economic development, giving part of their fortune to build important works like the curtain of the La Olla Dam.

The second Marquis de Rayas, Don Mariano de Sardaneta y Llorente, was a supporter of independence and a personal friend of founding father Don José María Morelos y Pavón. He supported the insurgent army financially and, after the War of Independence, was one of the signers of the document formalizing the creation of the new country.

* Coordinator of Literature, Theater and Reading Promotion, Guanajuato State Cultural Institute.



Daniel Munguía

Colonial art from the People's Museum permanent collection.



Daniel Munguía

Facade, Olga Costa-José Chávez Morado Museum.

The People's Museum
of Guanajuato was opened in 1979 on
the initiative of painters José Chávez
Morado and Olga Costa.

The People's Museum of Guanajuato was opened as a cultural center in 1979 on the initiative of painters José Chávez Morado and Olga Costa, who donated their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century art collections to make up part of the museum's permanent collection. Among the institution's objectives are exhibiting art from both the past and the present and fostering plurality of thought.

Today the museum has three floors of exhibition halls. One is dedicated to the permanent collection, including eighteenth- and nineteenth-century religious and civic art, with works by such renowned artists as Miguel Cabrera (eighteenth century), Hermenegildo Bustos, Juan Nepomuceno Herrera and José María Estrada (nineteenth century), as well as a small pre-Hispanic and folk art collection.

The building still contains the family chapel with its original baroque facade with pilasters in the form of inverted pyramids. Inside is a mu-

ral by José Chávez Morado painted as a triptych that depicts the story of one stage in the history of Mexico.

Other spaces in the museum are used to show the very diverse themes, idioms and techniques of the work of well known contemporary artists, including José Chávez Morado, Masaharu Shimada, Juan Manuel de la Rosa, Pedro Asencio, Jesús Gallardo, Juan Soriano and Manuel Álvarez Bravo.

The State Institute of Culture supports the museum's activities, which in addition develops programs for schools and social institutions and extension services to all the municipalities in the state.

Museo del Pueblo de Guanajuato
Pocitos # 7
Downtown
Tel. (743) 229-90
Open Tuesday to Sunday
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.



The ground floor of the Olga Costa-José Chávez Morado Museum holds the artists' personal belongings.

The Olga Costa-José Chávez Morado
Museum retains its
original structure and
functions.

OLGA COSTA-JOSÉ CHÁVEZ MORADO
ART MUSEUM

The history of the building that houses the Museo de Arte Olga Costa-José Chávez Morado (Olga Costa-José Chávez Morado Art Museum) could be told like a legend. Two beings bathed in light, overwhelmed by form and color, took up residence around the well of the Peñafiel mine on a mining hacienda, located in the Paxitlán ("place of pastures") neighborhood, one of the roads most traveled by Purépechas and Chichimecas.

Two artists lived there: Olga Costa grew her garden and José Chávez Morado contemplated the history of his people. They did part of their visual work here. Olga, full of color, passionately interpreted Mexican features; José, an example of the dignity of giving oneself over to life's just causes, is the edifier of a difficult simplicity.

The Olga Costa-José Chávez Morado Art Museum is, then, a love story, like the inscription of their two names on a tree trunk.

After living in the house for 46 years, they donated it to the public. It opened its doors in April 1993, and Olga died two months later. Her ashes are deposited in a large urn in the patio in which a beautiful *siempreviva* has been planted.

The site retains its original structure and functions: visitors can view the furniture and objects collected by its previous owners throughout the world and over time: ceramics, embroidery, gold work, tin devotional folk paintings and altarpieces. Marvels.

The museum also has temporary exhibits of work by contemporary artists.

Museo de Arte Olga Costa-José Chávez Morado
Pastita # 158 Barrio de Pastita
Tel. (473) 109-77
Open Tuesday to Sunday
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.



Traditional majolica ware. Olga Costa-José Chávez Morado Museum.