



Photos by Vicente Cuijosa



The Alfredo Zalce Contemporary Art Museum

Juan Manuel Morelos*

The Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Alfredo Zalce (Alfredo Zalce Contemporary Art Museum) opened its doors in 1971. Originally called the Contemporary Art Gallery, it is located in what was the San Pedro neighborhood of the colonial city of Valladolid, today Morelia. The building that houses the museum was built in the San Pedro Forest, renamed the Cuauhtémoc Forest in 1916. The land originally belonged to indigenous people, inhabitants of San Pedro, who in 1854 turned it over to the state government in exchange for the Aguacate Ranch. Around 1861, it was divided into lots and the new owners built country houses and great gardens on them. The house, built in 1897, belongs to the *Porfirian* period and is architecturally eclectic but reminiscent of the French style. In the early twentieth century it belonged to Manuel Ibarrola, who left

it to his widow, María Concepción Macouzet, in 1937. After passing through different hands, the state government decided to acquire the building to create what is now the Alfredo Zalce Contemporary Art Museum.

The first expositions held there included kinetic art, sculpture and a permanent exhibit of Loraine Pint's photographs. In 1972, the gallery's name was changed to the Contemporary Art Museum. It closed in late 1980 for two years of restoration.

In 1982, it was re-inaugurated with a magnum exhibition of Michoacán artist Alfredo Zalce's work. Three hundred pieces were put on display, among them painting, engraving, sketching, duco lacquer, sculpture, tapestry and ceramics. It was one of the most complete expositions ever held of Zalce's work; it had great ideological content and aimed at showing the pictorial movements of the moment and reaffirming national values. In 1993, "Alfredo Zalce" was added to the museum's

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Alfredo Zalce, *Morelia at Night*, 120 x 153 cm, 1996 (tapestry).

Alfredo Zalce,
From the Kitchen,
84 x 61 cm, 1974
(acrylic on plywood).



Alfredo Zalce,
Model, 91 x 110 cm, 1969
(oil on Masonite).



Alfredo Zalce, Sentinel "Cat in Fishbowl," 40 x 56 cm, 1980
(wood cut, colored by hand on paper).

name in recognition of this great Michoacán artist, a representative of the so-called Mexican school of painting and the last exponent of Mexican muralism, as well as an untiring social fighter and promoter of the visual arts.

THE PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

The museum has a permanent collection of Zalce's paintings and sculpture, of which only 13 pieces are on display at any given time; they are rotated constantly with pieces kept in storage. The garden boasts three Zalce sculptures: on the left are *Dance* and *Acrobat*, while in front of the building is *Woman*. The museum also has different collections of work by internationally renowned artists, among them: graphic work by Efraín Vargas; a Chicano silk screen collection; posters; photography by different artists; sketches and paintings by Luis Sahagún; a collection of engravings by José Guadalupe Posada; and works by Manuel Manilla, Octavio Vázquez Gómez, José Luis Cuevas, Vicente Rojo, Pedro Banda, Heriberto Juárez, Luis Palomares, Octavio Bajonero, Jesús Escalera, Francisco Huazo, Javier Cruz, Enrique Ortega, Tina Modotti, Joan Miró, Detapless, Rufino Tamayo, Mimmo Paladino, Juan Manuel de la Rosa,

Francisco Toledo, Nierman, Tebó, Lotar Müller and Carlos Gutiérrez Ángulo.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The museum hosts conferences, lectures, seminars, specialized courses, workshops, concerts and operas. It organizes temporary exhibits year round. Also, to promote the participation of children and young people, the institution has developed different educational programs, including guided tours and workshops.

The museum also houses an independent Documentation and Research Center for Performing Arts; here, the general public can access materials about dance, theater, opera, music and performance art. **MM**

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Alfredo Zalce
Avenida Acueducto 18
Centro
Morelia, Michoacán
Phone: 312-5404, 312-4544
Hours: Tuesday to Friday: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

BRIEF NOTES ON ALFREDO ZALCE

Alfredo Zalce was born in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, in January 1908. His parents, Ramón Zalce and María Torres, were professional photographers. Alfredo was drawn to painting at an early age and at 16 entered the National Fine Arts School's prestigious San Carlos Academy in Mexico City. There, he studied under Germán Gedovius, Leandro Izaguirre, Sóstenes Ortega, Carlos Dublán, José María Lozano and Juan Pacheco, among others. In addition to being an outstanding painter, Zalce was a teacher and promotor of the visual arts: he founded the Taxco School of Painting and Sculpture in 1930 in the state of Guerrero; he was drawing master at several primary schools in Mexico City; he taught at the San Carlos Academy La Esmeralda National School of Visual Arts; and in 1950 he was named director of the People's Fine Arts School in Morelia.

Zalce produced a volume of lithographs, *Prints of Yucatán*, in addition to innumerable murals all over Mexico. As part of the touring exhibition of the National Visual Arts Front, in 1955 and 1956 he visited different Eastern European countries, including Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, the former Soviet Union and the Democratic Republic of Germany. Two years later he participated in the



Alfredo Zalce, *History of Industry and Commerce*, 2.78 x 36.92 m (acrylic on wall).

First International Biennial in Mexico City. His works are shown in many museums, among them, New York's and Stockholm's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Modern Art Museum, the national museums of Warsaw and Sofia, Mexico City's Modern Art Museum and the Alfredo Zalce Contemporary Art Museum in Morelia. He received innumerable honors and prizes during his fruitful career, which only ended with his death in January 2003. He was the last of the great exponents of the Mexican school of painting and Mexican muralism.



Mexico Becomes a City, 31.5 x 40 cm, 1947 (engraving on paper).



1968, 40 x 29 x 36.5, 1972 (bronze).