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CROSS-POLLINATION AT SAPS: INTERVIEW TO TANYA MELÉNDEZ

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Cross-Pollination: Masterpieces of the Collections is a collaborative workshop of students from Mexico City and New York, organized by the Sala de [Arte](#) Público Siqueiros (SAPS), Atelier Romo and the Museum of Fashion Institute of Technology (MFit). The project goal is to inspire students through the exploration of museum collections, in addition to providing the opportunity to work in teams with students from other countries.

Tanya Melendez, curator of education and programs to the public in the MFit, who we had the opportunity to interview, talked that the workshop is rooted in two different projects, one originated in the MFit and the other in Atelier Romo, which joined through a partnership with the SAPS. She also told us that Atelier Romo project, which is in its fourth edition this year, was designed by Sebastian Romo from the glut of view that colleges do not end up implementing all of its resources in the education of students and removed from the [curriculum](#) as basic tools and practices that can only guarantee a poor future performance.

Cross-Pollination, an annual workshop created by Tanya Melendez is always in connection with an exhibition of the permanent collection of the museum. This is the third time the workshop takes place. Its main objective is to provide a platform for students from different cultures to establish contact, exchange information and ideas and collaborate on how they will do when working in the field of creative arts: with colleagues from other disciplines, with different talents and interests. One of the reasons that started the series of Cross-Pollination workshops, says Melendez, was to give students in the United States information on what happens outside the country, particularly in the fields of fashion and design. Also, the intense collaboration with students in other nations give them the opportunity to understand the culture of another country in depth and unbiased.

One purpose of this workshop was to bring students to the works of David Alfaro Siqueiros, about the role played by this important muralist in the designs presented, Melendez said:

For students in Mexico who developed various creative projects, which included a fashion collection, a mural and a series of videos, Siqueiros's proposal regarding the dynamics poliangularity was that had the most impact. Contrary to the idea of Sebastian Romo, who thought that the political issue of the work of Mexican muralist would be dominant, inspiring more depth to the students of the Atelier were the formal and geometric, rather than the content and context existing in the work of Siqueiros. These formal and constructive elements referred them directly to the work in the field of fashion displayed by their counterparts in the MFit. For Romo, fashion is an extension of public art, a sort of personal manifesto helps denote profession, an action that says how we understand and do, even a mood. It is a portable architecture, that lives directly to the context and the landscape in which we live. In this context, it is not unusual for more than half of the garments made for this project by Atelier students have moved directly to architectural construction.

Similarly, the [show](#) Fashion A-Z in the Museum at FIT was a prime source, as Tanya points out, the students learned about the rigors of the practice of fashion. The two main themes were, first, that the quality of manufacturing is essential for a garment can aspire to be a masterpiece in fashion. Secondly, the design is a discipline which seeks solutions to problems. The workshop began with sessions in which students of FIT gave presentations on selected designers by Sebastián Romo's and Tanya Melendez. In the words of Tanya "introductory sessions were simple but highly effective. They gave students the opportunity to interact and share concerns. Using a platform like Skype, which allowed real-time communication, face to face, was instrumental. Through these sessions, it was possible to add fields and go gradually introducing students to new information, first about style, and then about Siqueiros and artist Tania Candiani. It enabled them to understand the processes and approach to fashion MFit acquies".

For the curator, thanks to Cross-Pollination, the ideas of the students in New York about Mexico changed. Both the work of Siqueiros as contact with the group of Atelier and Analia Sonoloff (who at that time working in the SAPS) made a strong impression. Tania Candiani's participation was particularly relevant as allowing to extend the conversation to the topics and contemporary Mexican art as relevant to both countries such as the border between Mexico and the United States (focusing on the city of Tijuana), and provided access to images of the city that is a mystery to those who have not visited. During the interview, the students had to analyze and understand issues that they had never presented as the complex situation of the border in Tijuana and the meaning and scope of the narco. These results were unexpected for the workshop.

On the pedagogical proposal of the workshop, Melendez said that started with the idea that education as a mere

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transmission of knowledge is an inefficient model and exhausted. The main objective of this workshop was to prepare students to be self-sufficient in generating knowledge in any field. She also noted that a multidisciplinary is critical at this time of acceleration by which humanity is going, where even the simplest everyday objects such as cell phones, are multifunctional. This workshop gave participants the opportunity to work the way they would in a professional context. They worked together to give life to a product to which each participant adds elements which make the whole.

Parallel to the workshop, released a book consisting of an essay and two interviews conducted by three students from New York that contains pictures of the educational process at the Atelier Romo and photo shoots at the SAPS taken by the team from Mexico. The book also features a facsimile of Siqueiros' text "How a mural is painted" (translated into English for the first time) and a series of images of how students painted a mural of the atelier.

Finally, Melendez told us about the role played by the three institutions to make this project:

The project was rooted in a common interest in developing work based on collections. The SAPS opened the doors of its files and murals, while the MFit focused on exhibition AZ FASHION: Highlights from the Collection of The Museum at FIT, Part One. The students of the Atelier Romo and the Fashion Institute of Technology were able to investigate, analyze, experiment, write and create based on those collections, that served as sources of information and inspiration. The Atelier Romo gave space and direction, so that students could do their research and projects. Sebastian Romo was instrumental in the progress and achievements during the six month duration of the project. The MFit provided the experience and information about the world of fashion. Gave the students new insights into the minutiae of the study of fashion in the museum context. Also, Tanya Melendez worked with the students of New York in the conduct of the trial and interviews, making sure to deepen their knowledge about the work of their counterparts in Mexico and Mexican culture in general.



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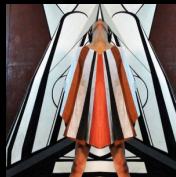


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