



## Mexico Art Journal: Mexico City

by Leslie Moody Castro June 22, 2019

We landed in Mexico City later than we expected. Two of the three of us were home and eager to get into our own beds. We were parting ways that night for the first time in a full week. Traveling is always easy alone, when you can set your own time limits, plan visits and meetings to suit your own schedule, and hibernate on the nights you need to. Traveling for the first time with friends can sometimes feel like rolling a square wheel, until a groove sets in and you've all found your roles and begin to read each other's minds.

Once we landed, we hopped into our separate Ubers and set off in our different directions, with a plan to meet at my house in the morning before our first artist visit. Mexico City is structured very differently from Guadalajara and Monterrey. Here, we would visit residencies, the SOMA school, and artists we had wanted face time with for some time. Mexico City was more about catching up, and ending with a reunion party for everyone who'd supported our trip with recommendations and introductions, as well as our Unlisted Projects artists alumni. It was good to be home, and I knew the days of reconnecting would be long ones. That first night back home was a quiet one.

I woke up the next morning with a swollen throat and a mild fever. I blamed the altitude and pollution. We had an early visit with Armando Rosales. I got myself together and out the door. We were meeting Armando at the Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo (ESPAC), a collecting foundation that invites young artists to work with the collection and produce exhibitions in its space. We were lucky enough to be in the city to catch *Distancia Doble* (Double Distance), a collaboration between Armando and Ana Bidart, whom we would meet later that afternoon. Armando gave us a walk through of the show, and a digital studio visit to show us his work trajectory and his development as an artist. His work takes quotidian objects or social norms and subverts them. It's a gesture as simple as learning to write with the left hand by repetitively writing phrases from historical textbooks — phrases which just happen to be socialist-leaning. Or using a standard shipping crate leftover from an art fair as a roving exhibition space. As we stood there listening to him, I felt myself declining.





We had three more visits that day and our next stop was to Ana Bidart's studio. Ana's work is steadily gaining respect in the city's art community. As we walked into her apartment she handed me a warm cup of tea and sat us all on the couch. She began to tell us about the importance of the line in her practice — it is the foundation of all her work and a point of departure for the quiet gestures she makes. Her work is not medium-specific, necessarily, but dependent on the time spent churning an idea in her head. Ana takes the necessary "thinking" time she needs to fully develop a project. At times that's only a few weeks or months, and other times an idea develops over years.