

Friends of Oaxacan Folk Art – A Decade of Accomplishments!

FOFA was formed in 2007 to preserve and promote the remarkable folk art traditions of Oaxaca, Mexico, which are endangered by regional and global economic challenges that significantly impact the folk art community. We are proud to look back at what we have accomplished in 10 years:

Encourage young Oaxacan folk artists to develop their identity as artists and stewards of their communities' historic traditions.

FOFA has sponsored four art competitions for artists 30 years of age and under. These ambitious and increasingly popular events have been organized together with the Museo Estatal de Arte Popular de Oaxaca (MEAPO). Each resulted in an exhibition and accompanying catalog.

- In 2008, 65 artists submitted entries to compete in *Oaxacan Popular Art in the New Millennium: Nurturing Young Artists of the State of Oaxaca*. The exhibition and catalog encompassed 36 young artists together with 10 master folk artists.
- In 2011, our contest *Shaping the Future: Young Folk Artists of Oaxaca*, resulted in a catalogue and exhibition featuring 41 young artists.
- In 2013, 119 young artists competed for a place in the exhibition and catalogue *Celebrating Mother Earth: Inspiration for Oaxaca's Folk Arts*, which featured 56 artists.
- In 2016, at FOFA's competition *Honoring Our Roots, Exploring Our Dreams*, 106 artists submitted works, resulting in an exhibition catalogue featuring 60 young artists. Back-to-back exhibitions at MEAPO and the Fundación Alfredo Harp Helú have been organized for November 2016-January 2018.

Provide technical and marketing assistance to help artists weather the vagaries of a changing and uncertain market.

Our growing community of young folk artists, now numbering about 150, has been offered free educational workshops which we've designed with our collaborators in Oaxaca.

- English Language Skills for Communicating with Clients (12 weeks);
- Computer Skills for Sales (email, digital photos, client lists, social media) (10 weeks);
- Oaxacan and Mexican Art History (12 weeks);
- History of Our Cultural Roots, focusing on the cultural contribution of indigenous cultures to Mexico and historic events in the Zapotec and Mixtec worlds. Field trips to major archaeological sites and museums gave many artists their first exposure to such treasures as Monte Alban and the Mitla ruins (12 weeks);
- Marketing Principles and Strategies, to promote communication and sales with potential clients via tools such as product cards; strategic display of work; effective photography; and proper packaging and packing; with one-on-one consultations to determine the most important marketing focus for each individual's work (two to three days);
- Use of Social Media for Marketing, including exposure to internet tools, along with concepts, strategies, and technical requirements (two-day);
- Exhibiting Your Work Through Telling Your Personal Story, to help artists highlight the beauty of their work and its meaning within the artist's personal history (one-day);

- Communicating with Value, to help individual artists convey what is special about their products, including their relationship to one’s history, culture, tradition and its quality (one-day);
- Innovation and Design, to help artists grapple with “how do new ideas emerge?” Sources of inspiration and the value of collaboration with other artists (one-day);
- Design Innovation and Utility, to define and explore new product concepts, including a case study of the impact of tourism on textile art (two-day); and
- Our Handicrafts, Ancient Heritage and Cultural Heritage of Indigenous Communities, to reflect on the importance of the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation; identify the elements, materials, techniques and symbols typical of the traditional practice and one’s family, social and community legacy; and assume stewardship role in preserving their cultural heritage, and as members of the younger generation, to revalue and give new meaning to this inheritance (multi-day).



Increase public exposure of Oaxacan folk art in the US and Mexico to raise awareness, appreciation and marketability of these remarkable art forms

- Sponsor visiting artists to the New York area. FOFA has brought four Oaxacan folk artists to the U.S. and organized local school demonstrations, public lectures and receptions;
- Annual holiday craft sales, folk art fundraisers combined with celebrations of Mexican food, music and mezcal;
- FOFA’s website (www.fofa.us), a “go-to” site for people travelling to Oaxaca –soon to be upgraded and improved!
- *Tips for Tourists*, FOFA’s English and Spanish language pamphlet on how to visit artists in their home studios in Oaxaca, with contact information and directions (now being updated);
- Participation with local cultural entities to promote Oaxacan folk art, including Summer Stage in Central Park, the Mexican Cultural Institute, and the Art Institute of New York.

FOFA is grateful to Los Amigos del Arte Popular, LADAP; the Western Union Foundation; and to the scores of generous individuals who have supported our work over the years.