

Sharing El Pochotle's Knowledge and Experience with Winners of FOFA-MEAPO's Contests for Young Folk Artists

The Pochotle A.C. collective presented a workshop for winners of the 2016 and 2018 contests for young folk artists sponsored by Friends of Oaxacan Folk Art (FOFA) in collaboration with Museo Estatal de Arte Popular Oaxaca (MEAPO). This event was created by FOFA, a 501 (c)(3) organization based in New York with financial support from a grant by Los Amigos del Arte Popular (LADAP). The Alfredo Harp Helú Foundation (FAHHO) provided a state of the art classroom at Centro Cultural San Pablo and Museo Estatal de Arte Popular Oaxaca (MEAPO, the State Museum of Popular Art Oaxaca) contributed in announcing and more generally supporting the workshop.

Miniaturist teacher Jesús Edel Bustamante Cruz, one representative of the Collective, explained that they have 10 years' experience with the idea of helping other young creators to form their own collectives in their different communities. In an interview following the workshop, he explained: "El Pochotle is a collective that is dedicated to art and culture and to researching, creating, disseminating and giving workshops in the southern highlands. On this occasion, Maestro Víctor Bustamante and I wished to share with them how this collective works, how it emerged and what we are doing in the Miahuatlán community to be able to publicize this art of the miniature that is made in this community. We do it by giving workshops, creating exhibitions, researching, going to the communities and asking the elderly about the legends they know and encouraging children to make their miniatures based on those legends."

He continued, "We are doing the same with the young creators of Oaxaca. They make a work of art while listening to a legend. In this case, it is the legend of the Lion's Stone from Santa María Coatlán in the area of Miahuatlán. Prior to recording this, we had to investigate, write, and make an audio geared to children and youth and produce a work of art in miniature related to this legend."

He regretted that they have not had official support, either from institutions in their own community of Miahuatlán, or other institutions that merely fulfill their roles by granting signatures or the normal procedures. The State government only supports projects that are already established or that are already their obligation. Things we require, such as transportation, materials or tools to continue with the workshops, are considered beyond their scope. He added that in their own community they do not have space for exhibitions: "We are looking for spaces in business or somewhere else to exhibit our creations." He thanked the individuals who have offered their spaces for some exhibitions of this works of art work.

Edel Bustamante highlighted the support provided by Maestro Carlomagno who, through MEAPO, has promoted this type of activity, supporting miniature carvers in matters such as finding collectors to buy the work, and inviting them to workshops, conferences and courses. They have also searched for spaces so that he and his fellow

collective members and artists can express what they feel and what they have in Miahuatlán.

This workshop, held at the facilities of the San Pablo Cultural Center, fulfilled its objective and it is expected that the young creators who attended have been able to learn and can replicate this approach in their different communities and in the city of Oaxaca. At the same time members of the Colectivo Pochotle will continue with its creative process in their community, doing the same dissemination work in the southern highlands.

Attendees thanked the presenters for what they had shared. Many of them said that this was new, and that they have a new vision of what can be done with this type of art.

This workshop by Colectivo Pochotle is part of a series of workshops that have been given nationally and internationally, in Oaxaca and its surroundings, as well as in other communities to which they are invited including Mexico City and other states. They have given workshops in Italy to primary and secondary school children about miniature carving.

The members of this group work in different artforms, such as carving in wood, Pochotle spine and bone, modeling in clay, and painters and muralists. They have the support of an UNAM researcher, the anthropologist, Damián González Pérez, and Lic. Elvia who is also a researcher and is currently studying for her master's degree at UNAM; this has helped them to continue learning more about the art of miniature in communities.

According to the anthropologist Damián González Pérez the work carried out by the collective is important not only for its creative or artistic value, but also for highlighting significant aspects of the communities from which they originate. Workshops that are taught in the most remote communities offer an opportunity to learn local narratives, knowledge about territories, community life forms, as well as to question themselves as a group and to generate a process of reflection within these communities with children – using the modality of wood or bone carving.

He further explained that the work they are doing involves rescuing wood or bone carving, activities that were being lost. In so doing they have contributed to boosting creativity and artistic activity again, while also motivating others to resume these arts. They are recreating an artistic tradition, which they are spreading in very remote communities of the southern highlands such as San Marcial Ozolotepec, San Miguel Suchixtepec, Huixtla, Xitla, or San José Miahuatlán among others.

The members of the Colectivo Pochotle congratulated the young creators who attended the workshop, and invited them to continue with their art as well as to share their knowledge with other artists. In this way they will receive feed back and continue to learn more. Similar greetings were sent by Maestro Raúl Armenta, Sr. Pedro Fabián, Dr. Damián González Pérez, representatives of the Alfredo Harp Helú Foundation and

special guest Maestro Carlomagno Pedro, Director of MEAPO, who has devoted special attention to the preservation and appreciation of Oaxacan traditions.