

SOMA: Summer in Mexico

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This summer I am interning with SOMA, a non-profit art collective based in Mexico City. The organization has two principal aims: to provide excellent post-graduate fine arts education, and to foster communication and growth with the city's art scene.

Here is SOMA's web page:

<http://somamexico.org/en/>

For my internship I am working with SOMA's summer artist residency program. This summer SOMA accepted 29 international artists of diverse backgrounds and ages into the program. During the course of eight weeks, the participants will undergo individual critiques, attend lectures, visit local artists' studios and some of the city's greatest artistic attractions, and work on their own projects. Although there will be an exhibition at the end of the program, participants are encouraged but not required to present completed work. I think this is an excellent amendment to the traditional residency program format because it allows the artists proper freedom in the creative process and eases pressure so that they can soak up what they are learning and let the information take its due course.

See participant biographies here:

<http://somamexico.org/participants-soma-summer-2014/>

Thus far my internship responsibilities have been facilitative and administrative. In other words, I help the organization and the summer residency program run smoothly. This means that as an organizer I have been able to go on all the studio visits and other excursions and learn alongside the residents, which is an invaluable experience.

While looking for an internship over the school year, I kept my eyes peeled for an opportunity that would help me improve my Spanish skills. I found out about SOMA through my Spanish major advisor, and from there initiated contact with the organization and completed interviews myself.

My first days at SOMA have been great. With the program, I have had the opportunity to hear some incredible speakers and visit interesting places, including a handful of local artists' studios, Lucha Libre (Mexican wrestling), and Tepito, Mexico's biggest black market. Attached, see this article on Tepito's unique independent economy by Alfonso Hernández, a local of Tepito and expert on black markets, from whom I was lucky enough to get a guided tour of the market (Hernández's article begins on page six of the PDF).

<http://pankov.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/17886868-selforganisation-countereconomic-strategies11.pdf>

Lectures and visits with the program as well as personal conversations with the visiting artists have deepened my understanding of art, creativity, and livelihood. I

am looking forward to learning more in the weeks to come. Exposure to such a creative group of people has already sparked a handful of ideas and plans in me. i hope that in addition to acquiring administrative and organizational skills, the remainder of my time with SOMA will encourage personal growth and creative insight as well.

View from the top of a mountain hike in Tepotzlan, a small town about an hour away from Mexico City.