



# Mexico

## Design the city of the future, preserve biodiversity

In Guadalajara, local residents are taking over an open dump to plant trees and turn it into a natural space in the city. The painter Priscilla Martinez has seized on a practice rooted in Mexico's political history, muralism, to support citizen mobilisation.

### COUNTRY

Mexico

### LOCALISATION

Guadalajara, State of Jalisco

### DATES OF THE PROJECT

June 2021 – November 2021

### ARTISTS INVOLVED

Priscilla Martinez

### PARTICIPANTS

Residents of the Tlaquepaque district

### FUNDING

Fonds Metis Budget 15,000 €

### PARTNERS

State of Jalisco

### SECTOR AND SDG'S



## URBAN GROWTH AND BIODIVERSITY AT RISK

With its vast territory and varied ecosystems, Mexico is one of the 17 richest countries on the planet in terms of biodiversity. Faced with the many threats to its natural heritage, action needs to be taken on a variety of scales, from global to local. Guadalajara, capital of the state of Jalisco, is the country's second largest city. In recent decades, its rapid growth has led to the destruction of biodiversity. In the Tlaquepaque district, during the containment period for the Covid pandemic, local residents rallied together to take over a wasteland, an open-air rubbish dump, and oppose the authorities' plans to build a car dealership there. They cleared the land and began planting trees. It was against this backdrop that the Métis Fund, in partnership with the State of Jalisco and more specifically its Ministry of the Environment, invited a local artist to move into the neighbourhood, get to know the residents and paint a fresco on the wall adjacent to this wasteland.

## WORKING TOGETHER, IMAGINING THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

Committed to art as a vehicle for social change, Priscilla Martinez has taken up a practice rooted in Mexican tradition: muralism. Born in the revolutionary Mexico of the 1920s, when the majority of the population was illiterate, this is a political art form accessible to all, which seeks to rally people around common references through frescoes painted in public places. After studying at the National Institute of Fine Arts in Mexico City, Priscilla Martinez travelled to the United States, Morocco, France and Bosnia. During her travels, she painted frescoes, drawing her inspiration from exchanges with local people.

With the help of the Metis fund, Priscilla spent several months working on this project in her home town: 'The local people taught me a lot about biodiversity and the environment, and I think I can teach them about art and culture. We've built up a very strong relationship throughout the project – and I think it's going to last forever'.

A social mediator leads discussions with residents, and workshops are held with biologists on recognising urban flora and fauna, returning monarch butterflies to the wild, and pollination. Priscilla's monumental fresco evokes all these exchanges – the faces of local residents and the façades of houses mingle with the scarlet macaws and wild flowers – and bears witness to the citizens' initiative to transform the wasteland into a space for nature in the city.

At the heart of an area prone to tensions, the project opens up a dialogue between local residents and public authorities. The fresco both reinforces and testifies to the citizens' mobilisation, and helps to make the wasteland a sanctuary. Its unveiling mobilised a number of local decision-makers, including the Governor of the State of Jalisco, who officially declared the area an urban park, in line with the demands of the local residents.

A retrospective exhibition was held at the French embassy and then at the University of Mexico, which also organised a dialogue on building an urban community.

## THEY SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE

*"The mural is an aesthetic creation, which will remain in the public eye for generations and will carry a message of warning, mobilisation and hope."*

PRISCILLA MARTINEZ, ARTIST

*"Biodiversity is a very important issue in Mexico. We wanted to approach this issue from an artistic angle, to create different spaces for dialogue. Incorporating environmental issues into the urban landscape through a work of art is a way of bringing people together and calling for action through a sense of wonder."*

JULIETTE GRANDMAN, DIRECTOR OF AFD MEXICO

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10%

OF THE WORLD'S BIODIVERSITY  
SHELTERED IN MEXICO

10

HECTARES OF WASTELAND  
PROTECTED AS A NATURE AREA IN  
GUADALAJARA

90

PEOPLE INVOLVED