

**Exhibition:** *Rufino Tamayo: Innovation and Experimentation*

**Dates:** May 3–27, 2024

**Location:** Millard Sheets Art Center

LA County Fair, 1101 W. McKinley Ave. Pomona, CA 91768



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The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Rufino Tamayo: Innovation and Experimentation*. Rufino Tamayo (1899–1991) was a leading Mexican artist of the 20th century who achieved international acclaim. Though he was known primarily for his paintings and murals, he also created a robust body of works on paper, which provided an important avenue for formal and technical innovation. Drawn exclusively from LACMA's permanent collection, the exhibition highlights Tamayo's engagement with printmaking and also includes a selection of Mesoamerican sculpture (an important source of inspiration for the artist) from the museum's collection. Spanning over 60 years of his prolific career, *Rufino Tamayo: Innovation and Experimentation* focuses on Tamayo's longstanding interest in prints as a means of exploring new techniques and furthering experimentation. The exhibition is curated by Rachel Kaplan, Associate Curator, Latin American Art at LACMA.

*Rufino Tamayo* is the second LACMA exhibition to be presented during the LA County Fair at the Fair's Millard Sheets Art Center, an exhibition space dedicated to promoting the rich and diverse cultures that lie within L.A. County and Southern California. In 2023, LACMA announced a collaboration with the LA County Fair, as part of the museum's ongoing initiative to share its collections throughout Los Angeles County. The 102nd anniversary of the LA County Fair will celebrate the medley of communities that comprise Los Angeles County with its 2024 theme Stars, Stripes and Fun. Fair dates will be May 3–27. The exhibition is free with LA County Fair admission. More information at [lacountyfair.com](http://lacountyfair.com).

### **About the Exhibition**

The exhibition features 20 prints by Tamayo and five Mesoamerican sculptures from LACMA's collection. Tamayo is perhaps best known as a painter and muralist;

however, he was also deeply interested in experimenting with prints and finding a way to add volume and texture to a traditionally two-dimensional medium. A unifying thread in the exhibition is Tamayo's depictions of the human figure, which became progressively more abstract as he developed what he described as a universal art.

Tamayo actively collected art from the ancient Americas. He amassed more than 1,300 Mesoamerican works, which now belong to the Museo de Arte Prehispánico de México Rufino Tamayo in Oaxaca. The exhibition features five comparable objects from LACMA's collection, demonstrating the artist's fascination with this material throughout his long career.

The exhibition opens with Tamayo's large mural-size print *Two Personages Attacked by Dogs* (1983). This monumental work is a striking example of a Mixografía print, a new mixed process that allowed the artist to introduce volume and texture. Its dramatic scale emphasizes Tamayo's experimental approach to printmaking.

The main gallery delves deeper into Tamayo's printmaking endeavors, including woodcuts, etchings, lithographs, and Mixografía prints created from the 1920s through 1980s. Throughout his career, Tamayo created over 350 prints, collaborating with workshops in the United States, Mexico, and Europe as he achieved increasing international acclaim. He developed a relationship with Los Angeles, first through a residency at Tamarind Lithography Workshop and later through the Taller de Gráfica Mexicana, which relocated from Mexico City to Los Angeles as the Mixografía Workshop Gallery in the early 1980s. Works on view in this main gallery focus on his exploration of various print processes, leading to his collaboration with the Taller de Gráfica Mexicana and the development of the Mixografía technique. Digital photographs and a video projection provide a behind-the-scenes look at the making of Tamayo's Mixografía prints.

### **Exhibition Highlights**

In October 1964 Tamayo arrived in Los Angeles for a fellowship at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop. Over the course of six weeks Tamayo produced a series of 26 lithographs, including *Transparent Man* (1964). The printer's records note that Tamayo used a paper stencil for the figure, rubbing the lithographic crayon around it to create texture. This method allowed Tamayo to convey a frenetic sense of energy and instability.

In *Trembling Woman* (1974), Tamayo invokes Jackson Pollock's signature drips in the lithographic medium, achieving the texture and dynamism he appreciated in the

latter's painting. Splatters of ink overlay an outline of the woman's body, creating a "trembling" that radiates beyond the confines of the figure and into the surrounding space. *Trembling Woman* is the first print that Tamayo created at the Taller de Gráfica Mexicana, working closely with the workshop over the next several years to explore further ways to incorporate texture and volume into printmaking, a collaboration that subsequently led to the development of the Mixografía printmaking technique.

*The Personage* (1975) depicts an androgynous figure with the arms extended down and curved, forming a circle—a pose that Tamayo returned to repeatedly. A long diamond in the shape of an inverted kite extends from the head to torso, mapping a geometric scheme onto the body. Tamayo would continue to explore the shapes that compose the figure, resorting to the minimum number of forms possible to convey a sense of the human presence. Printed in Mexico, this lithograph was published by LACMA's Graphic Arts Council as part of a program featuring "modern prints by modern masters."

*Hands on Blue Background* (1979) alludes to the human figure by focusing on one specific body part: the hand. An artist's hands are instruments used to guide the paintbrush, pencil, or crayon, and appear in Tamayo's work throughout his career. In this etching, it appears as if Tamayo pressed his hands directly on to the surface of the paper, referencing the basic ideas of printmaking in which one surface is inked in order to transfer its image to another.

*Two Personages Attacked by Dogs* (1983) embodies Tamayo's interest in expanding the possibilities of printmaking. The unprecedented size introduced challenges for the Mixografía team, who designed special print- and papermaking machines to meet Tamayo's vision. Advertisements for the work's debut in Los Angeles in 1983 called the work the "largest mural ever printed." In this bold image, two menacing dogs—inspired by ancient Mexican sculpture—chase a fleeing couple, bringing to mind the biblical story of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden as well as more general feelings of human angst. The exhibition includes a video showing the making of this print.

**Credit:** This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

#### **About LACMA**

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of nearly 152,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural

heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

**Location:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. [lacma.org](http://lacma.org)

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