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# **The Legacy of the Friendship Route in the Development of Mexico City With an Inclusive, Empowering, and Equitable Perspective in Peace and Harmony**

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*The Friendship Route, is a group of sculptures built for the 1968 Olympic Games, which was intended, according to Mathias Goeritz -who conceived it-, to humanize Mexico City through art. In conjunction with three other guest sculptures, these were created by sculptors selected as far as possible based on inclusion criteria for the diversity of geographic origins, religious beliefs, races and ideologies, but also genders. Helen Escobedo and Ángela Gurria were the only two women out of a total of 22 sculptors, and they played a leading role in opening and closing this sculptural path, thus leaving a legacy in qualitative terms on the basis of these configuration guidelines regarding the importance of the women in the way of developing the country's capital city. Thus, this sculptural route, Olympic heritage of all Mexicans, has been established since those days and until today, in a paradigmatic legacy at international level, with respect to the way in which cities can be territorialized emotionally and with meaning from the sculpture.*

*Keywords: sculpture route, diversity, equity, inclusion, legacy*

## **CONTEXT OF THE CULTURAL OLYMPICS MEXICO 68 AND THE ROLE OF MATHÍAS GOERITZ**

The decade of the sixties was characterized by great social changes. These changes were achieved through different movements: pacifist, environmental, student, feminist and black civil rights movements, among others. Additionally, there was a social revolution in the areas of clothing, music, drugs and sexuality, where social taboos were broken and established norms were transformed, especially those related to racism and the role of women in society.

In terms of international politics, it was a time of great tension between the capitalist and socialist blocs, formed by the United States of America and the Soviet Union, respectively, in what was called the Cold War, which brought the world to the brink of a third world war, especially during the “Missile Crisis of 1962”, but which manifested itself in the interference of these two superpowers in local armed conflicts such as the Korean and Vietnam wars, just to mention some of the most representative ones, which became international conflicts, which joined the multiple protest movements, student and union revolts that began in France and spread rapidly in other countries, as well as the political assassinations of John F. Kennedy,

Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. (the latter for racial reasons), to describe the convulsive global geo-political environment of an era that radically disrupted the historical process of humanity, and from which the foundations were laid for many of the changes that subsequent generations have lived through.

It was in this turbulent context, where mistrust and fear of otherness reigned worldwide, that Mexico City was named host of the XIX Olympic Games by the Olympic Committee General Assembly held in Baden, Germany, in 1963. In order to achieve this designation, the Department of the Federal District (at that time, the governing body of Mexico City) had submitted its candidacy by means of a 207-page trilingual document where it not only answered the official questionnaire, but also presented a historical sketch of the city, as well as of the sporting events held in the past, complemented with a detailed report on the existing sports facilities and those to be built, as well as the weather conditions and medical opinions on the effects of the altitude at which this metropolis was located, which was an aspect that caused great debate and concern on the part of specialists in the subject, as well as various stakeholders with interests in the matter.

The decision for Mexico to host this great event may have been influenced by the positive image of then President Adolfo López Mateos (a great sports fan), who had made himself known for his foreign policy, since in the midst of the Cold War, he traveled and established international relations with several countries in favor of peace, friendship and world disarmament, trying to promote a modern image of the United Mexican States, as had been done in previous six-year terms since the government of Miguel Alemán Valdés, and to which events such as the Formula 1 Mexican Grand Prix held since 1962, and in previous six-year terms, the Pan-American Race held between 1950 and 1954, contributed in the sports field.

Another advantage was the economic stability achieved during the government of Adolfo López Mateos, thanks to his Secretary of Finance Antonio Ortiz Mena, and which was framed within a fiscal and monetary stabilization policy that was established from 1954 to 1970, known as Stabilizing Development, which resulted in a period of internal economic growth known as “the Mexican Miracle”, after which there was a sharp decline in economic development with a gradual loss of purchasing power, due to the increase in debt, the overprotection of national industries and the preponderance of public investment in the financing of projects with social returns, among other characteristics.

Once the venue for the XIX Olympic Games was secured, and even a little before, the members of the Organizing Committee were established by official decree. This committee began to operate under the responsibility of General José de Jesús Clark Flores, who would be in charge of organizing, designing and financially managing the sports facilities to be built. For this purpose, he formed an Executive Committee headed by Agustín Legorreta and Pedro Ramírez Vázquez (both as vice presidents).

At the end of Adolfo López Mateos' presidential term, his successor, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, named him president of the Organizing Committee for the XIX Olympic Games in Mexico, but this position was short-lived because a year later he had to resign due to an illness that finally led to his death. The architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez was appointed in his place and became a key element in the organization of the XIX Olympic Games, since the president of the republic in office had serious doubts about the need to hold the Olympic Games to which the country had committed itself during the last six-year term of office.

The XIX Olympic Games in Mexico was a pioneer in the planning of several aspects. One of them was the concept of integrating cultural activities in the same number as the sporting event, thus generating a true Cultural Olympic Games, which differentiates this sporting event from the 18 that preceded it, and even distinguishes it from those that have been held subsequently.

Since the creation of the Organizing Committee for the XIX Olympic Games in Mexico, it had sent letters to the different Olympic committees in order to know how the artistic activities had been developed, and the reports received showed that the artistic manifestations had been scarce and only in a commemorative way to enhance the sporting event. In this sense, it was noted that the role of sculpture in cultural celebrations had been practically non-existent, except in the city of Tokyo, where small statues with representations of Olympic themes and patterns, donated by different states, were placed to decorate the outside of the Olympic stadium.

It is important to mention that from the very beginning and even before Pedro Ramírez Vázquez took over the presidency of the Organizing Committee, the idea for the celebration of the XIX Olympic Games

in Mexico was to highlight the event through public sculpture, keeping in mind that the latter should be part of a cultural program that would complement the sports program of this international event.

When Pedro Ramírez Vázquez took over the presidency of the committee, he also looked to ancient Greece for inspiration to combine sport with art, as had been the case in the distant past of the Olympic Games. The reason for this was simple. Mexico was not a power in sports and on the contrary, its tradition and cultural richness was manifest and this event was another opportunity to present the image of a modern Mexico (different from the image that had formed the golden age of national cinema) but with a great tradition and at the same time, obeying the Hellenic spirit of the ancient Olympic Games and the philosophy of the Olympic Games of the modern era (conceived by Pierre Coubertin), by promoting cultural exchange under a framework of friendship very relevant due to the global context described above, but very appropriate according to the Olympic truce, which since the Olympic Games of antiquity, was a tradition to grant, thus generating the slogan: “Everything is possible in Peace”.

In June 1966, Pedro Ramírez Vázquez called Mathías Goeritz as his artistic advisor; he had met him during the development of the project for the National Museum of Anthropology and History, during the six-year term of Adolfo López Mateos, and knowing his ideas about bringing a sculpture symposium to Mexico, he conceived this as a summit event for the Cultural Olympic Games, due to the characteristics that would distinguish it as a compendium of experts in which a sculptural theme would be exposed and developed in a complete and detailed way, approaching it from different angles through individual, brief, synthetic and successive interventions.

Mathías Goeritz is considered part of the “Rupture Generation” of German origin, he arrived to Mexico in 1949 invited by Ignacio Díaz Morales to teach at the School of Architecture of the University of Guadalajara and remained in the country until the year of his death in 1990. Due to his origin, this artist was strongly influenced by the German expressionist movement<sup>1</sup>, as analyzed by Natalia Carriazo in the opening text of “Los ecos de Mathías Goeritz” (The Echoes of Mathías Goeritz). After leaving his native country because of World War II, he settled in Morocco and then moved to Spain where he was strongly impacted by the prehistoric art of the Altamira caves, as described by Ida Rodríguez Prampolini.

Goeritz was a contradictory artist, influenced by the revolutionary aspirations of Dadaism<sup>2</sup> that resurfaced in Mexico and his attendance to symposiums in Europe and the USA, where he learned about ambitious urban art projects. Attendance at these symposiums led him to yearn to build a Vía de las Artes and to seek the possibility of holding a Meximposium (as he called it) where he could bring together the best artists of the time. This idea matches Pedro Ramírez Vázquez's intention of a Cultural Olympic Games, so the Meximposium becomes the International Meeting of Sculptors, the most relevant event within the Cultural Olympic Games of Mexico '68 and which results in the Friendship Route.

## **THE FRIENDSHIP ROUTE, A SHOWCASE OF WOMEN'S INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE ARTS**

The ideas of Mathías Goeritz discover a fertile field with the Cultural Olympic Games proposed by Pedro Ramírez Vázquez. Having been designated artistic advisor, he began the work to make the International Sculptors Meeting (official name of the symposium) a reality, which became the culminating event and resulted in the Friendship Route, which at the time was the largest sculpture corridor and artistic exhibition in the world, since it brought together artists representing the five continents, the most representative races and religious beliefs of the planet; but also where the role of the woman sculptor became relevant.

On the other hand, in terms of their construction procedures and systems, they tried to innovate through the materials used, changing the traditional ones such as stone and metal for concrete; meanwhile, in terms of conception and design, instead of making public sculptures of figurative and nationalistic type, as they used to be until then, it was decided to implement another condition that the sculpture had an abstract cut away from ideologies of any kind, an appropriate design guideline to establish an atmosphere of conciliation and dialogue in harmony and peace, between the sculptors creators of the route.

The organization, resources and construction of the Friendship Route had great difficulties, from the selection and invitation to the different sculptors, to its construction, but it finally consisted of 19 sculptures, located along the route that went through the recently inaugurated Periférico Sur, in the section that went from the Libertador Miguel Hidalgo Olympic Village to the Rowing and Canoeing Track Virgilio Uribe, sculptural works to which three guest sculptures were added, installed in the Azteca Stadium, the State of the University City and the Juan Escutia Sports Palace.

Even though the main reason that gave meaning to the Friendship Route was the Cultural Olympic Games Mexico 68, this was not only a commemorative event of this edition of the Olympic Games, but also Mathías Goeritz's critical response to the rationalist principle of progressive urbanism typical of modern functionalist architecture, which in designing the new roads distanced the city from the spirituality that in other times characterized the great works of the past. Thus, Goeritz's ideas based on a position condemning the conception of roads as mere means of communication that satisfied the function of circulating through the city, to which he put as an alternative his proposal of aesthetic planning of the great roads, were concretized in the Friendship Route.

But it was not only the opportunity to innovate modern urbanism at an international level and link it to the experience of emotions through monumental sculpture, but also to capture in it the inclusion of the female gender and its empowerment, aspects that Mathias Goeritz achieved when he gave a privileged place to two great female sculptors at a historical moment when women were not well considered in the field of art and decided that a woman would open the Friendship Route and another woman would close it, an avant-garde decision for the time.

In order to understand the importance of this decision, we must remember that the traditional archetype of women, marked by history since ancient times in most of the world's societies, and especially since the 19th century, with the definitive establishment of modernity and the ideas of progress, which over time favored the conception of a typical man (adult of reproductive age, with standard body measurements and owner of all his capabilities), confined her to child-rearing and housework, which although fundamental in a society, are not the only fields of development of this one. An example of this was that in the United States of America since the 1920s, at the end of World War I, women had performed acceptably well in roles previously reserved for men, and although the war had ended, they were not willing to retreat and be confined again to domestic chores. Among other achievements at that time was making political suffrage a reality (1920), although it should be noted that since the mid-19th century there had been pioneers in the struggle for women's rights.

However, in Mexico, being a more traditional society, the role of women in most of it was still mainly associated with housework, with professional development being restricted to areas related to care such as education and nursing. Examples of this are that women's voting rights were not recognized until 1953, the last country in Latin America to do so, and that in the 1960s, only one out of every 10 students in the professional education sector was a woman<sup>3</sup>. The Olympic Games in Mexico were, to a great extent, an opportunity to promote the role of women not only in the country but also at an international level, and an example of this was that for the first time in the history of the modern Olympic Games, a female athlete was designated to carry the Olympic torch and light the cauldron<sup>4</sup>, a distinction that was given to Norma Enriqueta Basilio Sotelo, a native of Mexicali (Figure 1), national champion in the 80-meter hurdles and considered the best Mexican athlete of the time, who with this symbolic ritual on October 12, 1968 inaugurated this international event, at the same time demonstrating the empowerment of women in this era of great changes in the role of women in different parts of the planet. In the case of the Friendship Route, this vindication of the importance of women as creators of art is given by appointing Ángela Gurría for the elaboration of the sculpture installed at the starting station and Helen Escobedo<sup>5</sup> for the final station, as mentioned above, so that it would be a woman who would open this sculpture tour and another woman who would close it, both of Mexican origin.



**FIGURE 1**  
**ENRIQUETA BASILIO**



Source: Memories of the Olympic Games "Mexico 68".

Ángela Gurúa, who was also the first woman to become a member of the Academy of Arts of Mexico in 1973 and in 2013 won the National Prize for Sciences and Arts, was born on March 24, 1929. Since she was a child she was attracted to the arts, reason why she decided to become an artist. However, in Mexico there were still great prejudices regarding the professional development of women, so she had to be self-taught in the field of sculpture. She then entered the University of the Americas (formerly Mexico City College) and later apprenticed for six years with sculptor Germán Cueto (one of the guest artists on the tour), with whom she was introduced to abstractionism.

Faced with a sociocultural context that rejected women professionals at that time in Mexico, she had to sign her first works under male pseudonyms such as Alberto Urría or Ángel Urría. However, over time she gained recognition and in 1967 she won her first prize at the III Mexican Sculpture Biennial, and it was this event that gave her the opportunity to participate in the Friendship Route along with four other sculptors who participated in it.

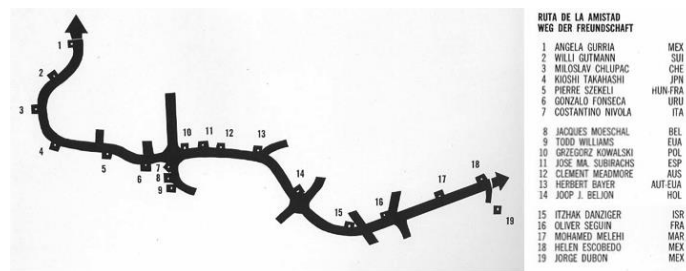
The other sculptor, Helen Escobedo, the daughter of a Mexican father and English mother, was born on July 28, 1934. She also studied sculpture at the University of the Americas (formerly Mexico City College) with Germán Cueto (mentioned above). In 1954 she obtained a scholarship to the Royal College of Art in London where she obtained a master's degree. From 1952 to 1962 she began her academic activity at the University Museum of the National Autonomous University of Mexico. She came to the Friendship Route through a special commission in charge of defining Mexico's participation in the International Sculptors' Encounter.

Both sculptors more than fulfilled the six points that Goeritz and the Selection Committee had established as the basis for the artists' creative work. The first of these points was that the projects should be of an abstract nature; the second, that they should have formal simplicity adequate to be seen from a distance and at speed; the third, that they should be designed to be built on a large scale; the fourth, that concrete should be used as a material; the fifth, that color should be applied to the surfaces; and the sixth, that each individual project should be discussed and approved by a team of specialists in order to achieve a harmoniously integrated whole. In this last point, the team of specialists was formed by the Selection Committee itself, who together with Bayer (one of the participating artists and who had been appointed as representative) chose the precise sites for the location of each sculpture, the orientation with respect to the visuals of the Periférico, as well as the size and color of these artistic works.

It should be noted that it was not initially considered that the sculptors would be the ones to open and close the route. Before the final decision, three proposals had been made, considering the plans provided by the Department of the Federal District (now Mexico City Government) where the possible residual areas for the location of the sculptures were identified. The final conception of the Friendship Route trace considered the location of the sculptures on the right side of the Periférico between the San Jerónimo junction and the junction with Insurgentes Sur in the north-south direction and on the opposite side, in the

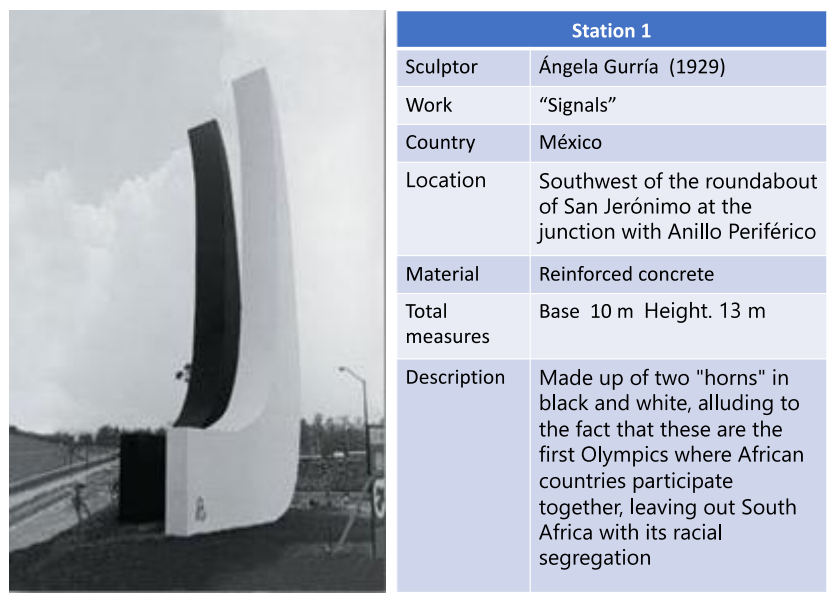
section between the junction of Insurge`ntes Sur and the Rowing and Canoeing Track Virgilio Uribe in Xochimilco. (Figure 2)

FIGURE 2  
FRIENDSHIP ROUTE TRACE



Source: Memories of the Olympic Games “Mexico 68”.

FIGURE 3  
STATION 1 SIGNALS BY ÁNGELA GURRÍA



Source: Prepared by Margarita Gallegos based on the Memories of the Olympic Games “Mexico 68”.

Station 1 of the Friendship Route was then occupied by Ángela Gurría's sculpture called Signals, located southeast of the San Jerónimo traffic circle, at the intersection with the Anillo Periférico (Peripheral Ring). This sculpture was made up of two “horns” in black and white, alluding to the fact that the “Mexico '68” Olympic Games would be the first in which African countries would participate together (leaving out South Africa due to its racial segregation problems caused by the Apartheid regime). Its position in relation to the spectator circulating on the Periférico from north to south, would seem to welcome visitors who would be staying at the Olympic Village. This sculpture was 18 meters high. (Figure 3)

At the opposite end of the Friendship Route, Station 18 was located, which was occupied by Helen Escobedo's sculpture, called “Puerta al Viento” (Door to the Wind). The sculpture was located on the north side of the Periférico, in the axis of the Cuemanco rowing channel. It consisted of two lateral structures with a circle hanging in the center, all in blue and green, taking these colors from the landscape of that time; the green of the alfalfa fields and the blue from the sky. In it the movement existed as an optical illusion

since the Periférico ended its route there and when turning around the traffic circle to return, it seemed that the central circle had a turn. This sculpture was 15 meters high (Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4**  
**STATION 18 DOOR TO THE WIND BY HELEN ESCOBEDO**

| Station 18     |  |
|----------------|--|
| Sculptor       | Helen Escobedo (1934)  |
| Work           | "Door to the wind"   |
| Country        | México   |
| Location       | North side of the central ridge of the Periférico on the axis of the Cuemanco rowing and canoeing channel  |
| Material       | Reinforced concrete  |
| Total measures | Base 17.25 x 4.30 m<br>Height. 15 m  |
| Description    | It consists of two lateral structures with a circle hanging in the center, all in blue and green. In it, the movement exists as an optical illusion because in its origin, the Periférico ended there and it was the return movement from South to North, so it gave the impression of turning that great circle. This station, in fact, closed the Route, on this great track |

Source: Prepared by Margarita Gallegos based on the Memories of the Olympic Games "Mexico 68".

## **THE FRIENDSHIP ROUTE AND THE INCLUSION OF DIVERSITY IN PEACE AND HARMONY**

To the empowerment of women and the inclusion of gender embodied in the Friendship Route, were added, as far as possible, those related to the diversity of geographical origins, beliefs, races and ideologies, something very important because it was desired to symbolically capture the brotherhood of humanity, through the dialogue of sculptors with different identity characteristics that tried to reconcile in an atmosphere of peace and harmony and under equitable conditions for all participants.

Thus, regarding the first of these inclusions, that of geographic origins, it was decided that among the 19 participants there should be at least one from the five continents, so from America, in addition to Helen Escobedo and Angela Gurria, Jorge Dubont, representing Mexico, Gonzalo Fonseca from Uruguay, and Todd Williams from the United States, collaborated; from Europe included Willy Guttman from Switzerland; Miloslav Chlupac from Czechoslovakia; Pierre Szekely from Hungary; Constantino Nivola from Italy; Jacques Moeschal from Belgium; Grzegorz Kowalski from Poland; Josep Maria Subirachs from Spain; Herbert Bayer from Austria; Joop J. Beljon from the Netherlands and Oliver Seguin from France; from Asia, Kiyoshi Takahashi from Japan and Itzhak Danziger from Israel; and for Oceania, Clement Meadmore, and for Africa, Moahamed Melehi from Morocco.

In terms of religious beliefs, the idea was to invite representatives from different religions around the world: Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam. From the first one were Helen Escobedo, Angela Gurria, Jorge Dubont, Gonzalo Fonseca, Todd Williams, Willy Guttman, Miloslav Chlupac, Pierre Szekely, Constantino Nivola, Jacques Moeschal, Grzegorz Kowalski, Josep Maria Subirachs, Herbert Bayer, Joop J. Beljon, Oliver Seguin and Clement Meadmore; from the second Kiyoshi Takahashi; from the third Itzhak Danziger and from the fourth Moahamed Melehi, and in the case of the latter two this had a special



relevance because of the conflict between Israel and the Islamic countries for the occupation of Palestine at that time.

Finally, in relation to the races, the idea was to invite sculptors from the five most representative races of the planet: white, red, olive, yellow and black. From the first one were Angela Gurria, Gonzalo Fonseca, Willy Guttman, Miloslav Chlupac, Pierre Szekely, Constantino Nivola, Jacques Moeschal, Grzegorz Kowalski, Josep Maria Subirachs, Herbert Bayer, Joop J. Beljon, Oliver Seguin and Clement Meadmore; from the second were Helen Escobedo and Jorge Dubon; from the third were Moahamed Melehi and Itzhak Danziger; from the fourth was Kiyoshi Takahashi; and from the fifth was Todd Williams, who was the most difficult case to achieve because at that time most of the Afro-American artists were dedicated to figurative sculpture expressing their African origins and it was difficult to get an abstract sculptor, until one was found in the United States of America, which was highly symbolic because his selection took place in the context of the struggle for the civil rights of Afro-Americans.

Another aspect to emphasize is the diversity of ideologies that came together due to having artists from the three prevailing ideological blocks in the Cold War world: the capitalist, the socialist and the third world, so from the first one we have Todd Williams, Willy Guttman, Constantino Nivola; Jacques Moeschal, Josep Maria Subirachs, Herbert Bayer, Joop J. Beljon, Oliver Seguin, Kiyoshi Takahashi, Itzhak Danziger and Clement Meadmore; from the second to Miloslav Chlupac, Pierre Szekely and Grzegorz Kowalski; and from the third to Helen Escobedo, Angela Gurria, Jorge Dubont, Gonzalo Fonseca and Moahamed Melehi. This was no small matter because the sculptures were made by sculptors from countries that were geopolitically aligned in these blocks, where the first two were clearly opposed, so getting them to fraternize and collaborate in the sculptural project symbolized those yearnings for peace that were raised in the 1968 Olympic Games.

In general, the other artists and stations that made up the group of 19 sculptural works of the Friendship Route, in addition to those made by Ángela Gurria and Helen Escobedo, for stations 1 and 18, respectively, mentioned above, were the following (Figure 5):

Station 2: “The Anchor” of 7.5 meters high, author Willy Gutman, from Switzerland, his sculpture was formed by a large irregular disk, which had a smaller element that was practically inserted into the larger one. It was originally painted in blue with purple edges. The bright blue with which we see it today, was awarded by the author in 1997.

Station 3 “The Three Graces” 12 meters high, author Miloslav Chlupac from Czechoslovakia. The sculpture consisted of three volumes with a slight separation. Each of the three in one of its lateral angles, avoided the use of the straight line, to create wavy corners that caused the appearance of different volumes in these columns of irregular shapes. The two closest of these structures were painted in pink tones and the one farther apart in violet.

Station 4: “Spheres” 7.5 meters high, author Hiyochi Takahashi from Japan. The sculpture consisted of two giant white spheres with two quarters of their bodies removed. The author's intention was to give the idea of movement when seen at the speed at which cars would travel on the Periférico.

Station 5: “The Bipedal Sun” 12 meters high, author Pierre Székely from France. His sculpture was dominated by the use of undefined forms. The author expressed about it: “My sculptures are timeless signs of humanity whose only reason to exist is to give pleasure”.

Station 6: “The Tower of the Winds”, 11.5 meters high, author Gonzalo Fonseca from Uruguay. Unlike the other sculptures that make up the Friendship Route, the Tower of the Winds was a habitable sculpture. Inside, there was a space that resembled minimalist aesthetics and is occupied by geometric elements. On the outside, several of its elements gave the idea of an archaeological monument and, as a whole, that of a grain silo.

Station 7: “Man of Peace” 12 meters high, author Constantino Nivola from Italy. The sculpture comprised a white geometric base with green, white and red lines. At the top, a hand in the shape of a dove stood out.

Station 8: (unnamed), total height including base, 20.5 meters, author Jacques Moeschal from Belgium. It was the largest piece on the Route. Its shape was a high base that ended at the top in a “dangle” that did

not close completely. The original color of the piece was green as it is seen today. This sculpture was located at the entrance of the Olympic Village.

Station 9: “The Magic Wheel”, 6 meters high, author Todd Williams from the United States, who was the only Afro-American sculptor in the Friendship Route, his sculpture consists of three circular and ovoid discs, joined by different parts, offering a set that suggested a space or roof of shelter. From its origin, the work was painted with several colors, which allowed it to stand out in the landscape. Its interior space allowed to walk underneath it, thus allowing the viewer to take shelter from the sun. This sculpture was located in what used to be the athletes' training grounds, today known as the Olympic Village Sports Complex.

Station 10: “Sundial”, height 4.8 meters, author Grzegorz Kowalski from Poland. In this sculpture a horizontal composition predominated. It consisted of seven cones painted in different warm tones and each one of them moved its vertex in different directions. The play of the different cones produced a sensation of movement, visual tension and opposing forces. It was a walkable sculpture that made the viewer part of the landscape as he or she walked through the living space.

Station 11: “Homage to Mexico”, height 12 meters, author José María Subirach. This sculpture was a last-minute addition to the Friendship Route, it was built in record time and was a gift from the Spanish community. It was made up of two triangular volumes, positive and negative, with a horizontal body that served as a base on which the word “Mexico” was suggestively depicted.

Station 12: (unnamed), height 5.70 meters, author Clement Meadmore. This work, of a single body folded on itself, demonstrated the simplicity of its forms and the dynamism it contained, making it similar to a Moebius strip.

Station 13: “Articulated Wall”. height 16.50 meters, author Herbert Bayer from the United States. It was characterized by a central steel axis that joined 33 rectangular modules independent of each other, but which, when arranged one on top of the other, formed the materialization of the movement in an ascending manner. Made in reinforced concrete, the sculpture also played with different contrasts of light and shadow that changed according to the movement of the sun itself.

Station 14: “Giant's Gathering”, height 7.80 meters (the tallest), author Joop Beljon from the Netherlands. The sculpture was made up of seven different figures that form a compact body of volumes with a reference to Mesoamerican construction. The massive reinforced concrete blocks were originally painted in several colors such as purple, orange, pink and violet suggested by Goeritz to Beljon.

Station 15 “Gate of Peace”, height 8.60 meters, author Itzhak Danziger from Israel. The sculpture was composed of a series of planes that folded and intersected each other, being painted in blue and yellow colors.

Station 16: (unnamed), height 7.60 meters, author Oliver Seguin from France. It was a visually heavy sculpture made up of two large masses where the straight line predominated, originally one black and the other white, being a walkable sculpture that when entering between these blocks gave the idea of isolation from traffic and noise.

Station 17 “African Charamusca”, height 12 meters, author Mohamed Melehi from Morocco, the only sculptor from the African continent, but of olive race. His sculpture consisted of an undulating white column, which was enclosed by a red box that contrasted and delimited its physical space.

Station 19: (unnamed), height 10 meters, author Jorge Dubón from Mexico. This sculpture consisted of two volumes. The tallest was a large open tubular column, gray in color, the second volume was like an incomplete letter T formed by folding planes. Dubón created for the Friendship Route, a sculpture that suggested being an icon of the Cuernavaca canoeing track, just as the Red Sun is for the Azteca Stadium or the Big Dipper for the Juan Escutia Sports Palace.

**FIGURE 5**  
**THE 19 SCULPTURES OF THE FRIENDSHIP ROUTE**



Source: Prepared by Margarita Gallegos 2009.

The Red Sun (Figure 6) was one of the three sculptures invited to the Friendship Route. It was created by Alexander Calder from the United States of America, and was located in the main access esplanade of the Azteca Stadium. Standing 25.8 meters high, it is the largest piece made by the American sculptor, and was designed in steel with these proportions to merge with the monumental dimensions of the Coloso de Santa Ursula, as this world soccer venue is also known. This artistic work has three large legs with welds of spectacular aesthetics, which support the center of the warm Red Sun that provides a tone that can be bright at noon and opaque at dawn and dusk, as well as from these emerge the blue and white concentric circles that allude to the corporate design of the XIX Olympic Games.

**FIGURE 6**  
**INVITED SCULPTURE THE RED SUN BY ALEXANDER CALDER**



Source: José Antonio García Ayala 2019.

The Big Dipper (Figure 7) was also one of the three sculptures invited to the Friendship Route, and was created by Mathías Goeritz. This was located on the west side of the main access esplanade of the Juan Escutia Sports Palace, and was designed so that the set of six reinforced concrete towers-columns of 15 meters high, could be seen from above by passengers and aircraft crew personnel passing over it on their way to the International Airport of Mexico City, who could see its configuration related to the star constellation from which it takes its name.

**FIGURE 7**  
**INVITED SCULPTURE THE BIG DIPPER BY MATHIAS GOERITZ**



Source: José Antonio García Ayala 2019.

The last of the three sculptures invited to the Friendship Route is the Running Man (Figure 8) by German Cueto, located on the side of Insurgentes Avenue about 500 meters from the main entrance of the Olympic University Stadium. This six-meter-high bronze piece was made up of two intertwined bodies resting on a block of volcanic lava that suggested a human figure running while greeting the runners of the Mexico '68 Olympic Marathon as they arrived at the stadium.

**FIGURE 8**  
**INVITED SCULPTURE MAN RUNNING BY GERMAN CUETO**



Source: José Antonio García Ayala 2019.

It should be noted that the 22 sculptors who participated in the Friendship Route and their invited sculptures, worked in conditions of equity as far as possible and despite the difficulties to materialize this urban art project, where for example in the International Meeting of Sculptors, there were sessions where aspects such as finishes, color, landscaping and lighting were discussed, and the details of the sculptural path were discussed in close collaboration between architects, sculptors and designers, which was complemented by the supervision of the construction of each of the 19 stations two months before their inauguration by their own creators, who chose the color of their piece, although it was thought that these would only be in orange tones.

### **A ROUTE ABSORBED BY URBAN GROWTH AND ITS FOOTPRINT IN A NEW PARADIGM**

Unfortunately, once the event of the XIX Olympic Games was over and the work of the Organizing Committee was finished, the sculptures were left adrift, and it was not clear who should be responsible for their conservation and maintenance. On the other hand, the stretch of the Periférico built to link and give accessibility to the Olympic Village and the Cuemanco Rafting Track, triggered the growth of the area and more and more sculptures were lost in the urban landscape. Hence, they were vandalized and almost destroyed.

In this regard, Helen Escobedo herself, author of *Door to the Wind*, stated (Díaz, 2007), that when the sculptors were summoned, the place's landscape was open and natural, the same blue sky was the backdrop for the sculptures, but over time the spaces were occupied by buildings of different uses, billboards, pedestrian bridges, water pumps, etc., which gradually absorbed and hid more and more of the sculptures, making this route a series of unconnected and barely visible pieces, which little by little absorbed and hid more and more of the sculptures, making this route a series of unconnected and barely visible pieces for the



most part. In this regard, Helen said: “This disdain reached such a degree that Mathías Goeritz had no other solution than to make them disappear”.

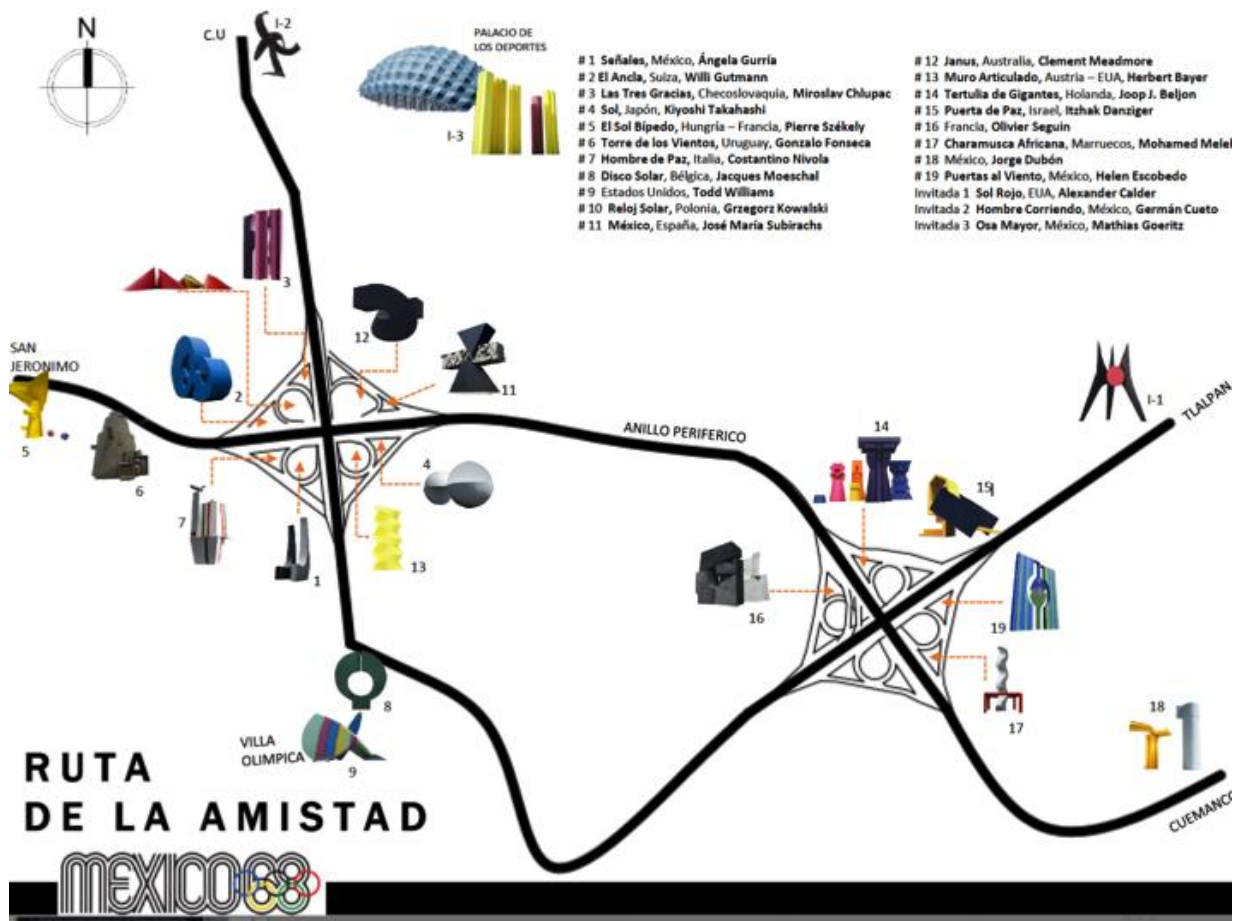
Fortunately, there came a citizen interested in their rescue and what they represented in the memory as a historical landmark of a moment that changed the appearance of the City and the image of Mexico before the world emerged: Luis Javier de la Torre who, together with Pedro Ramírez Campuzano (son of the renowned architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez), formed the Patronato Ruta de la Amistad A.C. (Board of Friendship Route A.C.), and initiated the rescue and rehabilitation of each one of the sculptures of this sculptural path and its invited pieces. With the permission of the delegations (now municipalities) where they were located, as well as with private and public initiative, and through the program “Adopt a work of art of the Route” they were restored, putting anti-graffiti paint and giving them a new life.

However, the lack of appreciation of this sculptural corridor by the authorities, together with the social demand to expand the capacity of this important road, led to the construction of the Periférico's second floor, so that its very existence was condemned. Therefore, the decision of the Board of Friendship Route was to relocate each one of the sculptures in the residual areas of the two most important road distributors of this section of the Periférico, leaving in their original place, only those that would not be affected by this new construction.

One of the first to be moved was precisely the Signals by Ángela Gurría, which remained in the southern part of the intersection of Insurgentes Sur and the Periférico, giving a new meaning to the Friendship Route which, although it lost the characteristic of being the longest sculpture route in the world, was integrated into a new landscape where the rescue of the sculpture was combined with the rescue of the original flora and fauna of the Pedregal.

In the case of the Helen Escobedo sculpture, it was not affected by the Periférico's second floor, but it was affected by the deterioration of the environment and the proximity of public transportation stops. This sculpture, whose relocation is one of the most recent, was located on the north side of the intersection of Viaducto Tlalpan and Periférico. (Figure 9)

**FIGURE 9**  
**CURRENT LOCATION OF THE SCULPTURES OF THE FRIENDSHIP ROUTE AND INVITED SCULPTURES**



Source: Board of Friendship Route

Although at the time, there were conflicting opinions about the results of the Friendship Route and that it lost importance once the event that gave rise to it was over, in reality, it was the starting point for a new type of “official” art, contrary to what had been the case up to that time. It also demonstrated the viability of what Goeritz called “the aesthetic planning of cities” by providing delight to the population and showing what should be an “emotional” urbanism based on a plastic integration of this with sculpture and landscape architecture which achieved a feast of the senses product of a concrete poetry and a passion for space that enriched the senses by abandoning the pedestal and contributing to the aesthetic awareness of the general public.

For Jorge Alberto Manrique, this event marks the beginning of a new movement, “Mexican geometrism”, in which diverse individual processes and European, American and Latin American backgrounds coincided. With the precedent of the Satellite Towers of 1954, from 1968 with the Friendship Route, the so-called “urban sculpture” begins to be, and is to this day, one of the important facts of Mexican plastic art. (in Fernández, 2005).

Other projects arising from this experience were, for example, GOCADIGUSE for the city of Villahermosa, in which five sculptors were involved in an ambitious project of monumental urban sculpture linked to a major thoroughfare, designed to enhance the most important peripheral avenue of the capital of Tabasco state. Regarding this sculptural complex, during an interview that Mathías Goeritz gave to

journalist Helen Krauze for the newspaper *Novedades* published on March 2, 1976, when comparing it to the Friendship Route, Goeritz said the following about it: “Of course, it will not be anything like the Friendship Route, so diverse, but it will give the impression of being made by a single artist...” (Id. ), which was an account of one of its weaknesses, since it was difficult to have an integral final finish that would give the impression of a single project.

Another derivative project was the Sculptural Space of the University City, where Mathías Goeritz participated again along with other sculptors such as Federico Silva, Manuel Felguérez, Helen Escobedo, Sebastián and Hersúa. In Mexico, there continues to be projects that include or summon international artists, such as the Chactemal Sculpture Corridor in 2003 with the participation of Joop Beljon from the Netherlands and Helen Escobedo, participants of the Friendship Route, as well as “The Sculpture Route of Steel and Concrete” in Monterrey in 2007.

There were also international contributions that took this experience as a starting point, as was the case in Germany, where in the *Reforma*<sup>6</sup>, newspaper of May 21, 2004, it mentions that Goeritz's sculptural project was taken up again, to replicate it in the German city of Braunschweig, and thus recall one of the sculptural projects that according to the author of the article were considered the most emblematic of Mexico City. In this project he mentions that a Mexican would participate: Pedro Reyes, and the project would be called *La Braunschweig Parcours 2004* (Braunschweig Route 2004).

Today we can see that public art has been transformed and now it is common to find abstract sculpture in places where it is intended to give relevance, such as Juan Soriano's *Moon* outside the National Auditorium, among other examples. But the importance of the Friendship Route goes beyond its national impact, because as Szekely<sup>7</sup> mentioned in his visit to Mexico in 2000, the Friendship Route is the only collection of urban monumental art of universal character that is preserved worldwide.

The above is not insignificant, because this statement reflects its legacy as part of the Olympic heritage of the world. Nowadays, it seeks to make visible the otherness based on different characteristics that distinguish various communities on the planet, in the search for greater integration and empowerment of the different ones that had been left aside, with a perspective of equality and equity, which accounts for the right of every human being to identify with others and separate themselves from others based on what they are, think, feel and want to express in complete freedom but with respect for others. It is important to recognize these in spite of the difficulties encountered in the creation of the Friendship Route, both because of the conditioning factors of the national and international contexts of the time in which it was created, as well as its materialization, and recognizing its weaknesses. This is a clear example of how these obstacles can be overcome and brought together in an atmosphere of harmony and peace, based on dialogue and conciliation of interests while recognizing the differences in geographical origins, religious beliefs, race and ideologies, and where the recognition and empowerment of women became a reality, innovating in the way of humanizing cities through art.

A humanization from urban art that allows today when experiencing the perceptive richness of colors, textures and shapes of each one of the sculptures that make up the Friendship Route, and the set of all the invited ones, to feel those emo-meanings that show the need to embrace otherness, because this decorates our world from heterogeneity, of what is different, of what identifies us socially, despite the conflicts and difficulties that may arise at the beginning, and allows us to experience that fraternity which is part of the nature of every human being, especially in cities, whose public spaces, the essence of these, are created specifically for this purpose, and are the reason for their existence: to live in community and, as far as possible, to do so in peace and harmony.

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## ENDNOTES

1. Expressionism was a cultural movement that emerged in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century and manifested itself in different fields of art. This movement, together with French Fauvism, is part of the first “historical avant-garde”; in this movement the artists defended a more personal art, giving predominance to the artist's inner vision against the representation of reality; that is, “expression” versus “impression”.
2. Dadaism emerged in Zurich (Switzerland) in 1916 as a movement of rebellion to the established systems in the art world. This movement promotes change, freedom of the individual, spontaneity, immediacy, randomness, contradiction, chaos versus order, imperfection versus perfection.
3. Cruz, Karina Ivonne at <https://www.publimetro.com.mx/mx/estilo-vida/2018/10/01/papel-las-mujeres-en-movimiento-estudiantil-1968.html>
4. <https://www.milenio.com/deportes/quienes-han-encendido-el-pebetero>
5. This does not include the one in Dubón, since the latter would be within the facilities of the canoeing track.
6. Article author: Edgar Alejandro Hernández
7. Author of “Bipedal Sun” proposed that the Route be declared a World Heritage Site.

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