

# Oscar Salinas Flores

## Biographical Sketch

Oscar Salinas Flores was born in the state of Durango on July 22, 1950, and has lived in Mexico City since the age of seven, where he completed all of his studies. His connection to the UNAM has been profound, having studied there from high school through to his undergraduate degree, a specialisation, a master's degree, and a doctorate.

Early in his undergraduate studies, he chose to shape his professional future by combining teaching, research, and design practice — a path he has always affirmed to be the ideal position for a professional designer.

During his time at the Faculty of Architecture, he had the privilege of being mentored by outstanding professionals in architecture and design, including the renowned artist and architect Mathias Goeritz; British designer Douglas Scott, creator of the iconic double-decker bus and public telephone in England; Clara Porset, a pioneering figure in furniture design; and Horacio Durán, founder of industrial design education in Mexico. These and other distinguished professors inspired and guided him to promote the design profession, as he himself was among the pioneering generations of industrial design students in the country.

Shortly after graduating, he was invited to join the first Design Centre in Mexico at the Mexican Institute for Foreign Trade (IMCE), where he had the opportunity to begin promoting design nationwide. He gave lectures, taught courses, offered consulting to businesses, industries, and artisans, organised design competitions and exhibitions, and coordinated student groups in social service and professional practice. From 1976 onward, he was invited to teach at his alma mater, within the Industrial Design program of the National School of Architecture (now CIDI, Centre for Industrial Design Research), becoming one of the first four alumni to enter as faculty members through a competitive selection process. He began his academic career teaching Design Studio, and was also invited to teach Contemporary Art as part of the then-called Culture Seminars.

Although he has never ceased his design practice, from early on as a student he also developed a strong interest in design theory and history. This was fostered through close contact with notable mentors such as furniture design theorist Clara Porset, colonial art historian Salvador Toussaint, science theory expert and writer Arturo Azuela, popular culture specialist Jas Reuter, and contemporary art critic Jack Seligson — all distinguished figures in their respective fields.

His deep curiosity and pioneering spirit led him to achieve several important milestones: he became the first industrial designer in Mexico to earn a doctoral degree (1991), the first designer to be accepted into the National System of Researchers of Mexico's National Council of Science and Technology (1992), and the first designer to join and help found the Interinstitutional Committees for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CIEES) in the field of Architecture, Design, and Urbanism

(1994), through which he has evaluated and advised nearly 70 academic institutions across the country. He was also the first recipient of the National University Distinction for Young Academics in the area of Architecture and Design (1990), and the first designer to receive the National University Award in the same category (2008).

From 2004 to 2011, he also served as a member of the Governing Board of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM), which is responsible for appointing the University's General Rector, unit rectors, and members of its Board of Trustees.

With 37 years of academic experience, his work as a professor and mentor has guided and shaped hundreds of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students — through his courses, academic leadership roles, and supervision of theses and research residencies. Many of his former students, both at undergraduate and graduate levels, have gone on to become successful professional designers, entrepreneurs, and public officials in Mexico and abroad.

Oscar Salinas has held some of the most prominent leadership roles in the field of industrial design. He has served as Director of the Undergraduate Programme in Industrial Design, the Graduate Programme in Industrial Design, and also held the position of Secretary General of the Faculty of Architecture at UNAM.

Beginning in the 1980s, he launched his work as a design historian, creating and introducing the History of Industrial Design course at a time when no such subject existed in any design school in Mexico. His research began with the biography of Clara Porset and expanded into a body of work — conferences, courses, articles, and books — that established him as a leading design historian in the country. Through this work, he has brought attention to overlooked subjects and figures, many of which are now studied throughout Ibero-America.

His book *Historia del Diseño Industrial*, first published in 1992 and now in preparation for a new edition, has gone through several reprints and is distributed throughout Mexico, Latin America, and parts of Europe. It is considered an essential textbook in design schools, as it was the first to address the history of international design while also incorporating Latin America and Mexico.

His book *Tecnología y Diseño en el México Prehispánico*, also the first of its kind, has become a key reference in the design field and other areas of study. The original edition sold out, and a revised international edition is currently in preparation. For his work in this field, Oscar Salinas has been invited to serve as an advisor or editorial board member for several design journals in Mexico and other countries including the United States, Brazil, and Japan.

In 2003, together with his wife, Ana María Losada, MDI, he took an important step by founding Editorial Designio, Libros de Diseño. The publishing house was created to give voice to the ideas of professors, researchers, and design professionals who previously had no viable platform for publication in a country like Mexico, which lacked specialised design publishers.

To date, Editorial Designio has achieved wide and growing distribution across Latin America and Spain. It has published work from authors throughout Mexico and Latin America, covering a range of topics including graphic design, type design, industrial design, design theory, design studies, and more recently, architectural design.

Oscar Salinas has been a prominent advocate for design in Mexico and the Ibero-American region. Through his participation in professional associations, he has organised and led numerous events, exhibitions, and initiatives in support of the design community.

He has been President and founding member of CODIGRAM (College of Industrial and Graphic Designers of Mexico), Secretary and founding member of ALADI (Latin American Association of Industrial Design, Mexico chapter), and Vice President and founding member of the Mexican Design Academy.

He has taught courses and delivered more than 90 lectures at academic and professional events in countries including Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Uruguay, Brazil, Panama, Italy, Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Finland, England, Japan, and Belgium. His research, once published and incorporated into international academic networks online, has spread his ideas and proposals, which are now cited and used in university courses and scholarly documents in Spanish, Portuguese, and English.

In recent years, his influence within the Ibero-American design field has extended further into the international arena. He has been invited to participate in some of the most prominent organisations dedicated to design research and history, including the Design History Foundation based in Barcelona, Spain (as a member of the Board of Trustees and Executive Council); the International Committee on Design History and Design Studies (as a permanent member since 2002); the Design Research Society, based in London, England (member since 2006); and the Design Summit international research group, founded in Sussex, England in 2007, where he is one of only twelve members.

In the same spirit, it is worth noting that he has served on numerous scientific committees responsible for reviewing and selecting papers for international design conferences held in cities such as Istanbul, Guadalajara, Lisbon, Helsinki, Osaka, Barcelona, Brussels, and São Paulo.

He has also served on international juries for major design awards, such as the National Design Award of Brazil and the Canary Islands Design Award in Spain. In addition, he has been part of the editorial boards of design research journals such as *Design Discourse: Journal of Design History and Design Philosophy*, published in Osaka, Japan, and *Design & Culture*, published in New York, USA.

He is currently a member of the international advisory group that organises the Ibero-American Design Biennial, held in Madrid, Spain, since 2008. His most recent contribution to the promotion of design has taken place within the team currently

drafting a National Design Plan for Innovation in Mexico, which is under review with representatives from the federal government and legislative bodies.

In his professional practice, Oscar Salinas has spent 38 years working in project-based design and consultancy, serving as a consultant, designer, and partner with companies, public institutions, and social organisations across a wide range of programmes.

Until 2006, he was Design Director of Corporación Milenio III, a company he founded in 1989. There, he led projects in industrial design, graphic design, interior design, and exhibition and museum design.

Milenio III's client list includes nearly 100 national and multinational companies, ranging from corporate groups and cultural institutions to government agencies. Among them are Coca-Cola, BMW, Nissan Mexicana, Ford Motor de México, HP Invent, and American Express; hotel groups such as Camino Real, Grupo Posadas, and J.W. Marriott Hotels; major Mexican companies including Grupo Modelo, Industrias Bachoco, Liverpool, Industrias Vitro, Grupo Bimbo, CIE (Latin America's largest entertainment corporation), the Mexican Stock Exchange, and Airports and Auxiliary Services.

However, his true passion has always been museum and exhibition design, which he has developed through projects for institutions such as the Museo Nacional de Arte, Museo Tamayo, Museo y Centro Cultural Santo Domingo in Oaxaca, the National Council for Culture and the Arts, and the Franz Mayer Museum. For these, he has led the curatorship, design, and installation of interactive rooms, exhibition halls, educational tools, and recreational areas, particularly those aimed at children — for whom he developed, along with his collaborators, the project “Jugando con...” (Playing with...), designed to introduce young visitors to Mexico's most important visual artists.

Milenio III has received more than 20 national and international design awards, including the Quórum Design Award, the a! Diseño Award, the National Design Biennial of Mexico, first prize in the international category of the NAIC Nicholson Awards (National Association of Investors Corp.) for *Outstanding Annual Report*, and the Silver Winner at the INTERNATIONAL ARC AWARDS for *The World's Best Annual Report* (awarded by the International Academy of Communications Arts and Sciences / MercComm, Inc.).

In recent years, Oscar Salinas has focused on the development of interdisciplinary research projects involving teams of students and professionals from various fields. Among these is Ecovia, a Multifunctional Ecological Vehicle — the first hydrogen-fuelled automobile in Mexico — funded by UNAM as part of the macroproject *University City and Energy*, where he has led a team of industrial designers and engineers since 2007.

Since 2009, he has also headed the project Design of Electronic and Interactive Instruments for Anthropometric Measurement, coordinating a team of engineers, industrial designers, and anthropologists from the ergonomics and technology labs of the Graduate Programme in Industrial Design at UNAM, who are currently developing the first prototypes.

His interest in original projects that combine technological and design innovation began with his leadership in the creation and integration of the Macroergonomics Laboratory and the Technology Laboratory within the Graduate Programme in Industrial Design at UNAM.

In summary, the professional life of Oscar Salinas Flores reflects a rich combination of teaching, theoretical research, and design practice. His work has had a significant impact on the training of future professionals through the exploration and widespread dissemination of design history and theory, fostering stronger ties between design and society, establishing meaningful international connections, and generating innovations in fields that, until recently, had remained underdeveloped in Mexico.

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