



[catchy bass beat]

Mark: Tell us about your family's connection to art. When did your family first become interested in art?

Doña María: In the '60s, they thought that a way of making incentive for economics and social development, it could be through the art because they were enjoying it themselves. And they wanted other people to enjoy it, and they wanted also to be supportive for the artist community. And when you have a space where you could dialogue about art, you could expose art, you can research about art, it's a treasure.

Mark: What do you think has been the effect of the competition on Dominican artists?

Doña María: Oh, I think they found a platform where they could express the messages they have. The needs as an artist to create and be accompanied by a curator, being sometimes a place to be exposed, to know about other artists and what are they doing. Some of the prizes are internships or exchanges in other countries for some- for some while. And I think the artists in the Dominican Republic value that so much.

Mark: How did the competition begin?

Doña María: The competition began in 1964. And it was a national competition. It was a- the first initiative of the private sector- And in order to be in the 26th edition, almost 27, we have had to open the ruling of it and let people from the diaspora come in and also participate, and maybe someone that's not Dominican but has a mother or father that is Dominican-

Mark: Right. And you feel that it has had a real effect on young artists in the Dominican Republic as well?

Doña María: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, this last edition, the 26th, we had people in their 20s, which was very, very, very new to us-

Mark: Absolutely.

Doña María: I think people are waiting for- the artists is waiting for this scenario.

Mark: That's great, that's great. How has the competition influenced the way that you acquire artwork?

Doña María: We've been having as part of our collection the awarded work. The curators

participate more, hand in hand with the artists, and the general public with their works.

Mark: Do you have any plans to expand the competition to other countries?

Doña María: That's something that I can't say yes or no. I think we're open if it is at some point important. If we're going to be interacting with the world, I think at some point we should have closer contact with other artists-

Mark: Sure.

Doña María: -other places and see what they're doing.

Mark: What's in the future for Centro León?

Doña María: Well, we are having an exhibition with- of comics. And also besides that we have the anthropology- that's very important for us. It's the Tainos, the first settlers that were in- in our island. So we're always open so people can see that you can always do things in an artful way, and that's for me the, the best way to do it.

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