

Mexican Museum hire not clinched yet

Final contract still in works to install prominent director from Mexico

By Charles Desmarais

The chair of the Mexican Museum recently said that it had found a new leader. Now, it's not so clear.

Andrew Kluger let drop in a discussion last week with a Chronicle reporter that the troubled San Francisco museum had hired a new director.

Kluger has since backed away from his earlier, categorical statement.

"We are between third base and home on a long-term contract," he said.

Kluger had told The Chronicle last week that its new director would be Miguel Fernández Felix. If so, this would be quite a coup. Fernández Felix

is a respected museum director in Mexico with a long list of credentials and achievements.

Reached by email Tuesday, Dec. 4, Fernández Felix wrote, "Nowadays I'm directing the Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. As soon as my current situation changes, I will be very glad to be in touch with you."

Kluger, however, insists that Fernández Felix is committed.

"We've already been working together. He's coming first as a consultant ... he's half-time right now," Kluger said. "We need him here in 2020 as the permanent director. It's just a matter of whether he starts in six months, 10

months, 12 months."

Fernández Felix travels regularly to San Francisco, Kluger added, "and I'm down in Mexico City every two weeks." He also said that Fernández Felix has begun to develop international support groups, with the goal that "each will bring in \$10 million to the museum."

If confirmed, the appointment is likely to be well received in the museum world.

Thomas Campbell, newly appointed director of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, called it "an interesting possibility. I've always found him to be a dynamic and respected member of the

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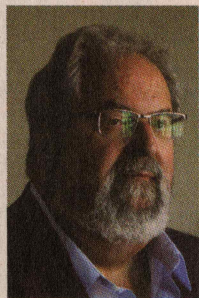
Fernández Felix in talks to lead S.F.'s Mexican Museum

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museum-director community. And a really nice person, too, generous and kind."

Graham Beal, who retired as director of the Detroit Institute of Art before recently moving to the Bay Area, said, "It would be great to have him in town," and pointed out that Mexican directors often leave their posts as part of "the six-yearly game of musical chairs played whenever a new government comes in."

Kaywin Feldman, director of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, was president of the Association of Art Museum Directors when Fernández Felix was on the board of that orga-



Andrew Kluger is chair of the Mexican Museum board in San Francisco.

nization. She called the Mexican director "an international player" and described him as a "sensitive, sophisticated leader who can get along with curators, donors, specialists and generalists."

The Palacio de Bellas Artes,

which hosts exhibitions from around the world, is probably best known to Americans for its murals by José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Rufino Tamayo and others. Before his appointment as director there,

Fernández Felix led several other Mexican institutions, including the Museo Nacional de Arte, the Museo del Virreinato and the Museo Dolores Olmedo Patiño. He served for a time as president of the Mexican Association of Muse-

um Professionals.

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Ten Arquitectos

A rendering shows the proposed new Mexican Museum at Mission and Third streets in S.F.