

A Coworking Space Captures a Community's Creative Spirit

The colorful adaptive reuse project is a collaboration between Oficina de Diseño Colaborativo, Maye Colab, and Atelier TBD.

By Lauren Jones

Located in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, Santa Tere Espacio's design aims to preserve the city's historical layers and reinterpret them through color.



COURTESY LEANDRO BULLZANO

COLOR



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hen you Google images of San Miguel de Allende, historic buildings awash in a rainbow of colors are likely what you'll find. The UNESCO World Heritage Site is unsurprisingly enchanting, bringing in over a million visitors annually. Yet gentrification has made some central spaces more affordable for expats and tourists than for its residents.

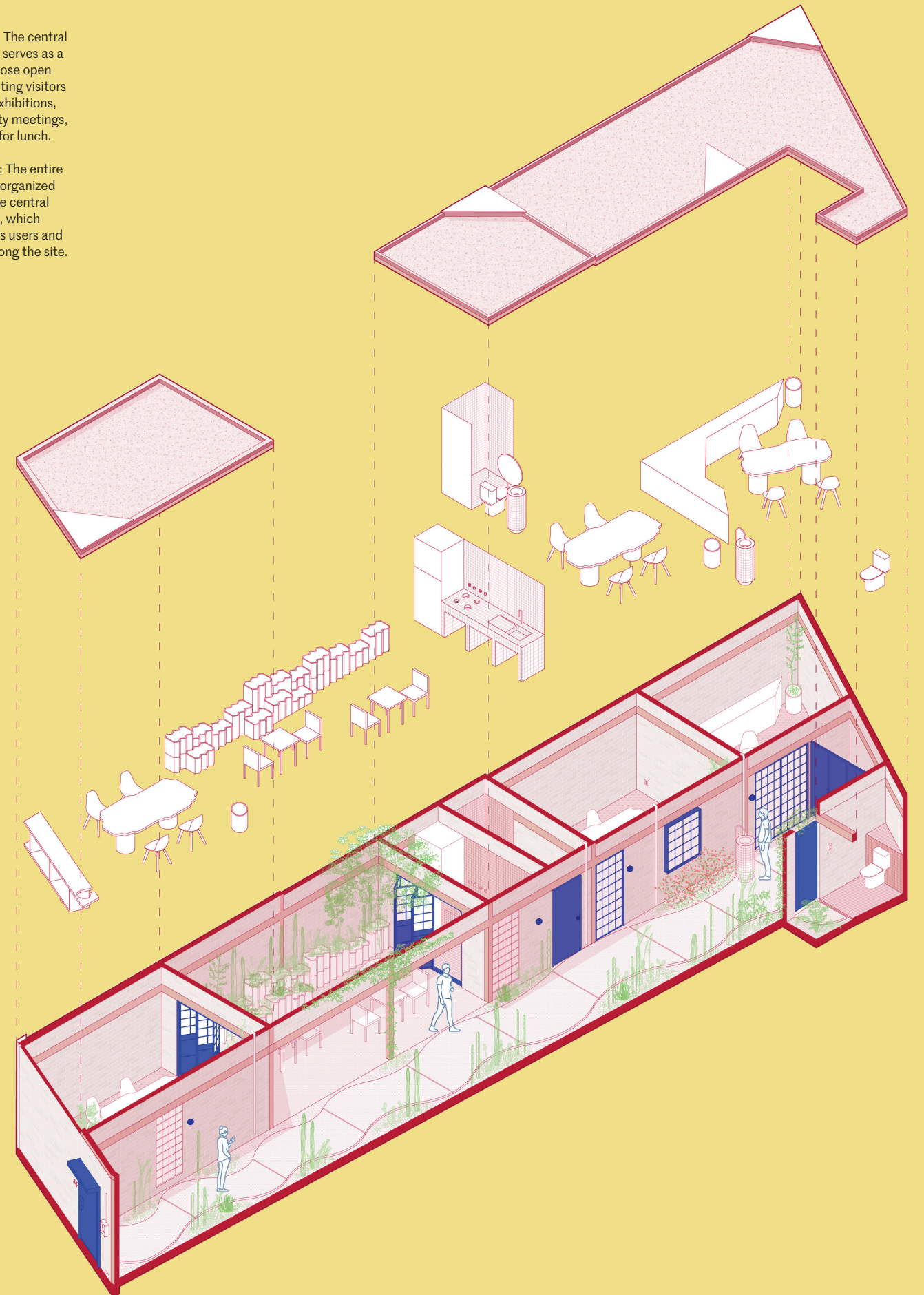
To create Santa Tere Espacio, a coworking and social hub geared toward locals, Oficina de Diseño Colaborativo teamed up with Maye Colab and Atelier TBD to transform a once-abandoned six-room home in the city's San Antonio neighborhood.

"From the beginning, we conceived a space where Maye [Ruiz of Maye Colab] and I could share offices but also a space that the creative community of San Miguel can use for any purpose," says Nadyeli Quiroz Radaelli, founder of Oficina de Diseño Colaborativo. Since

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Opposite: The central courtyard serves as a multipurpose open space inviting visitors to patio exhibitions, community meetings, or simply for lunch.

This page: The entire project is organized around the central courtyard, which distributes users and visitors along the site.



COURTESY OFICINA DE DISEÑO COLABORATIVO

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During construction, the team maintained a significant portion of the original structure and utilized materials discovered on-site, integrating them into the interior design color scheme.

opening last year, Santa Tere Espacio has hosted several workshops, book clubs, photography exhibitions, and LGBTQ+-centered events. There's even a bookshop, Camila, Una Boutique de Libros, run out [of] one of the three studios.

To execute their vision, the team leaned into the spirit of adapting, recycling, and reusing, something well in line with the property, which the original homeowners informally built. This type of construction is typical in Latin America, especially in low-income areas, yet "is usually disregarded and seen as irrelevant," Radaelli says. "Neighborhoods change so fast due to development, and we wanted to honor and acknowledge what was already there."

However, what was already there was in need of a major cleanup. The 18-by-80-

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In the bright custom kitchen, saturated colors including reds evoke local historical buildings and murals. The yellow walls provide striking contrast with the blue metal doors and red built-in furniture.

foot site was “full of trash with walls and roofs, but no windows, doors, or floors,” but today has been radically converted thanks to colorful interventions and thoughtful design. It is also one of the first adaptive reuse projects in the area.

Its cramped floor plan and lack of natural light have been replaced by a more open space featuring large windows, a geometric skylight, a central courtyard with native plants, and a vibrant tiled kitchenette. Some elements, like the facade, were left untouched, with bits of paint and rustic brick peeking through.

Over a six-month construction period, the design team rehabilitated the property and unearthed patches of paint, which ultimately informed the bold color palette finessed by Maye Colab. “It’s as if

the people that lived there got one or two liters of paint at a time and painted sections of the walls,” Radaelli notes. To preserve the essence of the site, those same colors have been proudly displayed via saturated yellow walls, modern red furnishings, and locally sourced blue steelwork for doors and windows from Crónica Estudio.

While the hand-built structure has been brought up to code, the collaborative process hasn’t stripped it of its unique character. In fact, it’s hard to feel anything less than joyful upon arrival as the narrow patio unveils an “explosion of color and plants.”

“It was very experimental,” Radaelli says of the design. “It’s bold, crazy, and something that not any client would likely

want to do. Now that we have proof of concept, maybe they will.”

Santa Tere Espacio, which Radaelli refers to as a creative playground, has been not only a source of inspiration but a welcoming light to the area’s creative community. “We never did a formal opening, but the neighborhood has been very supportive and we never had any issues during construction,” she adds. Like the informal nature of the building’s roots, its opening has been in a similar fashion. “People reach out to us to host events through word of mouth.”

Like the rest of San Antonio, Santa Tere Espacio has embraced the eclectic and one-of-a-kind nature of its rich community and is looking to the future. For Radaelli, “it’s like a little gem.” ■

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