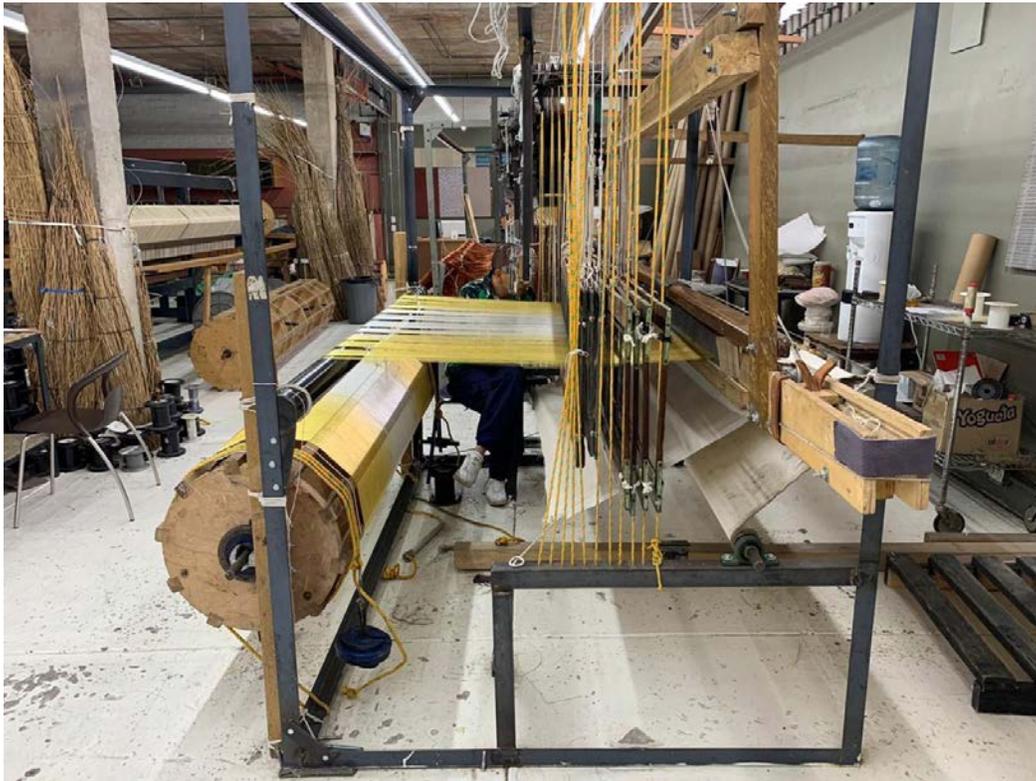


# Hechizoo's Workers Are Quarantining—And Creating— Together

Roughly 20 employees of the Colombian weaving atelier are sheltering at the company's Bogotá workshop

By: Allie Weiss  
May 1, 2020



Work continues at Hechizoo's Bogotá atelier. Photo: Jorge Lizarazo

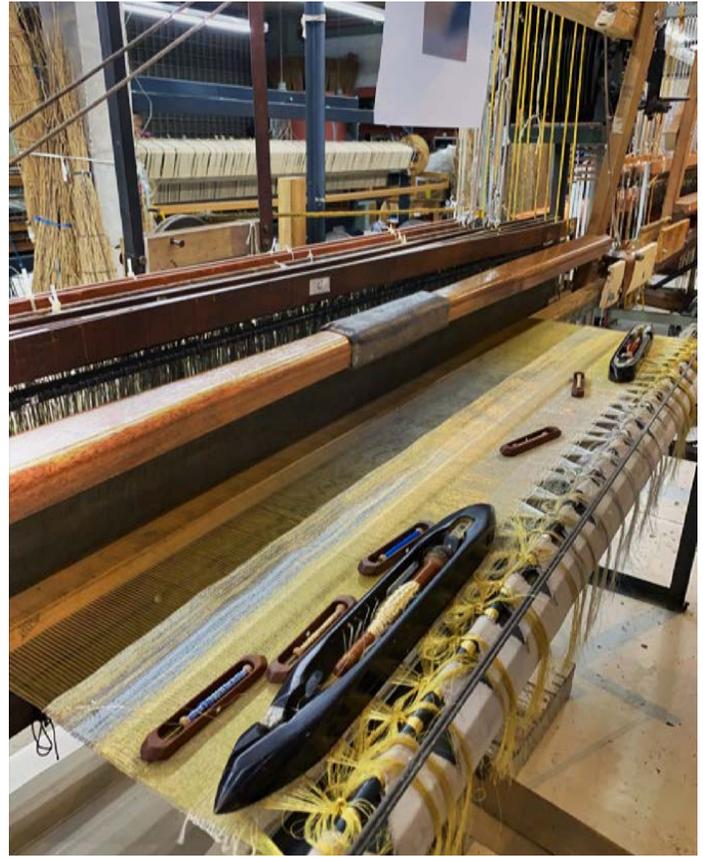
When lockdown orders rippled across the world in March, business owners were forced to make tough calls about how to keep operations running and whether they could continue to compensate their employees. Jorge Lizarazo, who runs the Colombian weaving atelier Hechizoo, knew that the only way to keep business afloat would be to find a way to keep creating.

“Most of my weavers, their main concern was needing to work,” Lizarazo tells AD PRO. The longterm financial health of Hechizoo, which is represented by New York's Cristina Grajales Gallery, was also in jeopardy. “It's impossible that this could survive if we don't keep doing what we know how to do,” he says. “Hechizoo cannot be on pause forever.”

# CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY



Five dogs join the 20-odd workers currently living at the atelier. Photo: Jorge Lizarazo



A scene from the workshop. Photo: Jorge Lizarazo

Lizarazo quickly realized that the only way to safely keep his Bogotá atelier in motion would be to have a group of weavers temporarily move into the facility, thereby preventing the coming and going that would mean potential exposure to the coronavirus. With that in mind, Lizarazo pitched the idea to roughly 20 of his 70 workers, most of whom happily agreed to move into the atelier if that meant they could continue working. (Some opted out, choosing instead to shelter at home with their families.) With help from government programs, Lizarazo is able to fully compensate the workers on site; other employees still receive full benefits but have had to take a pay cut.

Areas of the workshop were converted into makeshift dorms, and the de facto commune was off and running. The team has been busy finalizing orders that were placed prior to the lockdown, as well as conceiving the handful of new ones that have come in since. But with business slowed overall, the group is using newfound spare time as an opportunity to innovate. “The most exciting thing is that we are weaving for ourselves,” Lizarazo says. “We are designing again for ourselves. We have a kind of freedom; we’re experimenting.”

# CRISTINA GRAJALES GALLERY



The space has been retrofitted as a temporary home for Jorge Lizarazo and his employees. Photo Jorge Lizarazo



An intricate pattern emerges on one loom. Photo: Jorge Lizarazo

The group stays on the premises, venturing out only for trips to the adjacent market, and makes maximum use of the three kitchens on site. (Unfortunately, there is only one shower, but the group has devised an efficient schedule to make sure everyone gets time to use it.) Lizarazo himself often cooks lunch, which the group eats together before returning to work in the afternoons. Outside of working hours, group yoga sessions are not an uncommon occurrence. Naturally, the coworkers turned roommates are all getting to know one another much better.

“We finally get to be a family,” Lizarazo says. “Before, it was an intention; now it is a reality. I am really grateful for this team that I have, and they allowed us to keep Hechizoo.”



The team, with Lizarazo at the center, sits down for a group meal. Photo: Jorge Lizarazo