



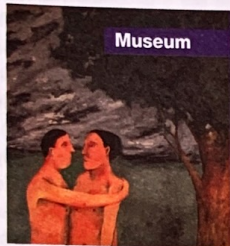
Oaxaca Times®

The inner life of Oaxaca

Issue 22/6

November-December 2008

www.oaxacatimes.com



Museum

The Maco

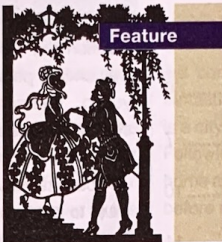
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Christmas in Oaxaca

From the Breaking of the Plates, to the Feast of the Radishes, Christmas time in Oaxaca is a vivid celebration that combine Christian religious traditions with the deeply-rooted sense of community that bind together the pueblos and colonias. You won't find last-minute shopping specials, or Salvation Army Santas on the street corners, what you will enjoy is a generosity of spirit that blossoms throughout the month of December culminating at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Festivities begin with a series of calendadas, or parades, featuring processions of huge dancing puppets, decorated autos, carriages, and bicycles, and a strolling brass band. The first calenda begins on December 6, followed by one on the 10th celebrating the Virgin of Guadalupe. On the 12th everyone ventures to the Guadalupe church for a festive breakfast served in front of the church.



The richest calenda takes place on December 16th and is dedicated to La Virgen de Soledad. This calenda is the most important in the entire state of Oaxaca and indigenous groups from all over descend upon the city to parade through the Zocalo to the Basilica of Soledad. There on the steps of the church dancers perform the spectacular

Danza de la Pluma. December 16 also marks the start of the nine days of posadas that take place throughout the city in the days leading up to Christmas

The posada is traditionally a neighborhood celebration, in which children selected to portray Mary and Joseph, along with shepherds, and attending families, stop at various homes in their neighborhood looking for shelter. It is a musical event, with both visitors, and recipients singing out the call and response. Ritually turned down at many homes, the children finally reach the home of the padrinos (or godparents) for the event where they will be received with song and prayer.

Following the prayers a feast of tamales and coffee is served and a piñata, filled with fruits and nuts, is attacked and broken by the children.

Not all the breaking around Christmas gets done by children. From the 16th through the 31st of December

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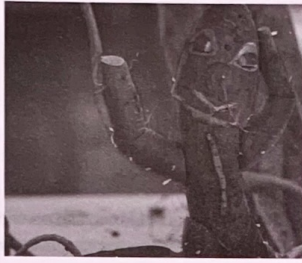
everyone participates in the "breaking of the plates." If you've ever longed to throw a wineglass into a fireplace this festivity is for you. Outside of the Cathedral Restaurant stands are set up serving hot chocolate, better than grandma ever made, and plates filled with "Bunuelos," the traditional Christmas time pastry. Drink your chocolate, eat your dessert, then smash your plate afterwards. And you don't have to clean up. The tradition is said to have its roots in pre-Colombian tradition which warranted that all of one's personal belongings should be destroyed every 52 years.

The entire city is one big festival during Christmas, with an open air market in the already bustling zocalo, with food stands, carnival rides, and artisan crafts.

The Night of the Radishes

If you aren't particularly all ho, ho, ho about Christmas then Oaxaca won't let you down during the season. Instead of decking the halls with holly, think about using radishes as your holiday motif.

Legend has it that 350 years ago two Dominican monks came up with a marketing idea designed to help indigenous farmers market their produce. They came up with a plan to have the farmers carve their beets, radishes, and carrots into fantastic shape. Thus was born the "Night of the



Radishes" a unique festival celebrating food as folk art.

Celebrated on December 23, the fiesta lasts only a few hours. But what a few hours those are. Since 1897 when the festival was taken over by the Oaxaca City Municipal Government thousands of visitors have ventured to the colonial capital for the unusual celebration.

Visitors who parade through the Zocalo will see radishes sculpted into everything from busts of Maria Sabina, the famed curadnera, to exquisitely detailed figures of Gueleguetza dancers. The radishes, which are specially grown for the occasion, are not consumable, but are heavily treated with additives so that they can reach their colossal size, which sometimes reaches 40 inches.

These days the radishes are in addition to the displays of radishes, artisans will compete in two other categories - dried flowers and corn husks. But without question the radishes are the big draw at the festival. These days they are cultivated in a park by the airport. The harvest takes place on December 18th, and the artisans have five days in which to complete their artworks.

There is big money at stake in the contest. The grand prize is \$10,000 pesos. But merely for participating, and you have to be selected to participate, you will receive \$400 pesos.

But don't leave the Zocalo after viewing the radishes. The fiesta, one of Oaxaca's most spectacular will continue on until midnight with a fantastic display of fireworks, and this is a city that loves fireworks, at 11 p.m. Following the fiesta, meander back home and enjoy a rich cup of chocolate before going to sleep.

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The MACO

■ TRACY GAUDREAU

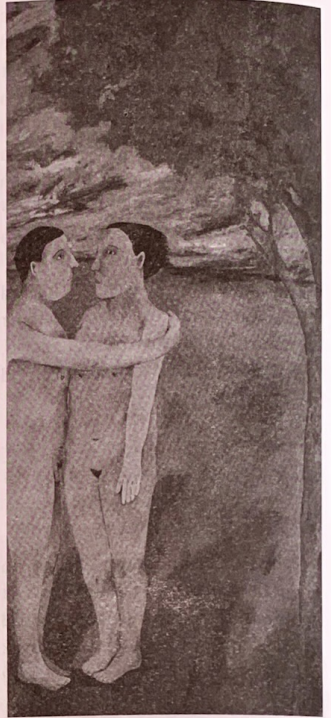
Carlos Ashida is honoured to have been invited to take on the position of the new director of the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Oaxaca (MACO). The MACO exhibits recent art from around the world and work by leading Oaxacan artists such as Rufino Tamayo, Francisco Toledo and Rodolfo Morales.

Carlos has been with the museum for four months now but he is originally from Guadalajara where he studied architecture. He has worked in galleries for over 10 years, mainly in Guadalajara and Mexico city. He began as a self taught artist and free lance creator. He has always held Oaxaca in high regard as Oaxaca is very important to the art scene of Mexico and The MACO is a model for other contemporary art houses in the country.

Carlos has a lot of ideas and plans for the future of the MACO. Including the ability to show Oaxaca what is going

on in other parts of Mexico and abroad through a collaboration with other cultural centres. However, they can not take on decisions at this point about exhibitions as he is concentrated on very ambitious plans to transform the Museum into a better show place for artists . They have plans to remove the ceiling to improve illumination. This is a delicate process that needs to be done without tampering with the structure of the historic building, that will take at least four to six months. They will also be looking to improve the electric, technical and climatic situations, looking to have the right temperature and space for exhibits.

The artists that Carlos admires are the artists he has worked with. Now that he is working with the artists of Oaxaca he will establish this identification here. He believes it is important to have a representation of local artists in the



program. They will dedicate rooms to show pieces made from junk local artists. He is looking to keep a strong connection between local artists and the museum.

Starting from the last Friday in September (Sept 26/2008), The entire museum will be taken over by Reunion Familiar Exposicion Fotografia Convocatoria. A photography exposition which is a collaboration with The Centro Fotografico Manuel Alvarez Bravo They are currently in the process of selecting material for the massive expo featuring 80 participants. People from all over have been invited to send in their photos to be featured in the exhibit where they will tell the story of people through their photographs with themes of geography, history, landscape, architecture, dreams, desires and objects from the past, present and future.

For more information on the exposition or the MACO in general you can go the website www.museomaco.com or visit the museum in the colonial building on the pedestrian street Acala #202.

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