

Mementoes of the 1810 Mexican Revolution introduce visitors to Tlaquepaque.

TLAQUEPAQUE: A Place to Stop and Shop

By IRENE McMAHON

Americans are still heading south of the border to a place of exotic "foreignness" close at hand. Mexico remains a rugged and beautiful country of friendly people that has always been a favorite for traveling northerners and always fruitful for shoppers and bargain-hunters.

There is no better time than now to head for Guadalajara's suburb, San Pedro Tlaquepaque, the craft center of Mexico. First you have to learn how to pronounce Tlaquepaque. Then you want to keep repeating "Ta-la-key-pa-key" for its rhythmic sound.

It's only a 15-cent short ride from the center of Guadalajara, the city of glorious parks and the powerful paintings of Jose Clemente Orozco depicting the violence of the 1810 Mexican Revolution.

Tlaquepaque is the most attractive and interesting of a group of once separate villages. To call it a suburb is misleading because it is not similar to any you will find in the U.S. It is a sizeable city in its own right with a population of about 200,000.

The heart of Tlaquepaque is the *parian* (public market of diverse things), long renowned for pottery and native craft. Here in the bustling pedestrian mall, the pomp and ceremony of the Mexico of yesterday still lives with cobbled streets, intimate welcoming plazas, parks, and outdoor cafes tucked under the arches of the block-long El Parian. On Sunday at *paseo* time, this becomes a promenade for local youth.



Mariachi musicians aid in adding atmosphere to the Restaurant with No Name.

This once fashionable resort for upper crust Mexicans is truly a *tierra de artesanos*. Here 200 shops display the simplest crafts next to the most sophisticated. Within the last few years, blocks of gracious adobe architecture have been renovated into a most prestigious craft center exhibiting more locally produced crafts than any comparable area in Mexico.

The grand old mansions lining the streets Independencia, Madero, Morelos, and Prieto are now shops and restaurants exhibiting vast and colorful arrays of silver, hand-blown glass, wrought iron, papier-mache, brass, copper, and straw articles, embroideries, leather goods, weavings, and the ceramics for which

the town is famous.

Antigua de Mexico, Independencia 255, is perhaps the most luxurious of all the old residences. Wandering through its many showrooms, patios, and gardens one senses the serenity of the lives once lived here.

A boy squatting in the street finishes making a bird cage while street-vendors sell handmade toys and woven hammocks in front of the avante-garde gallery of the widely known Sergio Bustamante, Independencia 238. His display includes fantastical papier-mache, bronze, and copper alligators, frogs, peacocks, monkeys, cheetahs, lions, and flocks of additional indefinable birds and animals. Not for sale are the red flamingos splashing beneath the waterfall at the rear of the shop where beverages are served to special clients.

Bustamante has 26 artisans working with him and each week he adds new designs and cancels others. This attractive *mestizo*, Bustamante, has taken the materials of the Mexican craftsman and, influenced by the creativity of his ancient ancestors the Aztecs and the Toltecs, produced these imaginative critters that go beyond the usual repetitive Mexican craft. Unfortunately, his besties have been so successful they are being copied throughout Mexico.

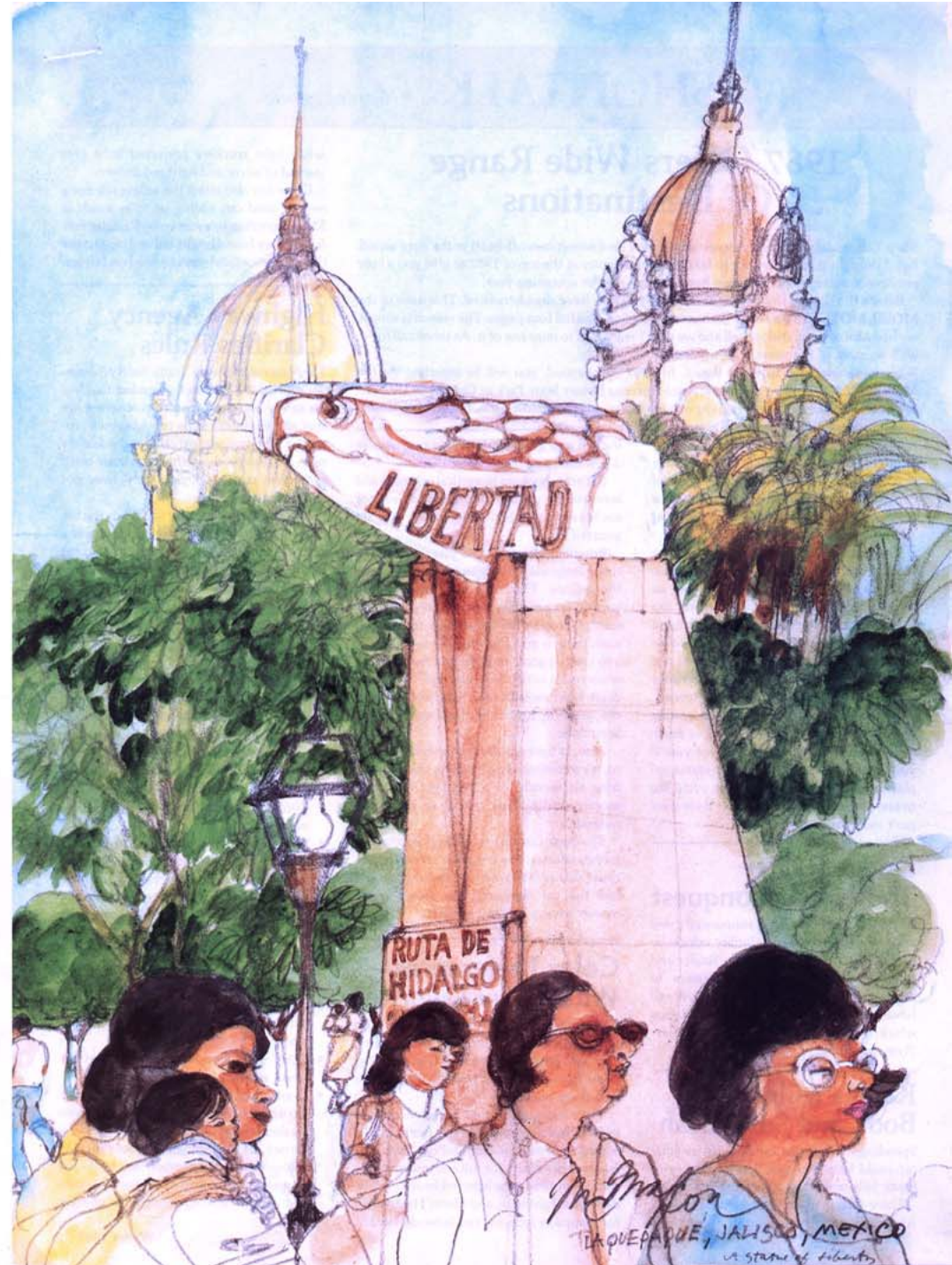
There is no naivete about the Josefa designs at the Barefoot Eagle, Jurez 120. These dramatic garments,

trimmed with embroidery and ribbons and patches of brilliant color, are of the highest style with a knack for outwitting time.

For the economy-minded, Aldana has four locations near the main plaza and El Venado across Tlaquepaque Boulevard has top quality items and they also carry a line of seconds. Leo e Hizos carries bargain leather goods. The nearby town of Tonalá, also known for its dedicated craftsmen, has moved several of its shops here.

The Regional Museum of award-winning ceramics, located in an elegant colonial house on Avenida Independencia, has a collection of pottery from the Valley of Atemajac, including *luzra de olor*

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(odoriferous earthenware) and the unique petatillo pottery. Typical of this region, petatillo is characterized by its distinctive, almost oriental, designs of stylized animals.

We had not yet become part of the unhurried tempo of life surrounding us so we decided that a long, lazy mid-day meal was the time to start. In Tlaquepaque as throughout Guadalajara there are many good restaurants but there is no better choice than the Restaurant with No Name, Madero 80. Un-named because you are to feel as a guest in this handsome, restored 200-year-old colonial home.

The brisk tempo of the mariachi band that greeted us was familiar. These violinists, guitar players, trumpeters, and singers once could only be seen in environs of Guadalajara but now have become universal wherever Mexicans have emigrated. In Tlaquepaque itinerant mariachis are numerous and are reputed to be the best in Mexico. They still carry the name derived from the corruption of the French word *mariage*. French troops during their occupation of Guadalajara (1863-1866) erroneously believed the bands were for hire only for weddings.

It was a beautiful day in this area known to have the best climate in the world. Our *equipales*, rustic chairs, were reserved for us on a patio surrounded by adobe walls, bougainvillea, and 25-foot high philodendron.

The public market presents a diverse promenade of passing pedestrians.



Exotic peacocks strutted between the tables as singing waiters announced the day's menu.

Dayton Herzog, the enthusiastic proprietor, told us that they use regional recipes from the 18th and 19th centuries with modifications "sanctified by the French."

We had admired the pottery in the restaurant and now we could stop next door and purchase it at Madero 70. Ken Edwards, the owner, has developed the fragile Tonalá pottery into hard-finished, brilliantly glazed, lead-free stoneware, gracefully hand-painted with flowers



Picturesque scenes abound in Tlaquepaque's streets.

and birds. Here you can watch the potters at work. Craftsmen can also be observed at the oldest blown glass factory, Rosa de Cristal, Independencia 232.

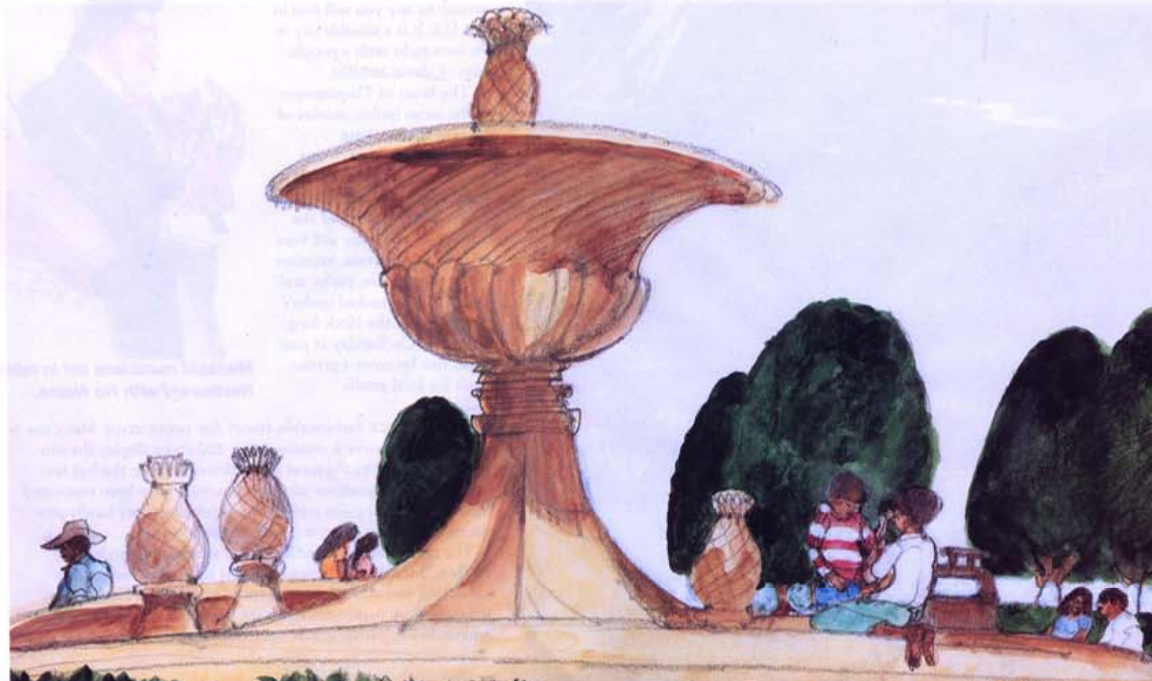
The array of shops is a challenge for the most accomplished shopper. It is dramatically different from our own U.S. shopping malls. Great varieties and quantities of handcraft, feats of artistry that families have devoted their lives to, abound. For centuries these crafts have been the means of survival for whole villages. No matter if your tastes are simple or otherwise, you will find treasures here.

You can bargain in the streets with vendors or accept the set price of the shops. Prices are so low there is not much margin for bargaining. Because Mexico is designated as an "underdeveloped" country you can bring Mexican crafts into the U.S. duty-free under the Generalized System of Preferences, GSP, Program.

Whether or not you choose to carry away leather shoes and jackets, sheer cotton hand-embroidered blouses, fish-shaped hand-blown bowls, or choice Oaxaca vases you will find it exciting to view the thousands of feats of artisanship collected in this throbbing and vital village, "Ta-la-key-pa-key."



Strolling peacocks strut between the tables at the Restaurant with No Name as patrons sample the menu (above). Welcoming plazas and parks greet the visitor (left).



Original paintings and drawing by Franklin McMahon