

1.15 - 16.2023

Most days start off with Susan, Richard and I meeting for coffee and breakfast on the zococlo. A zocolo is a staple in every latin country. It is basically a huge square for people to meet in, a place for festivals and other community activities and a plae for people to hang out (not in a creepy way). The Oaxaca zocolo is surrounded by restaurant after restaurant. People meet there to eat and people watch.



It was an exhausting, fulfilling day. First stop, San Bartolo Coyotepec. Each of the many pueblos around Oaxaca (many in the mountains) specialize in one product. San Bartolo specializes in black clay pots (that is the type of clay available in their area). I was so disappointed. The government has spent money to help them which means a huge prefab marketplace. Pretty cool structure, but oh so linear. Each booth was the same, named and numbered. I could not believe the work was all made from commercial molds. Rich managed to find one handbuilt item. When we talked to Gabo about this he said the day to go is saturday, that we missed the real show. It was interesting to see how families became commercial businesses.

Typically, if you go on a day trip, you hire a taxi driver to tote you around and wait for you. Our driver, Antonio then took us 1.5 hours from Oaxaca to San Marcos Tlapazola, (bumpyride!) a rural Zapotec village that specializes in red clay. Lynn and I have been there. It seemed closed and I was very disappointed, guarded by this dog, it looked shut down.



We knocked and waited. I could not believe what we saw when the gate opened. There they were, the women of the red clay. A cooperative of women who make the goods. Kneeling or sitting on cement with the red clay in front of them. Their story is incredible and includes an 5 stop trip to the US, concluding in NYC where MOMA bought some of the work for the collection, this is a must read if you ever plan on coming

here... <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/12/t-magazine/san-marcos-tlapazola-pottery.html>

I was so excited to meet Ella that I asked her a few questions. It wasn't long before Susan and Richard drifted off and I was trying to think of a polite way to leave the conversation. She was so full of emotion and wanted badly to share everything. The one thing I will mention is the emotion she felt when everyone around her began to copy what the women of their village does, she expressed deep hurt, confusion and anger. This work had been passed down from who knows how many generations of zapotecs. These women were so beautiful, in full traditional garments. They could have been anywhere from 40 -70 years old and full of joy and laughter (except the aforementioned part).



On the way back we stopped at El Rey de Matatlan for a mezcal stop. We had an excellent tour by Stephanie and a multitude of choices for purchase. The process is incredible, but you'll have to ask Rich. My mind drifted off to the Mexican ice cream which we had later. This was a good experience, but very commercial. If you come, you might want to schedule a tour with a local who will take you to single village mezcal makers.



We were pooped when we got home.

1.16.2023

A museum and tlayuda day

We decided not to eat breakfast today because for lunch we would have the ever present tlayuda. (Tlayuda is a handmade dish in traditional Oaxacan cuisine... a large, thin, crunchy, partially fried or toasted tortilla covered with a spread of refried beans, lettuce or cabbage, avocado, meat, Oaxaca cheese, most often meats and salsa.) covered with another tortilla and eaten like a sandwich.



First stop, shopping.....there is so much to see and buy here - handmade, mostly clay, textiles and mezcal. We look and admire in town and then go to the Pueblos to purchase. So much more fun to meet the artists, see the countryside and last but not least! pay 1/3 the price.

Next, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo. Wonderful paintings by two Oaxcan artists...Raúl Herrera and Crispin Vayadares.



This was in another Gallery. I did not get the name of the artists, but I love what they did with the exhibition walls.



Short siesta and then dinner at our favorite hole in the wall.. Called Taco Roy-tacos and pozole. We were so proud of ourselves for finding it. Come to find out, it is a chain, still as good.

1.18.2023

I missed a day somewhere and have no idea where I left it! Today's breakfast was streetfood. I would go for that every day. Carrot juice, loaf of bread and mangos.



Then hopped in a taxi to San Agustín Etla. If I were ever to expatriate it might be to this little town about half our from the city. Francisco Toledo is mostly to credit with its existence (as well as many other art buildings and museums in Oaxaca). He and Rufino Tamayo made Oaxaca what it is culturally toady in terms of preservation of buildings. (Both famous Mexican painters). Toledo saw the value of an old textile mill, visioned, paid for (not all of it) and helped design, what is now an inexplicably gorgeous Art Center.

<https://architectontheroad.com/travel-design-blog/the-art-center-san-augustin-etla/>

Research ares for grad students, studios, visiting artist program, media room, library and stunning galleries. The may sound crazy, but I get my fix more here than at any other museum... so clean, peaceful, spacious. Room to walk around, contemplate and revere each piece. It reinds me of what I hears Susan Stamburg say at a AAM conference "Museums are a secular temple for reflection. Also, what Dave Hickey named his gallery "A Clean Well Lighted Space"





A rest....



And then a treat- dinner at Casa Oaxaca. Tommorrow Susan and Rich continue their adventure and I go to my friend Bill's house (on the edge of town). See you all soon XOXOXO

