

MANZANILLO



ROBERT REIFF/GETTY IMAGES; EVERETT COLLECTION (BELOW)

Moviegoers who remember Bo Derek (below) in “10,” the 1979 comedy filmed here, arrive, as she did, in search of golden beaches.

IT STILL RATES A 10

Sunny and beautiful and lovingly pursued, even after 500 years and a movie kiss

By Claudia R. Capos

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



As our bellman Rafael drove us through the cobbled streets and past the splashing fountains of Las Hadas, an exclusive Moorish-style resort, he confided the details of a memorable visit several years ago.

“She sat right next to me, where you are, on the front seat of the golf cart,” Rafael said. “She still looked as beautiful as ever.”

“Have you ever washed that leg?” I said, glancing down at his white-uniformed thigh, resting not more than a few inches from mine. He didn’t answer, but broke into a smile.

The woman who captured Rafael’s heart was the actress Bo Derek. She returned to Manzanillo in 2004 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the filming of the movie “10” at Las Hadas. The 1979 romantic comedy directed by Blake Edwards was a box-office hit. The movie made superstars of Derek, who played the

alluring Jenny Miles, and Dudley Moore, who depicted the bumbling George Webber, a 42-year-old songwriter who became obsessed with Jenny’s beauty.

Vacationers who remember “10” still come to Manzanillo in search of beautiful people, romantic sunsets, and exotic adventure. With the Pacific surf lapping at its feet, Manzanillo enjoys the same temperate climate and mountainous seaside setting of other world-famous destinations along Mexico’s Gold Coast, including Puerto Vallarta to the north and Acapulco to the south. Its sun-kissed beaches have been featured in “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.” More recently, the horror sequel “I Still Know What You Did Last Summer” and a remake of “McHale’s Navy” were filmed here.

During our afternoon jaunt around the gleaming white spiral towers and bougainvillea-draped walls of Las Hadas, Rafael took us to Room 420 where Jenny and George had their tryst. We lounged on the spacious bed in the master suite and watched a few minutes of “10,” which runs continually on a closed-circuit television channel. Then we stepped outside to admire the suite’s clois-

MANZANILLO, Page M4

MÉRIDA

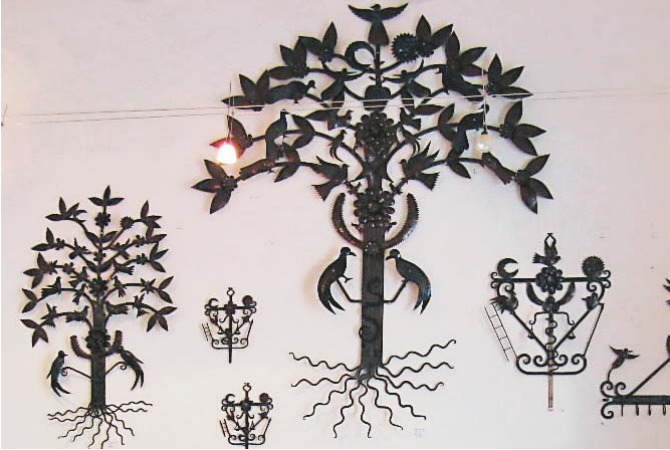


By Ann Wilson Lloyd

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

In this colonial city, step into a gallery and art lies at your feet. Nearly every building in Mérida’s historic center retains original 19th-century mosaic floor tiles, arranged like intricate Art Nouveau carpets. Rugs would have quickly moldered in the Yucatán’s tropical climate, but heat and humidity did not stop citizens here from living the Belle Époque to the hilt.

Mérida’s trove of European-influenced period architecture dates from the 1500s, and many once-abandoned buildings are being lovingly brought back as galleries and museums. The city’s history, its cleanliness and safety, and its location as a nexus be-



Expat and native, art lives here

From left: works by Cuban artist Douglas Argüelles Cruz at La Luz Galería; ironwork from Chiapas at Galería Tataya; and Barbara McClatchie’s Gallery In La’Kech in the front parlor of her house.



MICHAEL LLOYD FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE (FAR LEFT); ANN WILSON LLOYD FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

tween Cuba, Latin America, and Miami are engendering a lively international art scene.

Add art to your Yucatán itinerary, and you’ll mingle with Mérida’s sophisticated but friendly gallery crowd, see interesting work not yet available up north, and enter the city’s most delightfully restored edifices.

“I wanted a community space — a place for locals as well as Mérida’s diverse expats,” said Louis E. V. Nevaer, whose Casa Frederick Catherwood opened in March in a restored French-style townhouse. Nearly 450 people attended its opening, Nevaer said, “including expat Argentines, Catalans, Canadians,

MÉRIDA, Page M5

INSIDE

CHICHÉN ITZÁ Wonderful and ancient mysteries. M3 REAL DEALS Come, bail out from stress. M5

EXPLORE NEW ENGLAND

SPRINGFIELD Italians boast it’s truly delicious here. M6 HIKE-IN CABINS Go rough and remote. M6

A city for art, artists from around the Americas

► **MÉRIDA**
Continued from Page M1

Italians, Lebanese, and Cubans, plus Maya ladies in their ‘hui-piles’ [traditional dress], and hipsters in their Goth attire.”

Nevaer, a US economist and author whose mother’s family in the Yucatán dates to the 1600s, owned a rare 1844 folio of Catherwood lithographs, and thought Mérida deserved them. (Catherwood was the London artist who journeyed with American explorer John Lloyd Stephens documenting Mayan ruins between 1839 and 1841. The hand-colored lithographs are based on Catherwood’s drawings of the ruins as he and Stephens found them, covered with dense vegetation.)

Nevaer purchased an abandoned townhouse in 2006, and spent two years restoring it. “This house was built in 1895 by a man who made his money in the first chocolate factory in Mérida,” he said. “The floor tiles were imported from Marseilles. It has 21 sets of very valuable tropical mahogany doors.”

Upstairs two pristine rooms contain the framed lithographs. Downstairs is a temporary exhibition space, a small garden of indigenous plants, a coffee shop, and a community room where chess players meet. In a charming mix of art and life, Mérida galleries often include things like cafes, or owners’ studios and homes — even artist residency space. One can view art, have a drink, perhaps peek at a private garden or pool.

To see more of Mérida’s newest galleries travel clockwise around the central Plaza Grande, starting from Casa Frederick Catherwood. The route is walkable, but taxis here are plentiful and cheap.

Two blocks north is Galería Tataya, opened last year by François Valcke, a Belgian, and Gerardo Martínez, a Venezuelan, in their front parlor. Gorgeous geometric tile floors, high ceilings, and lots of light create a perfect setting for the high-end, unique art and crafts found on their excursions throughout Mexico, such as heavy, wrought iron door hardware, hand-crafted by artisans in a 400-year-old forge in Chiapas, and one-of-a-kind Talavera bowls from Santa Catarina Pueblo.

About seven blocks north of the plaza is the Santa Ana district and Paseo Montejo, the grand boulevard of 19th-century mansions. Some are derelict, but the huge refurbished palace that holds the national anthropology museum and the exquisite house museum Casa Museo Montes Molina represent past Yucatecan power and wealth: the ancient



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL LLOYD/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



Above, La Casa de los Artistas is a gallery in the home of Melva Medina and Abel Vázquez; a melting tableau by Rodrigo Quinones Reyes at the new Museo de la Ciudad; and top right, lithographs at Casa Frederick Catherwood, a museum and gallery.

Mayan empire, and the “henequen,” or sisal, trade that flourished in the late 19th century.

Reenter the 21st century through a new gallery district clustered a block or so west. Behind the pink colonial façade of La Luz Galería is Mérida’s most internationally attuned art spot, with a minimalist, white-cube interior and a roster of artists from Cuba, Europe, and Latin America. Contemporary art collectors from Monaco opened La Luz in late 2006, said director Claudia Victoria. “Mérida is a very cultured city, but in an intellectual way,” Victoria said. “The city appreciates visual arts but does not yet have the collector investment culture.”

A block away, La Casa de los Artistas is, as the name implies, the home and, since 2006, the gallery, for two of Mérida’s more established artists, Melva Medi-

na and Abel Vázquez. “We show mostly our own work,” said Medina, “but also a selection of other artists whose work we like.” In the parlor of their colonial home, Medina’s bronze sculptures sit next to white sofas and the vivid, surrealist-inspired paintings by Vázquez hang salon-style. Their sunny studio lies in a patio beyond an elaborate iron grille.

La Clínica, one block west, is another stunning new gallery and home combo. Canadian expat Terrence Jon Dyke finished restoring the long-empty space, a former doctor’s office, and opened the gallery in January. Dyke is both an artist whose pastel, viscous-looking abstract paintings are made with poured layers of Mexican drinks — beer, tequila, the rice-based “agua de horchata” — and an energetic impresario. He uses the front rooms as gallery space, and the rest of

the house for art happenings. A large Eva Hesse-like sculptural installation by Mérida-based, Czech artist Gerda Gruber hangs from trees in his backyard, and music and poetry events, avant-garde performances, and video projections are held around —and in — a sparkling plunge pool on his patio.

More avant-garde art and artist residencies can be found a few blocks south at La Periferia. This collective of seven artists who focus on critical issues of the region opened its gallery and art complex in a restored colonial building in September, sponsoring the Yucatán’s only archive of audio-visual art, as well as installations, video, and performance art.

Three blocks away, the more traditional Galería Mérida is four years old, but moved last year to these expanded quarters. Started by New York expat Paula Seivert and Mérida native and photographer Ivan de Leon, the gallery shows work by many of the area’s most respected artists, displayed in light-filled rooms, each with distinctively patterned mosaic floors.

Yet another elegantly restored home-gallery lies south of the Plaza Grande. The name Gallery In La’Kech means “the other me,” said owner Barbara McClatchie, another Canadian expat. McClatchie, a photographer, opened the space a year ago to show the work of talented young regional artists and her artist’s eye is evident throughout her home, garden, and gallery. “It’s a very busy art community here; there were over 300 at my first opening,” she said.

Regional government support for the arts has been generous; one of the city’s largest old buildings, a 1560 armory next door to the cathedral on the Plaza Grande, was turned into a contemporary art museum a few years ago. The Yucatán Museum of Contemporary Art, known by its acronym, MACAY, is a vast storehouse with holdings of mixed quality, though a recent standout was a large exhibit of virtuoso take-offs on old-master paintings by well-known Mexi-



If you go . . .

Casa Frederick Catherwood Calle 59, no. 572 www.casa-catherwood.com Permanent exhibit of Frederick Catherwood’s 1844 lithographs; temporary exhibits of contemporary art. Admission \$5.	www.artistsinmexico.com Sculpture and surrealist painting.
Galería Tataya Calle 72, no. 478 www.tataya.com.mx Unique crafts and fine art.	La Clínica Calle 62, no. 367 www.arte-clinica.com Contemporary art, performance events.
Museo Nacional Antropología e Historia Paseo de Montejo at Calle 43 www.mna.inah.gob.mx First-rate collection of Mayan artifacts. Admission \$3.70.	La Periferia Calle 54, no. 468 www.galeriaperiferia.com Contemporary art, performance events.
Casa Museo Montes Molina Paseo de Montejo, no. 469 www.laquintamm.com Exquisite Belle Époque mansion. Admission \$5.	Galería Mérida Calle 59, no. 452A www.galeriamerida.com Painting, photography, sculpture.
La Luz Galería Calle 60, no. 415A www.laluzgaleria.com Contemporary international art.	Gallery In La’Kech Calle 60, no. 595A www.galeriainlakech.com Contemporary art, sculpture.
La Casa de los Artistas Calle 60, no. 405	MACAY Calle 60, next to the Cathedral www.macay.org Contemporary art. Museo de la Ciudad Calle 65, no. 529A Historical collection, contemporary art.

can artist Benjamín Domínguez.

Nearby, the city’s former Post Office, a restored, 1908 French-style palace, has just reopened downstairs as the Museo de la Ciudad, with the upstairs available for contemporary art. A March group show focused on artists’ views of Mérida and included a realistic tableau of a full-size plastic lawn chair and drink cooler by Rodrigo Quinones Reyes, sculpted from modeling clay that was slowly melting onto the Belle Époque tile floor.

Well, it is hot here in Mérida, and the art scene especially so.

Ann Wilson Lloyd can be reached at annwilsonlloyd@gmail.com.

Destinations hope to reduce your stress

Keeping up with current events, the Myrtle Beach area of South Carolina is offering Vacation Bailout **REAL DEALS** Packages designed to be affordable and stress-relieving. An example: Arrive at the Breakers Resort on a Friday or Saturday for two nights in an ocean-view room and get complimentary breakfast for two. Two-night packages begin at \$79, and the offer is valid through Dec. 23, excepting Nov. 26-29.

Visit www.breakers.com and click on \$79 Weekend Sale or call 800-390-4433. For more offers and information on the area, go to www.myrtlebeachinfo.com or call 888-697-8531.

Double feature in NYC

You could save two ways with the Off Broadway package at The Muse New York, a Kimpton hotel in Midtown. For starters you get 20 percent off the best available rate. Other goodies include 20 percent off dinner at District restaurant, a CD of Broadway show tunes, and a choice of two cocktails upon arrival. Then, steps from the hotel at the newly reopened TKTS booth, Broadway tickets are available for as much as half off. Rates start at \$359 a night.

Visit www.themusehotel.com or call 800-546-7866.

Let’s don’t go there

Some tourist boards will no doubt be unhappy with Peter Greenberg’s new book, “Don’t Go There!: The Travel Detective’s Essential Guide to the Must-Miss Places of the World” (Rodale Books, 2008). Greenberg, a travel authority and radio personality,

zeroes in on the cities and countries with the most pollution, the highest crime rates, and the worst disease rates. Greenberg also writes about highways with high accident rates, hotels that are consistently cited for bedbugs, Legionnaires’ disease, and just plain filth; and airports to avoid.

Thanksgiving in Cambridge

For those looking for somewhere to put up their Thanksgiving guests, the Charles Hotel in Cambridge offers a Trimmings & Thanks package.

With their accommodations, guests get an apple, pumpkin, or pecan pie to bring to Thanksgiving dinner. They also get breakfast for two and a signed copy of

chef Peter Davis’s brand-new cookbook, “Fresh & Honest: Food from the Farms of New England and the Kitchen of Henrietta’s Table.”

Additionally, the hotel will give 10 percent off each booked package price to assist Haitian hurricane victims. Prices start at \$279 a room.

Visit www.charleshotel.com and click on Packages and Specials, then Select a Room Inclusive Package, or call 617-864-1200.

RICHARD P. CARPENTER

Most prices quoted are for double occupancy, minus taxes and fees. Offers are subject to availability. Richard P. Carpenter can be reached at carpenter@globe.com.

