

# The Eye

Beach, Village + Urban Living in Mexico

Huatulco · Issue 157

April 2026

FREE

*The French Connection*





NEW LISTING

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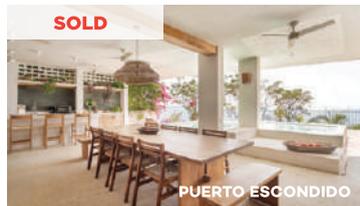


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NEW PRICE

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# Editor's Letter

**"Peace cannot exist without justice, justice cannot exist without fairness, fairness cannot exist without development, development cannot exist without democracy, democracy cannot exist without respect for the identity and worth of cultures and peoples."**

**--Rigoberta Menchú Tum (Guatemalan**

**Indigenous Rights Activist, 1990 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education, 1992 Nobel Peace Prize Winner**

**M**exico is often misunderstood. For many outsiders, the country exists as a kind of postcard: bright colors, mariachis on every corner, sombreros, tequila, and fiesta. The image has become so exaggerated that it borders on parody. Mexico is reduced to a handful of clichés that flatten the depth and diversity of the country. The reality is much more layered.

One of the things that has struck me most during my years living here is how strongly people identify simply as *Mexican*. In Canada or the United States, identity is often expressed through hyphenated heritage; Italian-American, Chinese-Canadian, Irish-American. Cultural roots remain visible and frequently celebrated.

In Mexico, those histories are often quieter, woven into the fabric of everyday life rather than worn on the surface. The result is a national identity that feels cohesive, but it can also obscure just how many different cultures have helped shape the country.

Like many countries, Mexico wrestles with questions of identity, belonging, and prejudice. Conversations around gentrification, migration, and "foreigners" have become increasingly heated in recent years. At the same time, Mexico itself has been shaped by centuries of migration.

Indigenous civilizations laid the foundations of this culture long before the arrival of Europeans. Spanish colonization profoundly altered the landscape. Later came immigrants from France, Lebanon, Germany, China, and beyond. Each group left its mark—sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically. We see these influences in architecture, food, language, music, fashion, and even urban planning.

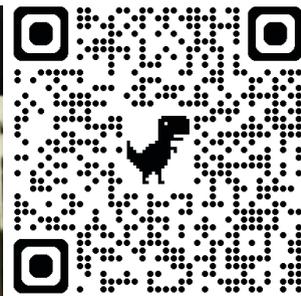
This month, *The Eye* explores one of those threads: the French connection. From pastry techniques that transformed Mexican bakeries to artistic exchange, architecture, and politics, the relationship runs deeper than many people realize. Recognizing these influences does not diminish Mexico's Indigenous heritage. One of the country's greatest strengths is that Indigenous traditions are visible in daily life in ways that are rare in the rest of North America.

But culture is never static. It evolves, absorbs, adapts, and reinvents itself. Mexican culture, as we know it today, is the result of centuries of exchange layered together into something entirely its own. That complexity is not a weakness. It is one of Mexico's greatest strengths.

Thanks for reading and see you next month!

Jane

Did you know *The Eye* is now in San Miguel de Allende? We've just launched our fifth issue in one of Mexico's coolest towns — a perfect counterpoint to the coast. Scan the QR code to read the issue:



Scan me!

## The Eye Team

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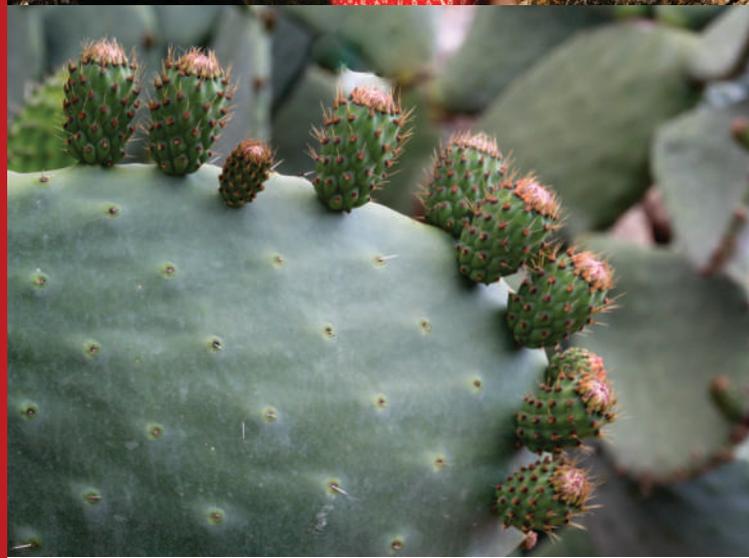
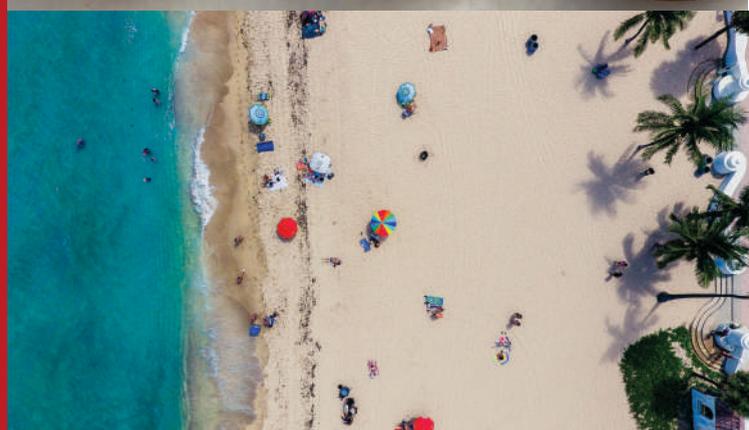
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## **From Baguettes to Bolillos: A Story of Cultural Exchange & Evolution**

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## **The Eye 4**



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# The Emperor's Ghost in the Mural: The French Connection to Mexican Muralism

By Randy Jackson

On June 19, 1867, on a hill outside Querétaro called the Hill of the Bells, Emperor Maximilian, appointed by Napoleon III to rule a country that had never wanted him, faced a firing squad. His execution reverberated through Mexican and European history. Yet how that moment was understood was shaped not by those who witnessed it, but by those who painted it. In Europe, that response was immediate. In Mexico, it would take decades, passing through a classroom, before it found its voice on the great public walls of the Revolution.

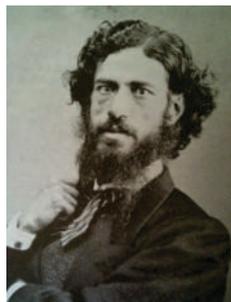
In Paris, Édouard Manet's series of paintings on the execution, collectively known as *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian*, demonstrated the power of art to shape historical memory. Painted from written accounts, they portrayed the event as a condemnation of Napoleon III's imperial folly and were subsequently banned. In Mexico, the effects were slower and paradoxical. The execution did not silence Maximilian's court painter; it freed him to walk into a classroom and change the course of Mexican art.



When Maximilian's court collapsed, his retinue fled to the coast. One man, however, walked in the opposite direction, not toward a ship, but toward a classroom in the Mexican National Academy of Fine Arts.

## Santiago Rebull

That man was Santiago Rebull, the official court painter to Emperor Maximilian, appointed to use art as an instrument of imperial legitimacy, to make a foreign emperor look like he belonged.



Rebull was born in 1829 to a Catalan father and a Mexican mother. His talent was recognized early. He won first place at the Academy of San Carlos in 1851 with his painting *La Muerte de Abel*. That victory earned him a scholarship to study in Rome, where he spent seven years, and what he learned there would shape Mexican art, passing through his hands to the students who would later paint the Revolution.



In Rome, at a Catholic arts school, he learned the techniques and principles of the Nazarene Movement. The Nazarenes believed art should serve a moral or religious purpose, and their major project was to revive the medieval art of fresco painting. It was a tradition built for walls, designed to tell stories to anyone who stood before them.

Rebull returned to Mexico in 1859 and, within two years, had risen to Director of the Academy of San Carlos. In 1865, he painted the official portrait of Emperor Maximilian - *Retrato de Maximiliano*. The Emperor was so pleased that he appointed Rebull as court painter and awarded him the Order of Guadalupe, the Empire's highest honour.

Within two years, the firing squad on the Hill of the Bells ended that empire. Rebull returned to the classroom carrying everything Europe — and the Empire — had taught him.

## The Protégé: Rivera at San Carlos

Diego Rivera was born in Guanajuato in 1886, nineteen years after the firing squad on the Hill of the Bells. When he arrived at the National Academy of Fine Arts at San Carlos as a student at the age of ten, Santiago Rebull was still teaching there.

As director of the Academy and as an instructor who took personal interest in the young Rivera's progress, Rebull brought his influence to bear beyond technique. He transmitted the Nazarene conviction that scale gave art its purpose. Frescoes were consequential, not just because of their size, but because their ambitions were monumental. Art was meant to instruct, to elevate, to speak to anyone who stood before it. Not for palace staterooms, but for the public walls.

As important as Rebull was to the painting style Rivera came to create, there were two other notable instructors at the Fine Arts Academy of San Carlos.

Félix Parra was a trailblazer in depicting Mexico's pre-Hispanic past with the dignity usually reserved for emperors. Parra's painting, *Episodes of the Conquest*, depicted the brutality of the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs. For a young Rivera, it was likely the first time he saw Mexican history treated as something proud and worthy of monumental art.





The other notable instructor was José María Velasco, arguably the greatest landscape painter in Mexican history. With paintings like *The Valley of Mexico from the Hill of Santa Isabel*, Velasco taught Rivera how to organize a massive, sprawling horizon into a coherent, balanced composition. It was a skill that would serve Rivera well when his canvas became walls and mountains and valleys were replaced by the epic history of Mexico.

By the time Rivera left the Academy at the age of twenty, he had spent half his life under the tutelage of these old masters. He had become a formidable talent recognized by these men, significant artists in their own right. Rebull famously remarked of his student: "He draws as well as I do, and he has a better sense of colour."

But his education was not finished. Like Rebull before him, Rivera left for Europe on a Mexican government scholarship, spending years in Spain, France and Italy. What he found there, the Cubists of Paris, the great fresco cycles of the Italian Renaissance, only deepened what Rebull had taught him.

The art that would come to define Mexican national identity, defiant, indigenous, and revolutionary, returned home with Diego Rivera. Mexico gained something unexpected from the defeat of the French-appointed emperor. Hidden in plain sight on those great public walls, in the very conviction that art belonged to the people who stood before it, was the ghost of a court painter who had once made a foreign emperor look like he belonged.

***Randy Jackson blends local reporting from the perspective of a seasonal Huatulco resident with explorations of life and change in Huatulco, Oaxaca and Mexico.***

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# Yuyé Hernández, a Resilient Afro-Mexican Artist Standing Tall Even When Life Knocks You Down

By José Palacios y Román

**A** diversity can test a person's life and shape their path toward transcendence. Some individuals become true champions through that struggle. The state of Oaxaca ranks third in extreme poverty in Mexico. One of its regions is the Costa Chica, home to some two hundred thousand African descendants whose historical presence dates back to the 16th century and beyond.



Following her creative impulses, Yuyé has participated in more than fifty exhibitions, where she has earned admiration not only for the creativity and quality of her work but also for the determination behind it. Without upper limbs, she paints with her feet, transforming what many might see as a limitation into a powerful artistic tool.

Her artistic production is rich in color, expressive brushstrokes, and recurring themes that explore the relationship

between women and nature. Looking back at her work over the past decade, one can see increasing maturity, confidence, and interpretive strength in the subjects she chooses to portray.

Her paintings convey harmony, candor, and touches of naïveté, creating a romantic connection with the viewer.

Finally, it is impossible not to recall the example of one of Oaxaca's most enduring figures: Benito Juárez. A Zapotec indigenous man born in poverty, orphaned at a young age, and raised without speaking Spanish, Juárez rose to become President of Mexico and successfully resisted the most powerful armies of his time.

His story reminds us that resilience is a form of strength.

Yuyé Hernández embodies that same resilience—standing tall even when life knocks you down.

Copalli Art Gallery, committed to promoting new talent from the Oaxacan coast, proudly welcomes Yuyé Hernández as part of its collection of emerging artists.

***The gallery is located in Tangolunda and is open daily from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. All are welcome.***

Yuyé Hernández (Santa Obdulia Hernández Nicolás) is an Afro-Mexican woman born in 1980 in El Tamal, in the municipality of Santiago Pinotepa Nacional. At the time, it was a marginalized and largely forgotten community.

Despite humble beginnings, Yuyé developed a strong character and a deep commitment to her community. Today she is recognized in many roles: as an artist, a defender of her cultural roots, an advocate against abuses of power, a public speaker and lecturer, a national voice on gender equality, and more recently, a councilwoman responsible for culture and finance.

In the mid-1980s, a Catholic priest from Trinidad and Tobago, Father Glyn Jemmot, began promoting visibility and recognition for the Afro-Oaxacan community. Years later, in 1992, the Cimarrón Cultural Center was established.

It was there that Yuyé began her artistic journey, learning to draw and paint using her feet. Yuyé was born without arms.

Through her involvement with the center and her relationship with Father Jemmot, she developed a strong sense of leadership and pride in her community and her Afro-Mexican identity.

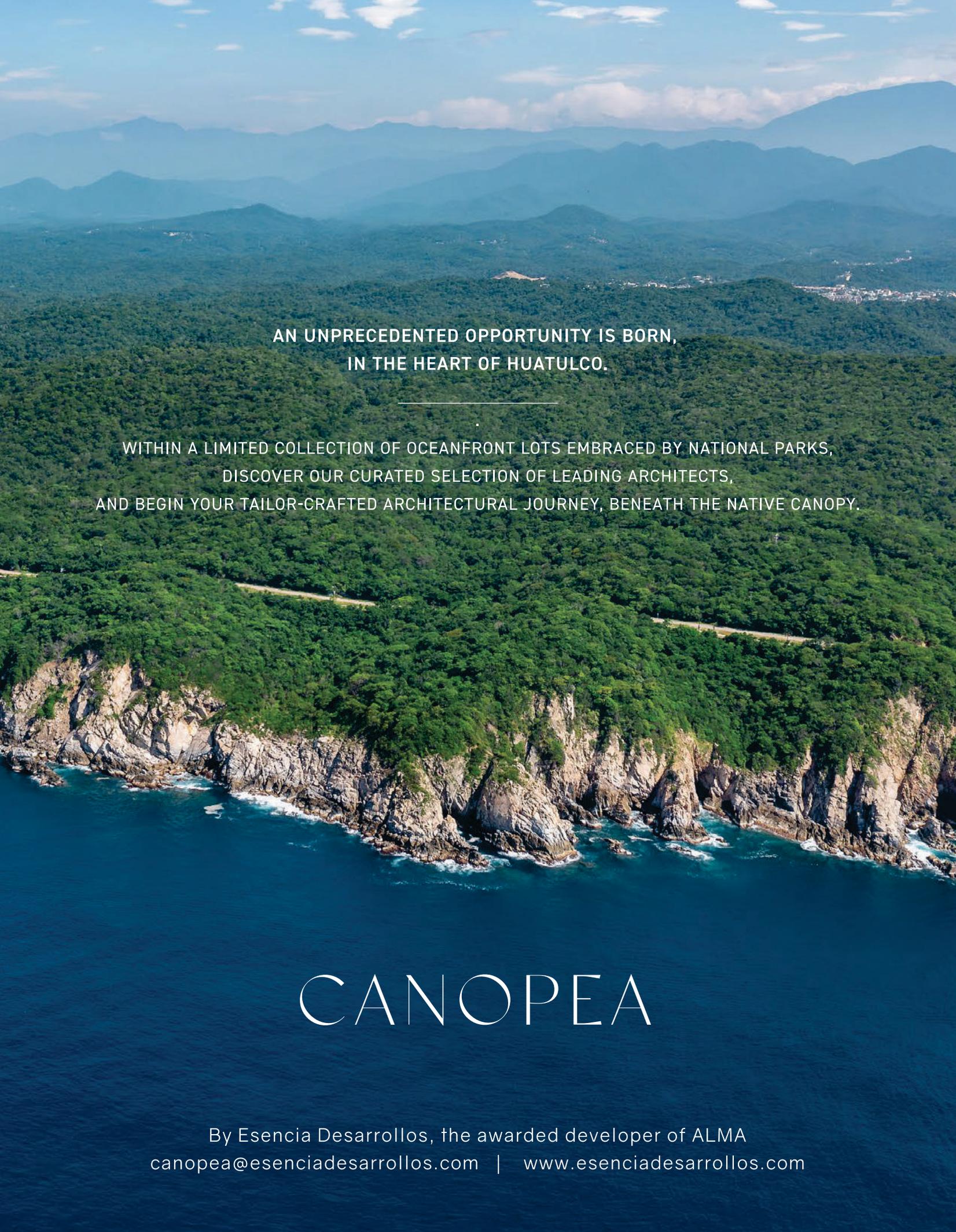
Beyond her social and political work, Yuyé is a graduate in visual arts from the Benito Juárez Autonomous University of Oaxaca. Her principal mentor was the renowned Japanese master Shinzaburo Takeda, one of the most influential figures in Oaxacan contemporary art.

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# The French Food Connection

By Marcia Chaiken and Jan Chaiken

**W**e love the food in Mexico. We arrive every year hungry for moles, *dorado* and *huachinango*, ripe papayas and mangos right from the trees, juicy *piña*, ceviche, and *hamburguesa de pescado*. But sometimes we have a yen for French cuisine — the kind we enjoy in Paris and throughout gourmand-pampering France. We want French food, not fusion — French-European, French-Mexican, or French-Vietnamese interpretations. When in Mexico City, this yen is more than satisfied by a meal at Au Pied de Cochon.

Au Pied de Cochon is one of several excellent restaurants in the Intercontinental El Presidente Hotel in the Polanco area. When we're in CDMX for a short stay, we reserve a room at El Presidente not only for its location near Chapultepec Park and the National Auditorium, but also because of its ready access to our favorite French restaurant. The restaurant's 24-hour schedule meet our ever-changing schedule, so we've been there for breakfast at 6am and late after-theater desserts as well as for lunch and dinner. One year, our stay at El Presidente occurred after surgery in a nearby hospital and coincided with Christmas. The Au Pied de Cochon staff was kind enough to set up a table close to the entrance that could accommodate a wheelchair.

Canadians often think that the Polanco restaurant is related to Au Pied de Cochon in Montreal. It is not. Nor is the restaurant of the same name in Geneva related. Only one restaurant is related — Au Pied de Cochon in Paris—to be more specific, the mother restaurant in Les Halles, the former central food market of Paris that existed for more than 800 years ago. The Les Halles restaurant is not as old as the market and was opened in 1947. It catered to blue-collar workers who arrived after their post-World War II shifts and was noted for its hearty onion soup and pork dishes including, of course, pig's foot. Today the original Paris restaurant, as well as the Mexico City offshoot, is still noted for delicious onion soup but is much more upscale.



It was Grupo Presidente that negotiated with the Paris owners to open the branch in their Polanco hotel twenty-five years ago. Pork dishes are still featured, and the seafood platters are still an astonishing sight; but there are dishes that are suitable for those of us who do not eat pork or *mariscos*. The succulent coq au vin is indistinguishable from the same dish served in Paris, as is the duck in orange sauce. Fish fillets (red snapper, salmon, and sea bass) are perfectly prepared with delicious sides. The beef offerings are varied and each is excellent. And for those looking for a special treat, the lamb ribs served with peas are a truly French delight. The soups are wonderful, and the starters, including foie gras, are very imaginative. The desserts are extraordinary and by themselves are worth a trip to Mexico City. Our favorites are the traditional profiteroles and chocolate soufflé.

For almost fifteen years the Polanco restaurant has been under the direction of Chef Frédéric Lobjois. A native Parisian who reportedly fell in love with French gastronomy at age seven, Lobjois began his career in restaurants in Paris and luxury hotels across France. He was invited to join culinary teams in Mexico by several renowned chefs in CDMX and after several years of building his reputation in top restaurants in the city, he fortuitously was recruited by Au Pied de Cochon to be the Executive Chef. He is professionally well known in Mexico, especially for special events when he joins forces with other chefs to present extraordinary culinary creations. He wisely keeps his personal life off social media.

People living in or visiting the beach towns on the Oaxacan Coast need not travel all the way to CDMX for French food. For many years, Huatulco was the home to the French restaurant, La Bohème in many incarnations. We and other French food fanatics followed the owner-chef around the area. First located in a residential area between downtown and Chahue, then in a small out-of-the-way space in Santa Cruz and later, after a hiatus, on a main street in

Santa Cruz, Francophiles could enjoy authentic French dishes. Alas, a few years ago La Bohème closed – seemingly permanently.

Currently (2026) those seeking French cuisine in Huatulco will find it at Bordeaux, one of the seven restaurants in the Secrets resort. Although she's only been the Chef de Partie for ten months, Chef Livy Deysi has created a buzz on online dining review sites. Livy is tiny in stature but has a personality that fills a large kitchen and dining space. She was born in the town of Huimanguillo in the state of Tabasco and was raised in nearby La Venta. When asked if she cooked as a child, Livy laughed with an emphatic "no". She found her love of culinary arts at age 16 in high school and then studied gastronomy for four and a half years at a public school in Tabasco. After studying and practicing a range of cuisines, she developed a passion for French dishes because of the complexity of the preparations.

Her first job after graduation was at Secrets in Akumal, Quintana Roo. She became a sous chef, and after 5 years in Akumal her talent was recognized. So at age 29 she was offered the position of Chef de Partie at Bordeaux in Secrets Huatulco. She is responsible for coordinating and supervising the Bordeaux kitchen staff in preparing the menu that is designed by the Secrets Executive Chef. Unlike some French chefs who are harsh and demanding with their subordinates, she acknowledges that her staff are experienced, and she welcomes their advice and suggestions. Personally, she enjoys cooking lentil ragu and preparing and presenting the Bordeaux offering of filet mignon with mashed potatoes and vegetables sautéed in butter. But for herself her favorite dish is escargot. Livy hasn't had a chance to travel outside of Mexico, but when she has free time she heads to cooler climes with her beloved dog Maximus.

The Bordeaux kitchen is open to the view of patrons in the formal dining room. Although Secrets does not allow restaurant reservations, whether for overnight guests or visitors who purchase a pass, you can watch Chef Livy at work and enjoy the only purely French food in Huatulco by calling the concierge at Secrets and purchasing a night pass. The cost is about \$120 USD per person and provides access to any of the restaurants, bars, shows and other entertainment.

We had hoped to include recommendations for true French restaurants in San Miguel de Allende, even though we have never visited one. There are several listed on restaurant review sites that appear to be more fusion or "French inspired" than actually French. We sent out a message to friends who spend extended time in SMA, resulting in no recommendations. If any of you readers are Francophiles with recommendations for actual French restaurants, please post them on the Eye website.

For those of you who are traveling to or through CDMX, we advise making an advance reservation at Au Pied de Cochon. Bon Appetit!

***Drs. Marcia and Jan Chaiken have been married for 62 years and have published many justice system research reports together.***

**BLÜ**  
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# Manta Raya: Where French Design Meets the Soul of Oaxaca

By Cathy Bergamo

Since its inception a little over five years ago, Manta Raya has strived to capture the essence of Oaxaca in a unique way, merging the Oaxacan textile tradition with the modern vision of a brand born from a passion for fashion and textiles. My path toward creating Manta Raya was not something planned, but rather a result of my love for the art of fashion and the destiny that brought me to Mexico, specifically to Oaxaca and the coast of Huatulco.

Although my life is now deeply connected with Oaxaca, I was born in France, a country that has marked my personal history and creative vision. It was thanks to a university exchange program that I came to live in the city of Oaxaca, and my first encounter with this city and its people was a revelatory moment. The cultural richness of this state, its traditions, and especially its textile history captivated me immediately. During my time in the region, I fell in love not only with the vibrant landscapes and the endless shades of the sea, but also with the warm beach lifestyle that permeates Huatulco. The picturesque bays, its endless open-water beaches, the radiant sun, and the perfect climate inspired me to create something that reflected that magic.

This is how Manta Raya was born, a Mexican brand founded in Bahías de Huatulco, which honors the textile tradition of Oaxaca while celebrating the coastal lifestyle. Our main focus is to pay homage to the natural beauty of Oaxaca and remind people of what it means to live in harmony with the environment, encouraging more outdoor moments, and creating high-quality, handcrafted products. The pedal loom technique, which we use throughout the manufacturing process, is a tradition that has endured for generations, and through Manta Raya, we aim to preserve this legacy while adapting it to the needs and tastes of the contemporary world. We combine contemporary designs with the vibrant color palette that nature gifts us in this very special place.



The blues of the sea, the golden hues of the sun, and the greens of the mountains are the colors we seek to reflect in each of our products. Each blanket is unique because it is handmade.

As a Frenchwoman, I can't help but carry a piece of my origin with me, and that influence is also reflected in our designs. The French Touch of Manta Raya is definitely present in our creations, based on stripes and color combinations. A clin d'oeil to our French roots.

Manta Raya is not just a brand, but an extension of my own story and connection with the beach. As the wife of a surfer, I spend a lot of time on the beach, seeking ways to stay comfortable and enjoy the environment to the fullest. The need for something practical yet beautiful, something that would accompany me on my getaways, was what drove me to create pieces that were not only useful but also a reflection of the relaxed, free lifestyle of the coast. Today, Manta Raya is perfect to carry in your bag wherever you go; it is made to be an essential for your beach days, to accompany you in your yoga class, or to use at home as a versatile blanket, on your sofa, or as a bed runner, adding a special touch to your spaces.

The philosophy of Manta Raya is clear: Slow Fashion.

Our brand identity is based on a connection with the sea and a design that celebrates outdoor living. In a world saturated by fast fashion, we bet on conscious production that respects both the environment and the artisans and our customers. We believe in the importance of creating durable products, not only in style but also in quality. Each piece of Manta Raya is made to withstand the test of time, offering something more than fashion: an object that tells a story and has a profound meaning that connects us with the land.

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# A Little Bit of France in Mexico

By Alicia Flores

**B**eing Mexican is not just one thing. Mexican culture has been shaped by several influences, and one of the most fascinating is France. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially under Porfirio Díaz, French culture became associated with elegance, progress, and modernity. That influence can still be seen today in architecture, in food, and entire communities.

And if you know where to look, you can experience a little piece of France without ever leaving Mexico.

One of the most refined examples is **Quinta Gameros** in the northern state of Chihuahua. This mansion was commissioned in 1907 by Manuel Gameros, a wealthy mining engineer who wanted a residence that reflected status and European sophistication. Designed by Colombian architect Julio Corredor Latorre, the house is one of the best examples of Art Nouveau architecture in Mexico. Its carved wood interiors, stained glass, and ornamental ironwork reflect the influence of French decorative arts that were fashionable at the time.



Construction began during the height of the Porfiriato, but history intervened. The Mexican Revolution forced Gameros to leave the country before he could truly enjoy the home. Over the years, the building has served multiple purposes, including as a federal building and later as part of the University of Chihuahua. Today, it houses a museum, where visitors can admire not only the architecture but also period furniture that helps recreate the atmosphere of early twentieth-century elite life in Mexico.

With the **Torre Eiffel de Gómez Palacio**, located in Durango, the French connection takes on a more symbolic form. This replica of the Eiffel Tower was installed in the early 2000s as part of a broader effort by local authorities to revitalize the city's public spaces and create a recognizable landmark. Gómez Palacio has long been an industrial and railway hub, and the decision to build the tower reflects both civic pride and a desire to connect with a global icon of engineering and modernity.

Although it is not connected to Gustave Eiffel himself, the structure captures something powerful: the way the Eiffel Tower has become a universal symbol of innovation, romance, and aspiration. For residents, it represents more than a replica—it is a point of gathering, a visual landmark, and a reminder that global culture can be reinterpreted in local ways.



For a deeper and more immersive experience, the town of **San Rafael**, along with nearby **Jicaltepec**, offers a living legacy of French immigration in the state of Veracruz. Jicaltepec was established in 1833 as an agricultural colony by French settlers, who were drawn to the fertile lands nourished by the Nautla River. Many of these immigrants came from regions such as the Alps and eastern France, bringing with them farming techniques, baking traditions, and a strong connection to the land. They established agricultural communities, cultivating crops such as vanilla, citrus, and bananas.



Over time, the settlements of Jicaltepec and San Rafael grew into a unique cultural enclave where French and Mexican traditions blended. Even today, this heritage is visible in the local food. The region is known for its bakeries, as well as artisanal cheeses and dairy products influenced by French techniques, adapted to the tropical climate and local ingredients. Walking through the area, you can feel a quieter, more rural rhythm shaped by agriculture, tradition, and a history that connects Veracruz to Europe in a very tangible way.

These places remind us that Mexico's identity is multi-faceted. French influence arrived during a time of ambition and transformation, leaving behind not only buildings but also traditions, flavors, and ideas that continue to evolve.

To travel through Mexico with this perspective is to see beyond expectations. It is to notice the details, the curve of an iron railing, the elegance of a façade, the taste of freshly baked bread—and to recognize that even here, far from France, its presence still lingers in quiet and surprising ways.

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# Gustave Eiffel and the French Influence on Mexican Engineering and Architecture

By Julie Etra

The French engineer Alexandre Gustave Eiffel's work is often associated with several structures in Mexico. Although his family was of German ancestry, he was born in Dijon, France, in 1832. He lived a long, productive, and creative life (he died in December 1923).

His work in Mexico corresponded with the Porfiriato (1876–1911), the 35-year period in Mexican history when Porfirio Díaz dominated Mexican political life and, in the later years, refused to relinquish power, leading to the Mexican Revolution. On the positive side, Díaz was known for his efforts to modernize Mexico through infrastructure projects, particularly the railroad system, and for encouraging foreign investment and European influence in architecture and engineering.

## Eiffel's Skills

Although Eiffel never set foot in Mexico, several structures in the country have been attributed to his designs or influence during the late nineteenth century. These include a church, a kiosk, and a bridge.

(For reference, the iconic Eiffel Tower was completed in 1889, and the Statue of Liberty, to whose structural design he contributed, was disassembled in France before being shipped to the United States. The statue was completed and dedicated on October 28, 1886.)

Eiffel specialized in iron construction that could be manufactured in France, disassembled, shipped, and easily reassembled on site, a technique he exported to several countries in addition to Mexico. As an engineer who understood wind loads, he was selected to design numerous projects where this was an issue.

## The Church of Santa Bárbara

Santa Rosalía, Baja California Sur, on the Sea of Cortez. The town was founded by the French mining company Compagnie du Boleo after copper deposits were discovered in the region in the nineteenth century. In the 1880s, the government of Porfirio Díaz granted the company permission to develop the mine, and the town grew around the mining operation.

The church was designed by Eiffel in 1884 and built in 1887. It was later exhibited at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris. The prefabricated metal structure was later acquired by the Boleo Mining Company. The company determined that a church was essential for the new town.



Disassembled, it was shipped by sea to Baja California Sur and assembled in Santa Rosalía in the 1890s. The galvanized iron church was designed to withstand severe weather and extreme climates. It was built entirely of stamped metal sheets mounted on a steel frame and has a simple, practical architectural design.

It was later modified, and several of its original stained-glass windows were removed. Today it retains much of the original design.

## Edificio Municipal Santa Rosalía

(Municipal Building of Santa Rosalía)

Some sources incorrectly attribute the design to Eiffel. This building is a wooden structure influenced by French architectural styles from the late nineteenth century and features two stories with a sheet-metal roof.



## El Palacio de Hierro de Orizaba, Veracruz

(Iron Palace, Orizaba, State of Veracruz)

This iron palace served as the seat of the government for the Municipality of Orizaba, a city in the western part of Veracruz and an important cultural center during the Porfiriato.



The building is often attributed to Gustave Eiffel, although some sources suggest it may have been designed by the Belgian engineer Joseph Danly. It was designed in 1891, disassembled, and the 600-ton building kit, along with the pieces and instructions for its assembly, was shipped across the Atlantic to the port of Veracruz. The kit was then transported by rail to Orizaba.

The engineering considered the climate of the region and incorporated drainage system details, including downpipes essential for the rainy season that also function as structural support columns. The site work, including the excavation for the building, was completed prior to its arrival.

Like the church, the design consisted of metal sheets, in this case two sheet plates with space in between to help dissipate heat. Today the building houses several museums, including the brewery museum; the brewery was established in the late 1890s when the railroad delivered the essential ingredients. It took two years to assemble, from 1892 to 1894.

**Cuernavaca Kiosko**

(Kiosk)  
This kiosk is located in the Plaza de Armas, the central square of Cuernavaca. It was brought from Europe, possibly from Glasgow, Scotland, by order of the then-governor Jesús H. Preciado in 1888.



Once the structure arrived in Mexico from Europe, it was transported to Cuernavaca on mule trains. Some references indicate that the kiosk was brought from the city of Glasgow, Scotland, at the time one of the most renowned foundry centers for the manufacture of ships, engines, and trains.

Although definitely of European origin, its designer has been the subject of debate, and it is unlikely that it was designed by Eiffel. The architectural style is Indo-Saracenic (also known as Indo-Gothic, Mughal-Gothic, or Neo-Mughal), a style mostly used by British architects in India in the late nineteenth century. The decorative details on the building reflect this style.



**El Puente de Fierro**

This is a steel bridge located in the municipality of San Cristóbal Ecatepec, in the Mexico City metropolitan area. It is sometimes attributed to Gustave Eiffel, although the exact origins of the structure remain uncertain.

The impressive iron structure reaches a height of about 15 meters and weighs approximately 90 tons. Originally associated with a railway line between Mexico City and Veracruz, the bridge later fell into disuse as this section of rail was abandoned with the expanding urban center.

The structure was later restored and is now known as the Bridge of Art, functioning as a cultural center and community arts space that hosts workshops, courses, and artistic performances.



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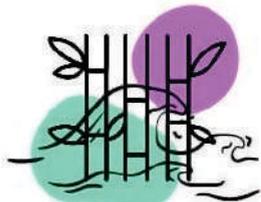
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# Imported Empires: Stories of the French Intervention in Mexico

By Carole Reedy

Everyone loves a story, and a novel set in a historical period can be a compelling way to learn about an era. While some nonfiction history books can seem dry and tedious, a well-researched and well-written novel can satisfy our desire for historical facts and figures.

This month I've chosen both fiction and nonfiction books that tell stories about the time when the European monarchs Maximilian and Carlota ruled Mexico. It is my hope that these books will deepen your understanding of their short reign (1864-1867).

North of the Mexican border, the American Civil War was raging while Mexican conservative exiles and clergy convinced Napoleon III (Louis Napoleon), after considerable political infighting, to place Maximilian of Austria on the throne of Mexico. Along with his wife, Carlota of Belgium, he would become emperor of a politically unstable nation already struggling with internal conflict. It was not the career path either Maximilian or Carlota anticipated.

While much of their story seems improbable, it truly makes for a tantalizing tale.

Looking back, it is easy to think, "How naïve." Yet history reminds us that political power plays often lead to poor decisions. This is a story of ambition, political intrigue, and, ultimately, tragedy.

How did all this come about? Simply put: "The intervention was triggered by President Benito Juárez's suspension of foreign debt payments, leading to a tripartite agreement between France, Spain, and Britain in 1861, though France ultimately pursued the deeper, imperialistic intervention."

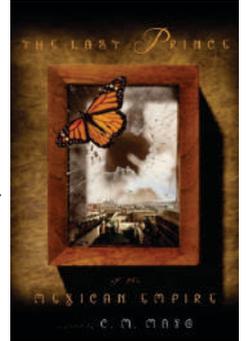
The Mexican Empire, as well as the reign of Maximilian and Carlota, came to an end with the execution of Maximilian by firing squad in 1867. He was only 35. Carlota had been suffering from depression to the point of "going mad," but she lived to the ripe old age of 86, dying of pneumonia caused by a bout of influenza.

Maximilian's last words are said to be, "I forgive everyone and ask everyone to forgive me. May my blood which is about to be shed, be for the good of the country. *Viva Mexico! Viva la Independencia!*"

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## *The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire* by C.M. Mayo

Author C. M. Mayo is an important voice in contemporary historical fiction. She has translated some of the finest Spanish-speaking writers of our time. In addition to *Last Prince*, she has written *From Mexico to Miramar or Across the Lake of Oblivion: A Nonfiction Novela about a Fairytale: A Visit to the Emperor of Mexico's Italian Castle*. The intriguing title is enough to justify a reading.



Avid readers as well as visitors to this magic land will surely enjoy Mayo's *Mexico: A Traveler's Literary Companion*, which highlights the best of Mexico's creative contributors who write about various aspects of Mexican life.

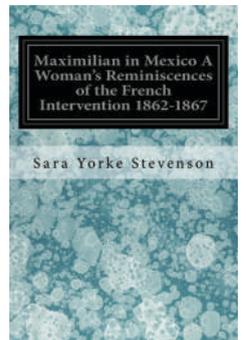
In addition to being a novelist, editor, and translator, Mayo is a poet, educated at the University of Chicago. Library Journal named *Last Prince of the Mexican Empire* one of the best books of 2009, just one of the many accolades the novel received.

The language of *The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire* is lyrical, highlighted by the shifting points of view of the cast of characters from an overworked kitchen maid to the Austrian archduke.

Blending the cultural and political aspects of the Empire combine here to make a compelling story. The added element of a young boy who childless Maximilian and Carlota want to adopt adds a human element. You'll be introduced to many historical figures woven into this compelling narrative.

## *Maximilian in Mexico: A Woman's Reminiscences of the French Intervention 1862-1867* by Sarah Yorke Stevenson

Sarah Yorke Stevenson (1847-1921) was an archeologist, Egyptologist, and suffragette who helped found the Penn Museum. In this meticulously researched book, she gives us one of the few published first-hand accounts of the time.

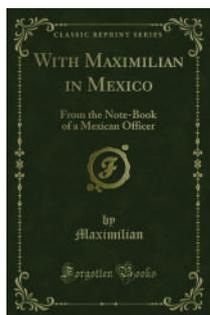


In her own words she says of her book, "By offering these pages to the public, my aim is not to write a historical sketch of the reign of Maximilian of Austria, nor is it to give a description of the political crisis that Mexico went through during that period. My only desire is to provide the reader with a point of view whose value lies in the fact that it is that of an eyewitness who was more than an ordinary spectator of a series of events that became one of the most dramatic episodes of modern times."

What a find! I came across this while researching. Appears to be a gem that may give us a different interpretation of the era, motives, and personalities of the players.

**With Maximilian in Mexico. From the Note-book of a Mexican Officer** by Maximilian baron von Alvensleben

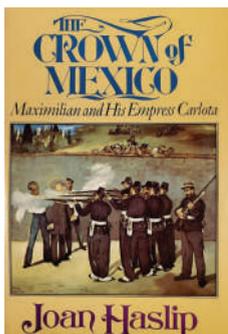
This reprint of an 1867 account offers a rare perspective from the viewpoint of a Mexican soldier who witnessed the collapse of the empire. Though less known than other works, it provides an intriguing firsthand glimpse into the turbulent final days of Maximilian's rule.



This is available for just 150 pesos on Kindle, considerably more in hard cover or paperback editions.

**The Crown of Mexico: Maximilian and his Empress Carlota** by Joan Haslip

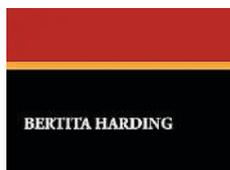
This highly acclaimed novel is rich in detail about the politics of both Europe and Mexico in the 1800s. It also takes us back to Maximilian's upbringing and is sympathetic in tone to Carlota.



Each novel or history we read provides us with new facts and insightful perspectives into the personalities of Maximilian and Carlota. This is what many of us love about novels. They take us closer to the motives of the people involved. There are psychological and sociological factors that straight history often doesn't—or can't—reveal. Maximilian was naïve and easily spurred on by his ambitious wife. He stayed on to the detriment of them both.

**Phantom Crown** by Bertita Harding

Yet another highly regarded novel that was written in 1934 and subtitled The Story of Maximilian and Carlota of Mexico. It is exactly that, a tragic and pathetic tale of this historic epoch. Carlota and Maximilian are surrounded by a populace that detested them at worst and pitied them at best. The country is torn apart, with liberal leader Benito Juárez in the north. (Benito Juárez was the constitutional president of Mexico. After the suspension of payments on the foreign debt in 1861 and subsequent French invasion, his government became a "roaming republic," resisting from the north of the country). Napoleon's ambition is unbridled. There was not much going in their favor.



**Phantom Crown:  
The Story of  
Maximilian &  
Carlota of Mexico**

One reader summed up succinctly all that we look for in a novel. "Wonderful history lesson, very informative, paints a wonderful picture of the times. It is a great read."

So many issues, so many countries, personalities, conflicts, and ambitions. 'Tis the way of the world. Next month we will highlight notable novels published this year. You will most likely find your favorite authors among them.



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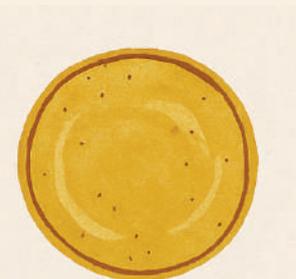
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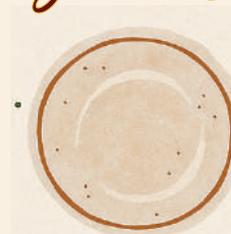
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# Bonjour, Baja! French Grapes Thrive in Valle de Guadalupe

By Melissa Lyon

If you have yet to visit Mexico's Valle de Guadalupe, imagine a sun-washed valley framed by rounded granite hills, dotted with olive trees, vineyards, and the occasional architectural winery that looks like it belongs in a design magazine. Located about 20 kilometers northeast of Ensenada in Baja California, the valley



enjoys a Mediterranean-style climate: warm sunny days, cool nights, and refreshing Pacific air drifting inland from the coast. These conditions are ideal for wine grapes, which thrive on sunshine but depend on cool evenings to maintain balance and acidity. Winemaking here dates back centuries to Spanish missionaries who planted vines for sacramental wine. Today the valley produces the majority of Mexico's wine and has become one of the most exciting wine regions in North America; part agricultural valley, part culinary playground, and part weekend escape for thirsty oenophiles.

In the past twenty years, the valley has transformed from a quiet farming area into a thriving wine destination. More than a hundred wineries now adorn the hills, ranging from rustic family vineyards to sleek architectural showpieces with Michelin-worthy restaurants attached. The growth is not only in numbers but also in reputation. Mexican wines from Baja California now appear on restaurant lists around the world and frequently win international awards. Pioneering producers such as Monte Xanic helped launch this quality revolution in the late 1980s, demonstrating that Baja California could produce wines capable of holding their own on the international stage. As Monte Xanic founder Hans Backhoff would explain, the mission was simple: create the best wine possible in Mexico. Judging by the packed tasting rooms and enthusiastic wine tourists who now flock to the valley each year, that mission is well underway.

Any discussion of Guadalupe Valley wine inevitably leads to the grapes themselves, and here the French connection becomes clear. Many of the region's most successful grape varieties originate in France. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, and Sauvignon Blanc have all found a comfortable home in Baja's sun-drenched vineyards. These

grapes thrive in the valley's dry climate and mineral-rich soils, producing wines that combine bold fruit flavors with refreshing acidity. Several notable wineries craft blends inspired directly by famous French regions. At Bodegas Magoni, for example, the lineup includes both Bordeaux-inspired and Burgundy-inspired wines.

During a recent conversation with *The Eye Magazine*, Mónica Magoni, daughter of veteran winemaker Camillo Magoni, reflected on the valley's deep relationship with French grapes. "We have all those French varieties," she explained. "We produce a Bordeaux blend and a Burgundy blend as well. We have Chardonnay. The French varieties have adapted greatly in our region." According to Magoni, the valley's climate, quite different from French wine regions, plays a major role in that success. "It's very Mediterranean-like," she noted, adding that the grapes have gradually developed their own local personality. "The French varieties have adapted greatly to the Valley and have developed their own characteristics." In other words, the vines may have come from France, but after a few decades under the Baja sun, they've become naturalized residents.

French influence in the valley extends beyond the grapes themselves. Many winemakers here have studied in Europe or adopted classic French cellar techniques. Careful fermentation, precise blending, and patient aging are common practices. One of the most recognizable French touches appears in the cellar: oak barrels. Wines aged in French oak gain subtle aromas of vanilla, toast, and spice, while the wood gently softens the wine's tannins. The result is a style often described as structured and balanced, closer to the elegance of European wines than the bold, fruit-forward style often associated with California. As Camillo Magoni has noted, Baja producers keep an eye on what's happening in traditional wine regions such as France and Italy while still striving to express the distinctive character of their own terroir. The result is a wine culture that borrows freely from European traditions while embracing Baja's rugged landscape and sunshine.

Naturally, the best way to appreciate all this Old-World inspiration and Baja creativity is to open a bottle. A great starting point is Bodegas Magoni itself. Among their standout wines is the Sauvignon Blanc "Clone 22" from the Magoni Reserva line. A bright, refreshing white with citrus aromas and crisp acidity, Mónica Magoni describes it as one of her personal favorites. Another recommendation from Magoni is "Manaz," an intriguing white blend made from 80% Viognier and 20% Fiano. She particularly enjoys it chilled on a hot afternoon, when its floral aromas and soft stone-fruit flavors feel wonderfully refreshing. Both wines typically retail in the range of \$400–\$550 MXN, depending on the vintage and where you purchase them.

Red wine lovers might explore bottles from Monte Xanic, whose Cabernet Sauvignon delivers notes of blackcurrant, cocoa, and toasted oak. Bottles generally sell for about \$750–\$850 MXN, while their flagship Gran Ricardo blend, created in 1994, can exceed \$2,000 MXN. Meanwhile, historic producer Bodegas Domecq offers the Reserva Magna red blend, built on Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, for roughly \$750–\$850 MXN.

What makes the Guadalupe Valley so fascinating is the way it bridges continents. French grapes, European techniques, and Mexican creativity come together in a landscape that feels both ancient and brand new. And really, that's the joy of wine. It travels across oceans, crosses cultures, and evolves with every generation of winemakers.

So the next time you're selecting a bottle for dinner, consider looking north to the Guadalupe Valley, where the French influence isn't imitation, it's inspiration. And the wines are distinctly, delightfully Mexican.

## The Eye Call for Submissions



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# Entre Mar y Vida (Between Sea and Life)

*Art has no gender, yet women painters often bring a special magic to their work.*

By José Palacios y Román

In Bahías de Huatulco—where the changing light, the sea, and the surrounding mountains shape daily life—art often grows from the landscape itself. A group of local women artists has come together to explore that connection through color, memory, and shared experience.

On April 2, 2026, Copalli Art Gallery will present the exhibition *Entre Mar y Vida* (Between Sea and Life) by the Huatulco women's collective *La Magia del Color* (The Magic of Color), a group of creators who live and work in this region of Oaxaca.

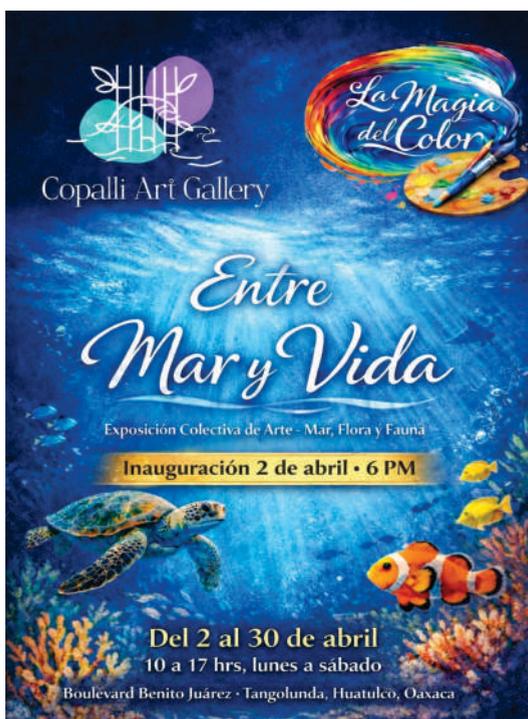
The mission of Copalli Art Gallery is to promote visual art and to open its doors to emerging local artists, making it a natural home for this exhibition.

*La Magia del Color* was formed out of a desire to create spaces for local art and artistic collaboration. This group exhibition seeks to strengthen the presence of women in the local artistic landscape while creating opportunities for connection between artists and the community. The collective is composed of: Ale Salazar, Alma Drew, Aranza León, Diana Laura Vargas Chávez, Grisel Hernández, Janette Santiago, Judith Martínez Caballero, Maru Ibarra, Aline Sofía Zúñiga Cárdenas, Marilú Gómez Bernal, Mariela Esmenjaud, and Mirna Liliana Muñiz Campos.

Each artist brings sensitivity, talent, and new perspectives to the cultural life of Huatulco. They offer a unique perspective: some were born in Huatulco, while others arrived drawn by the beauty and energy of the region. All share a deep bond with the natural and cultural surroundings that shape their lives.



The works of these artists explore a variety of techniques and visual languages, from painting and mixed media to contemporary works inspired by the sea, tropical vegetation, Mexican traditions, and the daily life of the region. This diversity reflects the spirit of the group's name, *La Magia del Color*—a celebration of artistic freedom and the expressive power of color.



Guided by the belief that art connects people, stories, and emotions, this exhibition invites an encounter between artists and the community. Its goal is to build new audiences and contribute to the cultural life of the region.

In a place where the sea and land constantly shape the rhythms of life, *Entre Mar y Vida* captures that relationship. Through color, texture, and personal perspective, these artists invite viewers to see Huatulco—and the creative energy of its community—through their eyes.

## Event Details

Opening: Thursday, April 2, 2026 – 6:00 PM

Copalli Art Gallery

On view through: April 30, 2026

Hours: Open daily from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Admission: Free and open to the public. All are welcome.

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# From Baguettes to Bolillos: A Story of Cultural Exchange & Evolution

By Kary Vannice

**W**alk into almost any panadería in Mexico and you'll notice it right away. The glass cases are full to bursting with colorful rows of conchas, cuernos, orejas, and empanadas. Trays are constantly being swapped out. It smells like sugar, yeast, and warm bread, and it feels very Mexican. And it is. But there is also something else going on that most people don't think about.



Another change that came with French technique is the focus on texture. Texture was always important in Mexican food, but these new methods expanded what was possible. After the incorporation of these techniques, softer interiors, crispy outer layers, and pastries that pull apart in layers became more common. These details may seem small, but they change how the food is experienced.

Bread in Mexico did not always look like this. Before wheat became common, food was centered around corn. Wheat came later during the colonial period, and baking slowly developed from there. But a bigger shift happened in the nineteenth century, around the time of the French intervention in Mexico.

What changed was not so much the ingredients. These largely stayed the same. What changed was how things were made.

French baking brought a different level of precision to the process. Dough was handled differently, fermentation was more controlled, and techniques like layering and shaping became more intentional. These influences were adopted into the Mexican kitchen and affected the texture, consistency, and final result.

This French influence didn't replace what already existed. It changed the way things were done.

A simple example of this is the bolillo. At first glance, it looks like a basic roll, but if you pay attention to the crust, the inside texture, and even the way it is scored, you can see the connection to the French baguette. Over time, it became a part of everyday life in Mexico. Today, it's used for tortas, served at meals, and found just about everywhere. Most people wouldn't think of it as French, but the influence is still there.

What happened next is what makes this interesting.

Mexican bakers didn't try to copy French pastries exactly. Instead, they used those techniques as a starting point and built something new. This is how pan dulce really started taking shape. The variety that exists today didn't come from just one tradition. It came from a system that allowed for experimentation.

Different regions created their own versions and varieties. Shapes, toppings, and recipes evolved over time. And this created the modern-day Mexican bakery culture that is both consistent and highly varied at the same time.

Today, the panadería is its own kind of space. It is not a French bakery, but it is not completely separate from that influence either. It runs on a structure that came from French technique, but everything about how it looks and feels is Mexican. There is more volume, more movement, and it is part of daily life, not something reserved exclusively for special occasions.

And this system is still changing. New techniques are introduced, ingredients shift, and bakeries and recipes adapt and evolve over time. At the same time, certain staples like the concha remain consistent, which keeps a sense of continuity and groundedness in the uniquely Mexican bread culture.

When people talk about this connection, they often call it influence. But that makes it sound like one culture affected another and that was the end of it. In truth, that's not what really happened.

Instead, French baking provided a new framework. Mexican bakers used it, changed it, and expanded on it, and eventually made it their own. What exists now is something different. We tend to think of influence as something that moves in one direction. One culture gives, the other receives. But that's not what happened here.

What started as a set of techniques became something entirely different once it moved through Mexican culture. It wasn't just adopted; it was reworked into something that now feels completely original.

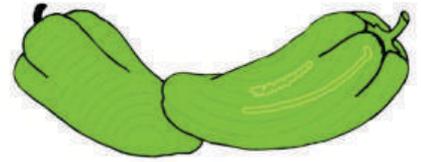
Most people won't think about any of this when they walk into a bakery. They'll just pick what looks good and move on with their day. But what looks simple on the surface is actually the result of a much bigger story that's still unfolding in everyday life.

Perhaps after reading this, you'll see more than just bread on your next trip to the bakery. You'll see history, collaboration, and evolution in that bolillo or concha in your hand.

*Bon appétit & buen provecho!*

***Kary Vannice is a writer and energetic healer who explores the intersections of culture, consciousness, and daily life in Mexico.***

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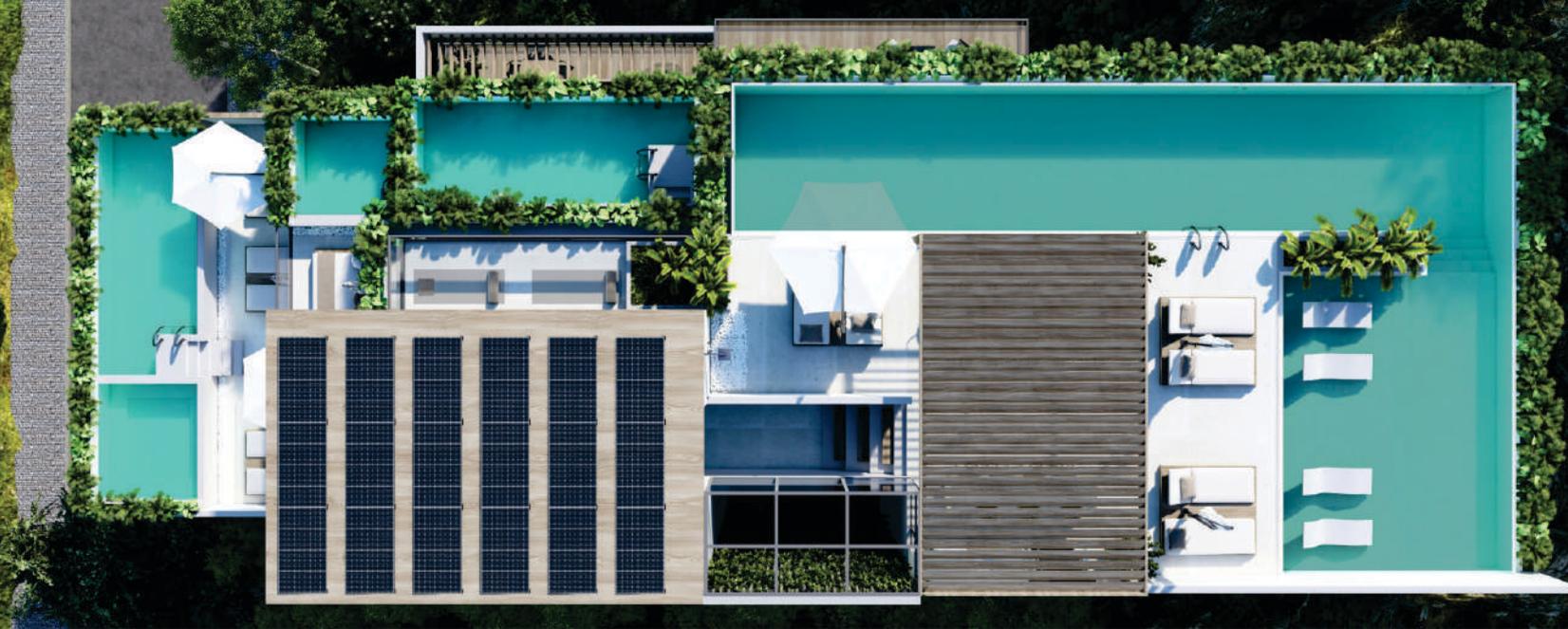
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