

## David Byrne's Journal 10.24.04 Mexico II

After lunch, Deborah says we simply must visit her friends, the family of an artist, Jaled Muyaes, who has a collection of about 5,000 Mexican masks, from all regions of country.

We arrive in a nice neighborhood; it has character and seems old. People wander the streets comfortably. Down a dead end street is a gate and we are let in to a courtyard, where the family has been celebrating a birthday. The tequila is out.

Jaled is, it seems, an obsessive collector, not just of masks. On a massive pink wall nearby is an artwork made of tools. It's a veritable hardware store of saw blades, pickaxe blades, trowels and awls. Other pieces of his are scattered about — a "tree" of trowel blades, another of shovel blades.

In a hallway are maybe a hundred framed old French engravings of people dressed as their occupations. A furniture maker is made out of tables and cabinets, a book printer is made of presses and books. In a side room, Jaled himself, 80 years old, is patiently at work on some Matisse-like collages made out of cut-out bits of corrugated cardboard. He rises to answer some questions about the masks and where they are from.

There are other collections here and there: a massive collection of Posada prints, massive antique fruit presses, ceramic cows and old books, including 1st editions and encyclopedias.

The mask collection is incredible. I'm getting seriously overloaded today. It's beautiful to see this 80-year old quietly getting on with his work of creating while the family celebrates a birthday with nieces and nephews. Some masks are very contemporary looking, abstract, or distorted and even hairy. Some have penis noses. We are told that they are not made very much any more. Villagers now buy the mass-produced rubber ones that we all know; the craft of making these is fading away.