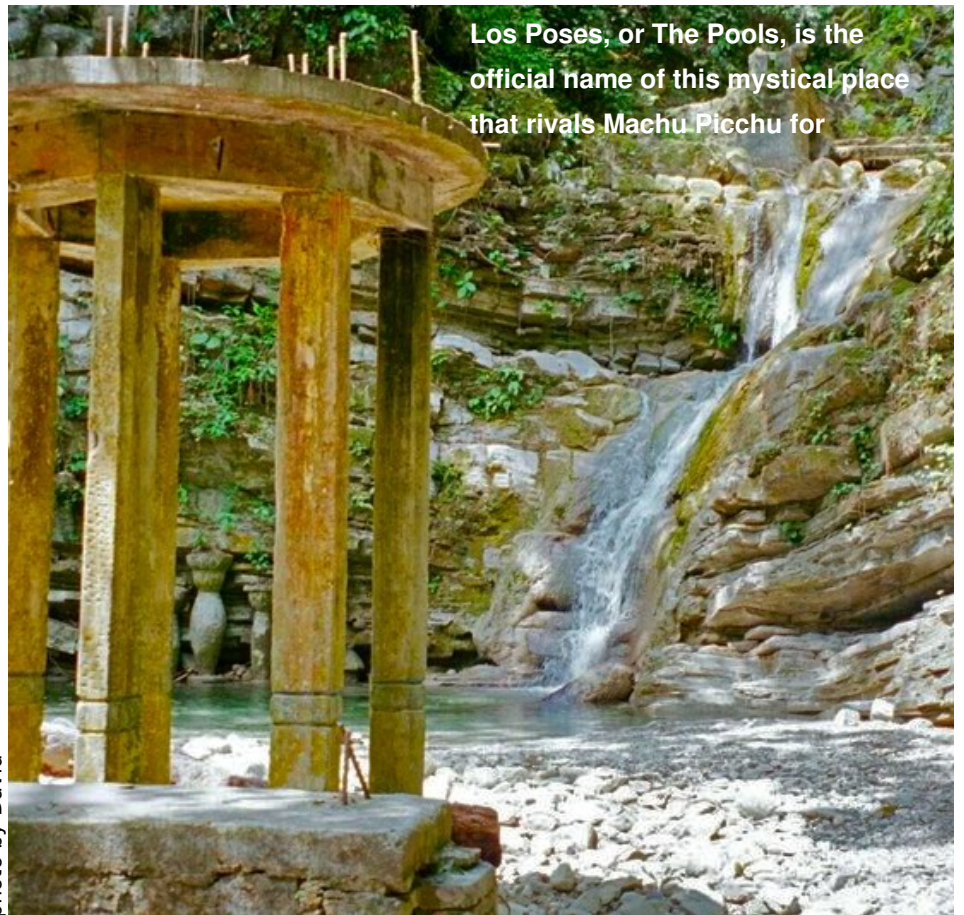


Xilitla

MEXICO'S
GARDEN
OF THE
GODS

photo by David



Los Poses, or The Pools, is the official name of this mystical place that rivals Machu Picchu for

Edward James had a Surreal Vision for a Garden in Mexico

Paradise Mexican Style

by David Alexander, April 2003

I'm in Xilitla (He-leet-la) this week taking a five-day siesta after about eight weeks of traveling, doing workshops, and lugging books through six countries. It couldn't be a more picturesque and peaceful place to clear the cobwebs of my mind and rest these bones.

Edward James is a name you know if you are a devout student of

art history. If not, you are more likely to be aware of names like Salvador Dali, Picasso, Man Ray, and King Edward VII.

King Edward had a short-lived reign over England since his mother, Queen Victoria, like the current queen, lived on forever. Just like our Bonnie Prince Charles, Edward VII basically sat out his life waiting in the wings for his big chance to rule and getting sidetracked with affairs of the heart.



photo by David



Edward gave us creased trousers with cuffs, stylish looking beards, fashionable cigars, and a grandson from an illegitimate daughter. The daughter achieved little in her life besides attending social functions with all the right people, but the grandson, named for his grandfather, outlived both his parents, inherited their fortune plus another from an uncle, and from age 23, spent the rest of his life looking for meaning in his existence.



Obsession becomes Art

It took the two substantial fortunes, plus an auction of his collected art works via Christies, 25 years, and the assistance of one of the loves of his life, the handsome Plutarco, to make it all happen.

An engineer by training and an eccentric by nature, Edward set out on a back pack journey into the Mexican Jungles in the Sierra Madre mountains and found what he thought was a Mexican version of Eden and yes, a river runs through it.

So, what does this place need to make it into a magical wonderland even Alice would be impressed with? Hmm-mm. How about art? How about 80 acres of sculptures? How about we just build it and see if they will come?

Five million dollars and 25 years later, they come in droves to see this unbelievable labyrinth of pathways, cement arches, reinforced-steel concrete flowers, and leaves so large you can walk on them.

Los Poses, or The Pools, is the

atmosphere and the pyramids of Egypt for scale. Don't try seeing it in a day or two, a climb up a steep endless staircase will suddenly end at a stone circle standing on end. That's it; nothing afterwards. Either duck under and traipse out into the jungle, or return and try your luck in another direction.

What is the artistic inspiration for all this? In the 1920s and 30s surrealism was making an impact on the art world. Edward, a man of means, and a good eye for artistic talent that would some day grace museum galleries, bought art from people no one else was interested in. Thus, he became a patron for starving artists, a man I could appreciate.

For example, he let Salvador Dali live with him for a summer after Salvador was evicted by a landlord allowing Salvador to continue to paint images designed to knit the brow of the observer.

But Edward wanted more than an art collection or the friendship of grateful artists, what he craved was recognition for his own genius. So, suddenly he has this vision in Mexico. and it becomes his obsession

Nurturing an Eccentric

In a filmed interview, Edward relates one of his most vivid memories from his childhood:

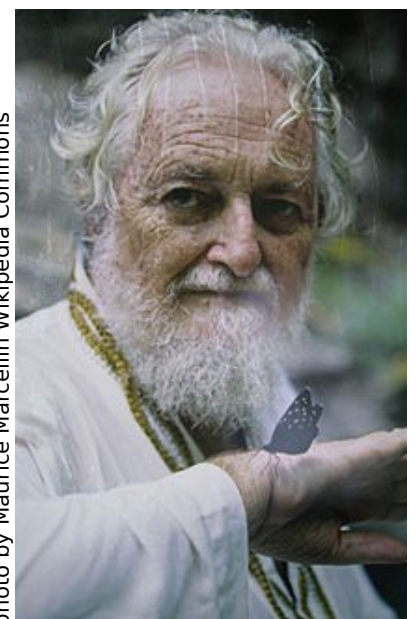
Mother yelling upstairs to Nanny:

"Nanny, I'm going to a party, could you send down one of the children to accompany me?"

"Which one mum?"

"Whichever one you think would go best with my blue dress."

Edward laments, "No wonder I was eccentric. It was a bit like if I had been born with Green hair, I just couldn't help it."



Tissue Time

One of the things people remember Edward James for is that he was constantly wrapping things in tissue paper and often traveled with up to 5,000 boxes of them. No, I'm not making that up!

What creature has trod this ground?



photo by David

El Castillo, The Castle

One of the side-ventures that has grown up in conjunction with Los Poses is a bed and breakfast, Posada El Castillo, that was built as a home for Plutarco, his family, and was also a part-time residence for Edward when he was in town for about 4 months of the year to oversee the continuous construction of his project.

Henry and Carmen are the current managers and are a relaxed, easy-going, and friendly couple that welcomes the visitor with all the warmth you imagine south of the border.

The house is designed along the same surrealistic themes as Los Poses, so be prepared to sit out on strange looking balconies and enjoy the mountain vistas off to the north and west while the clouds drape the peaks with cooling mist. Breakfast is Mexican style with delicious black beans as a complement to scrambled eggs and toasted bread.

The village Zocolo (town square) was the scene of intense activity on Palm Sunday with a long procession of people carrying palms behind the priests after morning mass, then the market filled with huge quantities of vegetables, meat, and chilies for sale during the afternoon, and finished off with a wonderful concert of classic Mexican music against the ancient wall of the city's cathedral after dark.

To learn more about Edward James and how to make reservations at El Castillo, click [here](#).



photo by David