



BEVERLY MANN

The Emerald Iguana Inn boasts a large Gaudi-style mosaic iguana fountain at the front entrance.

Weekend in Ojai, California: A Creative, Spiritual Haven

OJAI CONTINUED FROM B1

In 1997, Collins received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the City of Ojai. She is part of the Ojai Studio Artists, a guild of over 40 artists who organize an annual open studio tour every October to raise funds for scholarships to promote art education in the community.

How did she get started? Her first job out of high school was at a ceramics studio. Years later when her two children were grown, a neighbor said, "Let's go take an art class." Collins's first assignment was to paint a tree, hills, and a road, which actually was similar in style to what she paints today. Her student says Collins has a mimetic memory and that she knows if anything has been touched on, or not, in a painting, after seeing it just once.

Collins teaches three days a week with workshops on the first, second, and third Saturdays. It's obvious how much her students adore her, which I personally observed at her studio. According to Collins, "I love teaching even more than painting."

She used to paint still life in her younger years, similar to the 16th century Dutch masters, and then she went on to do landscapes using oils and acrylics. "Once I discovered pastels," she said, "I knew that was for me."

What she loves about using this medium is that what you see is what you get. Unlike oils and acrylics, pastel colors never change after they reach the canvas. Her popular pastel classes have turned into a club that holds two art shows a year exhibiting just pastels.

What is Collins's dream from here? She is quite content to teach and paint in this studio/home built by her deceased husband. "I have a perfect setup now. However, I still want to paint a masterpiece," she says. And, on another breath with a Cheshire cat grin, she notes, "Who can possibly have more fun than I am having now?"

Art and Aging

At the other end of town, up a curving hill, a perfect spot to eye



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Local artist Alice Matzkin learned to appreciate and celebrate the aging process, which is reflected in her self-portrait.



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The Embrace sculpture by artist Richard Matzkin pays tribute to his love for his wife as they grow old together.

the magnificent pink sunsets, lies the home and studio (called "The Nest") of artists Alice and Richard Matzkin, a husband and wife duo—she is a noted painter and he is a well-known sculptor. Married for 30 years, they have been an inspiration to one another's creativity, which has evolved into a thematic focus of the beauty and fears of aging.

Alice's painting of the famous potter Beatrice Wood at 100 years old sits in the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian. With her own realization of the aging process, Alice painted and interviewed 21 women age 70 and older, from portraits to nudes, in a quest to answer her own questions about how women can live fulfilling lives and still be considered beautiful as they age.

Richard approached aging from a darker perspective. "I was looking at my own fears and began sculpting a series called 'Naked Old Men.'"

As an expression of the deep love between him and his wife

Alice, Richard's work has progressed into a series of bronze sculptures depicting older couples caught in an embrace.

The Matzkins have taken their art to yet another level with a published book, "The Art of Aging." A documentary based upon the book is soon to be released, and their "Naked Women" series appears on a 2012 calendar.

After reflecting on her art and interviews with the 21 mature women, Alice says, "I have come to a place of self-acceptance and self-love and realize that life is extremely precious. I savor every moment."

I thought of Alice's words as I left the picturesque town of Ojai on my way back to San Francisco. I tried to reflect on the aromas, scenic beauty, and tranquility of the sacred town's mountain greenery that surrounded me at every turn. I savored it all.

For more information contact Ojai Visitors Bureau: www.ojaivisitors.com or 1-888-OJAI NOW

Beverly Mann has been a feature, arts, and travel writer in the San Francisco Bay Area for the past 28 years. She has received numerous accolades in the fields of travel writing, education, and international public relations, including a Bay Area Travel Writers Award of Excellence in Newspaper Travel Writing. Contact Ms. Mann at: www.beverlymann.com

How Not to Plan Travel

BY TANYA HARRISON
EPOCH TIMES STAFF

MINGLING CHANG/THE EPOCH TIMES

No fair!

The ball dropped on schedule in Times Square in New York City, then the Chinese Lunar New (Year of the Dragon) leaped upon us on Jan. 23, and I ran out of time to do all the travel I'd planned in 2011. Beyond that, I've discovered (much to my dismay) that I travel far less as an editor than I did as a writer. Hmm, there's something not quite right about that!

Ah, but we had a great year vicariously traveling the world, exploring new cultures, and experiencing new cuisines, didn't we? So what do we plan for this year?

To Plan or Not to Plan

Every year there are so many lists for top places to travel. I fancied, once upon a time, meshing all of those lists together to see how many of them recommended the same places, and then building my own list of must-sees. Okay, not really. There are far too many of them out there, and often they represent a narrow view of what travel means.

Travel means standing on the lip of a volcanic crater and reveling in the sheer energy of the seemingly desolate expanse. It means wrestling with an ornery camel to cross a desert with little sights to see than other camel riders, but being off a beaten path exhilarates you. Travel is exploring a majestic culture in a faraway jungle and marveling at the sophistication of an ancient civilization.

Travel feeds the spirit when we leave our comfort zones by volunteering to care for other living beings on this planet that we share. It's being consciously careful about how we tread this world in our search for rest and relaxation. Travel means heading out for business and inadvertently finding that near-perfect place to throw off the suit and tie to truly unwind or maybe even relocate!

In my opinion, then, almost anywhere is the best place to go. What I learned in 2011 was that traveling to where your heart leads you was the most important. With that in mind, we start 2012 with homage to tranquility.



Relax, breathe deep, be where you are—and you will discover where you want to go!

Take a deep breath, relax, and don't think about where you want to go.

This isn't to say that once you are inspired you shouldn't plan how to get there. That would be irresponsible of me! Of course you want to research your destination, check the local situation and economy, find inexpensive transportation (yes, there's still a squeeze on the travel dollar), and look for deals on lodging. How you eventually get where you go can make or break the overall experience of your destination. Do keep that practical traveler tucked inside a compartment of your Zen-like travel reverie.

The Unexpected Traveler

I haven't decided where I want to travel this year, let alone come up with recommendations. I still want to take more leisurely, scenic train trips; I just haven't decided to where. I've yet to experience transportation as

relaxed and interactive as a train ride.

I still want to explore more of my New York backyard. It's touted as such a popular destination for tourists—certainly, it has as much to offer the "staycationer."

I will also check regularly for hospitality deals to visit Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Maine, the last frontiers of my U.S. travel experience; however, I will not be attached to making it so. Sometimes, opportunities present themselves when we least expect them.

So, this year will be my Travel Year of the Unexpected. Yet, I expect to be delighted and enlightened with travel seen through others' eyes and my own. And each new experience will be savored and shared with you.

I wish you happy unexpected travel in 2012 and hope that you will be pleasantly surprised.

GEOGRAPHY GURU

Growing Your Geography Knowledge

Quiz 355

ZAMBEZI NATIONS:

The Zambezi River is the fourth-longest river in Africa, after the Nile, Congo, and Niger. Its length of approximately 1700 miles make it nearly as long as the Danube. Name the six nations in southern Africa that the Zambezi borders on or flows through. HINT: The capitals of the six nations are Gaborone, Harare, Luanda, Lusaka, Maputo, and Windhoek.

Answer for Quiz 354:

WEST OF SOUTH:

The westernmost point of land on the mainland of South America is in Peru, at Punta Pariñas. ORLANDO, at 81 degrees west, is closer to the same line of longitude as Punta Pariñas than are Boston, Dallas, Denver, or Los Angeles.

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