

lifestyles | **metrobeat**

BY RAMONA D'VIOLA | IMAGES BY ILLUMUS PHOTOGRAPHY

Colorful fabric at
Bazaar Del Mundo

OLD TOWN NOT JUST FOR TOURISTS

Bazaar Del Mundo and Beyond

STILL HERE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS FOR THOSE OF US WHO NEVER TIRE OF AUDACIOUS COLOR, ARTISAN ANYTHING, AND CLEVER CRAFTS, THE RELOCATED BAZAAR DEL MUNDO IS A DELIGHT, IF NOT A DOWNRIGHT SENSORY OVERLOAD. STOCKED TO THE RAFTERS WITH MEXICAN CRAFTS, NATIVE AMERICAN JEWELRY, HANDMADE HOUSEWARES, GUATEMALAN FABRICS AND A LIBRARY OF RESOURCE BOOKS TO INSPIRE YOUR COLOR-LUST, THE LATEST INCARNATION OF DIANE POWERS' VILLAGE IS NO LESS STUNNING THIS TIME AROUND.

For those San Diegans who haven't visited Old Town for a while, the Bazaar del Mundo is still in Old Town — just one block away from its former site within Old Town State Park. It moved several years ago when Powers' Bazaar and popular Casa de Pico and Casa de Bandini restaurants were pushed out of the park.

Like the Spaniards who began their colonization in what would become the birthplace of California, Powers was a pioneer in her own right. Opening the exuberantly colorful, Mexican-style marketplace in 1971, Powers is credited with kick-starting the area's revival — from a neglected state park to an oft-visited tourist destination — and burgeoning artist colony.

"The move impacted us insomuch as it was inconvenient — a bit like playing musical chairs," says Powers of her forced relocation, "but we have a great following of customers who come to shop regularly. Our business continues to grow and we're thriving in our new location."

BAZAAR DEL MUNDO, 4133 TAYLOR ST., 619/296-3161

BOLD IS BEAUTIFUL

With only one degree of separation from Powers, silversmith Lacey Waddell, proprietress of Lacey on Harney Street (3967 Harney St., 619/325-4592) worked at Bazaar Del Mundo before opening her namesake storefront, cum workshop, five years ago. Gregarious, outspoken and abundantly talented, Waddell, a member of the area's business improvement board, has been active in reinvigorating Old Town from an artisan's — and community — perspective.

"Locals think of Old Town as a tourist destination — and it is. But there's more than T-shirts, haunted houses and expensive margaritas here," says Waddell. "Old Town is home to a thriving artist community with a worldwide audience."

Named "Best Women's Accessories" in San Diego by cityvoter.com last year, Waddell's jewelry is big, bold and bodacious, with a devoted



Judy Waddell models her daughter's handmade, Mexican-inspired jewelry.

local following. Adorned in her creations, Waddell reinforces the hand-painted quote on one of the brightly colored walls of her diminutive shop: "Friends don't let friends wear conservative jewelry."

Drawing from Native American and Mexican silversmithing traditions, Waddell's jewelry is as outrageous as its creator. Each handcrafted piece is fabricated, start to finish, in the studio area of the well-stocked shop. Best known for her *Dios de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) designs, Waddell's work can be found at fine jewelry outlets throughout the West, including BAZAAR DEL MUNDO and the MINGEI INTERNATIONAL ART MUSEUM.



Lacey Waddell



POTENT POTION

Whether sipped, slammed or savored in an icy margarita, the purportedly hallucinogenic distillation of the agave azul has many fans. El Agave is renowned for its dizzying assortment of the alcohol known as tequila. Boasting more than 150 brands — each in its own distinctive bottle — you can sample flights of añejo, reposado, or the highly prized, extra-aged maduro. But remember — don't swallow the worm.

EL AGAVE, 2304 SAN DIEGO AVE., STE. B, 619/220-0692

BIG WAMPUM

When the padres started showing up in droves along with their conquistador counterparts, the natives headed for the hills. Fast forward a few centuries and you can still see remnants of the area's original inhabitants — if only at the numerous shops specializing in Native Americana. At the Apache Indian Arts Center, you won't find cheaply made tomahawks, skin drums, or other clichés of the Old West, but exquisite Kumeyaay basketry, Zuni and Hopi kachina dolls, intricate textiles, and Navajo turquoise jewelry — fit for an Indian princess and her chief.

APACHE INDIAN ARTS CENTER, 2425 SAN DIEGO AVE., 619/296-9226

MUY AUTÉNTICO

While a team of señoras knead, slap, and pit-pat mounds of freshly made masa into mouthwatering tortillas, you'd swear you were already south of the border. A perennial favorite among locals and a delight for visitors, the Old Town Mexican Café and Cantina is as close as you can get to authentic Mexican cuisine without actually going there. OLD TOWN MEXICAN CAFÉ, 2489 SAN DIEGO AVE., 619/297-4330, WWW.OLDTOWNMEXCAFE.COM

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GLASS HOUSES

“I watched a Dale Chihuly video on glassblowing,” says Dave Lowery, “and told my wife, Dianne, ‘that’s what I want to do.’” A professional rock-n-roll drummer in the late ’60s, Lowery was growing weary of the endless touring and late nights. “I enrolled in an art glass class at Palomar College,” says Lowery, “and the rest is history.”



Glassblower Dave Lowery

Like his artisan neighbors, Lowery’s Hot Glass (3985 Harney St., Ste. D, 619/297-3473) is part storefront, part glass studio. With a blazing kiln roaring in the background (at what feels like a million degrees), Lowery and his talented protégé, gaffer Justin Gilliland, turn out dozens of custom lamp shades, sconces, vases and bowls in a dizzying array of designs and colors.

“Everything is color coordinated,” says Lowery, glancing around a workshop filled with his handiwork in shades of orange, yellow, green and red. “Looks like we’re running low on blues right now.”

With the kiln pumping out a heat wave you can practically feel from the street, Lowery and Gilliland work up a sweat in the studio while Dianne Lowery, the other half of the operation, keeps relatively cool in the front of the store. Working primarily with architects and restaurant and interior designers, Mrs. Lowery is the visionary, marketer and “chief bottle washer” behind the operation.

“Dave taught me how to blow glass and together we experimented like crazy — I’ve got the burn scars to prove it,” Lowery says with a laugh. “Now, I manage the design and business aspects, and let the boys handle the hot stuff. After all, you know what they say, if you can’t take the heat.” ■