



AT THE TOP OF THE MURAL, FIGURES CULTIVATE FIELDS around the base of volcanoes, and a ceremony of some sort is being held in full pomp and triumph. Banners of vivid feathers and majestic guidons suggest a royal procession. Drums are beaten and cymbals clash. To the left and off the road, groups of natives raise their arms to cheer the passing pageantry while on the other side—maybe in the same field—several rows of men sit tied together at the neck by a single length of rope. They are being presented to a dignitary wearing an impressive headdress of many colored feathers. A retinue stands behind this worthy as he receives these prisoners. I guess the prisoners may be the human booty of a war and are about to be sacrificed.

I am standing before this mural in the town of Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, Mexico, and it is the Christmas season. The painting is on the wall of the town's library, formerly a sixteenth-century church, and coming on it as I have this afternoon in December of 2000 puts me on a march through strange and familiar territory that will even pass through fields of my own history.

But to be perfectly honest, I must invent some of this account; make up circumstances and rooms and the images that move within them as I pilfer a history that does not belong to me, inevitably leaving clues of myself behind. I am a burglar. Those of us who have been brought to this trade argue the notion that in stealing the accoutrements of another life—for one more transient possession—we somehow refurbish those details and give them new value. So goes the self-important claim of the con artist, for in truth the object of the adventure has always been to leave behind a semblance of the thief.

But how to get away with a whole wall, this wall of pictures in Pátzcuaro that I have come across? The fresco cannot be folded up and tucked into my carryall. Some of its figures would slip off the plaster and fall to the floor, their clatter on the stone pavement giving me away. My specialty is lifting small pieces of a life, but here before me this afternoon is an enormous prize; the saga of a people, several centuries worth, all laid out. It is more of a prize than my petty thievery has ever encountered.

Moreover, the figures painted on this wall are already very noisy. They are singing and screaming, chanting—the space is filled with the sounds of struggle and ceremony that create an awesome clamor which compromises the most professional stealth. The librarian, intently bent over his desk, must be used to the uproar; he has grown deaf to its cacophony.

This day in December is sunny and warm, and the small city of Pátzcuaro in the state of Michoacán is a busy place. The clear air is redolent with the aromas of markets and street food and the fumes of rattletrap buses and autos. I have come to a square

dedicated to Gertrudis Bocanegra, one of the many martyrs that populate Mexican history. The baroque facade of St. Augustin is just across the street and dominates the quarter. It became the town's library in the 1940s. Though I know little Spanish, I have come to browse its collection in the endemic reflex of a writer at loose ends on an easy afternoon in a foreign land.

A scatter of citizens occupies the steps of the library, waiting for buses and jitneys that swing into the curb at rapid intervals. The vehicles pause only long enough to disgorge or to take on passengers in a quick choreography that seems to barely avoid curbside injuries. Other people sit on the steps and observe this drama impassively, bending to and fro as I pass through them to climb to the entrance. They are idols uninterested in my presence, unwilling to lose their concentration on the heat of the day.

Kathleen and I are spending several weeks here as guests of a foundation that hopes to transform a seventeenth-century convent into an artists' colony. We rise before daybreak, hunched over our writing desks and bundled against the cold because Pátzcuaro is seven thousand feet up and the night temperature gets close to freezing. A gas grate warms my wife's area, but in my nun's cell in a back garden I grip an electric radiator between my thighs. By mid-morning the air becomes balmy and will turn hot by siesta. The light is brilliant, and the shade can be quarried.

But my eyes need no adjustment to an interior gloom within the library because the huge mural that confronts me seems to blaze with its own energy. Looking at it, I hear music. The vivid colors resonate and make me blink with the racket they make. Let me give some sense of its size. The mural fills the entire space of what had been the

back wall of the nave of the old church, an area about forty feet wide and sixty feet high. The painting rises from the top of a bank of modest bookshelves—few books on the shelves—to the parabola of the ceiling. The size and dynamic of this work of art overwhelms me. The painting competes with the din and bustle of the market square I have just left outside; even in the quietude of the library this world is noisier.

A rich ochre, the color of the Michoacán earth, grounds the panorama of centuries that has been dramatized on the wall, and this same color of pigment, in its different hues, has been brushed over the naked torsos of the men and women who populate this turbulent topography. A particular osmosis has occurred, the painter seems to imply, between the indigenous people and the earth that has nurtured them. Scraps of red and blue appear in their clothing, the first fires of civilization are burning and feathered crowns and ornaments rattle with shells and seeds. Halfway down the mural, an unsettling silence falls upon the scene, a preparatory bit of stagecraft, and then the steel blue of armor is introduced into the painting, and faces become white and pink; figures wear velvet cloaks and doublets. The Spaniards have arrived.

Where the mural reaches the ceiling, as if to go back in history—even before history—a huge waterspout stirs up the blues of a lake while enormous volcanoes erupt to dye the wine-colored hillsides nearby. Water and fire, the stuff of creation and myth. Tiny figures appear in the landscape, growing larger as the cavalcade descends and nears the floor level—an old trick of pre-perspective art. But a modern mind has organized this review and has compressed events from different intervals into one space—one bite of the cookie so to speak. To make past and present all one, to put epilogue and prologue

on the same page, has been one of my own obsessions, so the design of this painting instantly engages me. A narrative winds down the side of the history it portrays on diagonal planes like the turns and slants of a mountain road, and the participants in this story step down these inclines. On either side of this parade, as if in *arroyos* by the side of the road, incidental scenes contribute subtext to the contingents passing by.

Central to the whole scene are the roots of a huge tree stump that push down through the congested vault of the panorama to encounter the conquistadors on the level below. The Spaniards have ridden out from behind a canyon wall, waving broadswords and carrying lances, and their countenances look a little raw, perhaps from pushing through the carapace of their armor. The Aztecs mistook the animals the Spaniards rode for deer, never having seen horses. Men wearing large shells and riding on deer—what a touching imagination that would doom its holder. It had been no contest from the beginning. The roots of the mammoth stump intertwine the Spaniards' passage with the royal procession above to make a continuous version of history.

No problem understanding the sense of the next commentary pictured in a tableau within a cavern to the right of the advancing conquerors is a cookout, but the roaring fire is consuming documents and drawings of pre-Columbian design. I have read of Cortes destroying the Aztec written history, the codex of this culture and literature in a fire that lasted for weeks in Tenochtitlán, the old Aztec capital. Warming its bones by the flames in this cavern, a skeleton holds up a blank piece of paper—nothing left on the page. Standing next to the skeleton, a chimera composed of a human torso with a hand where a head should be and serpents for arms. What's the message here—this

artist clearly wants to make a statement—maybe thoughtless acts produce the death of a culture? For good measure, a note has been tacked to the cavern’s wall, “*Paraiso de ratas.*” My Spanish can figure that out—rat heaven.

Violence is the recurrent motif of this elaborate, gorgeous cartoon, and the force of it pushes me back a step or two. From the exploding volcanoes down to the thuggish acts of the conquistadors, the havoc and cruelty become a kind of road show of horror. On the route before the oncoming Spaniards, a native has been bound to a scaffold and a torch is thrust into his genitals. The torture becomes a grisly salutation, rigged to greet the invaders from the Old World. The painter suggests Mexico was born of violence and is violently lived.

In fact, I am uncomfortable, even frightened by the tradition of violence here. I am uneasy passing the police just outside the library and the others who stand on almost every corner of this modest city, armed with heavy-caliber sidearms and carrying shotguns with bandoliers of cartridges slung around their necks. What civil disobedience do they anticipate that merits such firepower? Their steely inspection as I pass convicts me on the spot of some wrongdoing. I must be guilty of something.

These police, representing several different branches of enforcement, often turn on each other. They become the violent ones. Local papers carry reports of these forays that make me wonder if these shootouts among themselves are the results of their boring duty standing guard over an innocent populace. I pass people in the street who resemble the figures in the mural, those that stand by the side of the road, spectators of the history that marched before them. How many of them would be wounded if one of those shot-

guns went off? The very weight of the weaponry compels its usage, just as the forged steel panoply of the conquistadors may have elicited their ravages.

On the other hand, maybe these Mexican cops know something we don't know or won't admit. Nothing can defend us from the violence being done today. We can only stand guard and observe the madness that has seized our ordinary rounds. The destruction is vaster than the demolition of great towers and the deaths of thousands of our citizens. Trust has been destroyed. The social contract has become an unworkable bargain and made as silly as those men in wigs who fostered the whim now appear. We've had an easy time of it; walking down a street and most of us fairly certain the person coming toward us will do us no harm. The other citizen has held the same confidence. But no more. We no longer trust each other while those we have appointed to defend us sometimes become the ultimate foes. And whose social contract was it anyway? Who wrote it out and who got to sign it?

The librarian has noticed me studying the mural and has come near. Clearly I am a *gringo*, a tourist, someone who needs help. He offers me a postcard of the mural; the library has them on sale. No color reproduction of the mural is available, and the reduction of this huge masterpiece to postcard size, and black and white, makes a puddle of its powerful narrative on which the figures disport like so many different shapes of pasta. I buy a couple—by way of paying a fee—and we exchange good-natured nods in the absence of language. I have many questions but don't know how to ask them.

What, for example, is Sir Thomas More doing in this pictorial? The younger Holbein's portrait of the author of *Utopia*, black cap and gold chancellor's chain is exactly

copied; More appears as a serene kibitzer in the lower region of the mural. He looks over the shoulder of a Catholic priest who oversees a native pulling a strand of wool from a spinning wheel. Other Indians are engaged in different tasks: fishing, ceramics. The tree roots have broken through the canopy above and a banner has been raised: "UTOPIA." Is this another ironic statement? The artist must have a refined sense of humor, because to the left of this group happily weaving and shaping clay, another native has been chained to a tree and is being flogged. A don in velvet doublet and stylish hat observes the fellow's torture as he sits beneath an awning held up by more of the local inhabitants. The native's punishment becomes an entertainment for the Spaniard but what has been the crime? Did the native tangle the thread coming off the spinning wheel—what's the chronology? Has the whipping preceded the happy productivity under Sir Thomas's grave supervision or is it taking place simultaneously in a kind of contrapuntal beat of the lash to the whirl of the spinning wheel? The rhythm is familiar to every colonial society, including our own, where jazz was homespun in the midst of misery.

The final scene of the mural is placed in the lower right-hand corner of the wall and some of these figures are familiar. I recognize Zapata—that heavy moustache made Marlon Brando look even more petulant. The hero of the 1910 revolution stands beside the hero from the 1815 uprising. Morelos wears his usual blue coat with gold embroidery and the white bandanna tied around his head. A woman kneels at their feet, blood spouting from her bosom. A placard lies on the ground to identify her.

Me Gertrudis Bocanegra
dio su sangre por
La Independencia

She gave her name to the square outside the library. The Spaniards shot her in 1817 and here she is again, bleeding to death beside a plow, her blood from the bullet wound pouring into the ground, the richest of nutrients for a young nation.

The librarian and I are standing just beneath this final scene, at the foot of the mural. He points to an inscription in the corner—the artist has signed his work. “Juan O’Gorman—1942.” Then I am guided to the opposite side of the room where the librarian raises his arm to point at two figures. Man and woman, and they wear contemporary dress. O’Gorman has painted himself into the mural, as artists through the ages have always done. But he represents himself not as an attendant to a court scene or a beggar crouching in the shadow of eminence but as a rather studious chap wearing a sport coat, shirt collar open and holding a manifesto that, of course, I cannot read. His eyes regard me through heavy glasses, a slight query in their glance. “You see what has happened here in Michoacán?” I feel him asking. “You see what took place here?” He stands almost modestly to one side of the clamor he has created on the wall next to him. A woman peers over his shoulder. She is pink of cheek and wears her blond hair in a tight coronet. Her eyes are fixed to one side, her attention focused outside the painting. She looks away from the events depicted as if they are too gross for her to witness.

She is the muralist's wife and her name is Helen Fowler. She is a Midwesterner, a *gringa* who was never happy in Mexico, never attempted to learn Spanish, and her looking away from the history her husband has pictured on the wall of the Biblioteca Bocanegra may sum up her feelings about the whole country. But I am getting ahead of the story; my covetous impulse to grab up everything in sight has replaced the cool selectivity of the professional thief.

And my breathing has become short. We are seven thousand feet above sea level, so I warn myself against a turn of melodrama; that curious tingling that has just needled my senses may only be due to the altitude. But bring up the music! I first encountered O'Gorman while doing research for my novel *Home is the Exile*, half of which is set in the Mexico of 1939–1940—about the time of this mural. He was one in that set of brilliant young intellectuals, writers, and artists, most of them with strong Marxist leanings, who surrounded Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo in the late 1930s. He was an architect who practiced the functionalism of Le Corbusier, introducing the style to Mexico, but he was also a muralist under the mentorship of Rivera. As homage to his master, he designed and built the twin boxlike houses and studios in which Rivera and Kahlo lived and fought. O'Gorman was in the forefront of that second generation of muralists who followed the three great ones—Rivera, Siquerios, and Orozco—and his work appears on the walls of important public buildings and museums. Especially the library of the University of Mexico.

And now in Pátzcuaro in the year 2000, I am meeting him, looking up into his shy, rather droll expression. The horn-rimmed glasses suggest an introspective nature. The

Portrait of Helen Fowler O'Gorman,
1960. Watercolor and pencil on paper,
37.4 cm x 23.4 cm. Courtesy Sandro
Landucci Lerdo de Tejada



proclamation he holds is a device taken from Rivera's kit (artists steal from each other all the time!) to make a point or to educate the viewer. I'll have to get the message translated, for like Helen I know little Spanish. But how did he come to paint this magnificent history of Michoacán on the back wall of this ancient former church? Sixty years before, Pátzcuaro must have been even more provincial, more remote. As I have noted, few books make up the collection of the library, and I wonder if they are the same number as when O'Gorman mounted the scaffolding to create this fresco. The library's books seem strategically placed on the shelves in the strategy of a shopkeeper of a moribund business spreading his meager inventory around. Or maybe over the years, books have been gradually filched, one by one, and never returned by the borrowers. Fines, long overdue, are piling up and ignored all over town.

When I tell Kathleen and the others in residence at this small artists' colony about the mural, I feel as if I am giving away the secret of a great treasure, a long lost storehouse of riches that I have just come across. But I need someone to translate that document the painter holds in his hands and also find out more from the director of the library. One of our colleagues who is fluent in Spanish agrees to go back to the library with me the next day. But the library is closed the next day and the next and the next. Locked up, and I've only had one look at the mural. The staff has begun its Christmas holiday and the place will not reopen until after New Year's Day, after we return to Pittsburgh. The same citizens seem to be sitting on the steps of the library; they have not moved since yesterday, and all I have are the two postcards and a head full of echoes.

Maybe this inquiry would not be attempted if I had had another look at this mural. In the meantime, I fear I have made a ponderous mishmash of O’Gorman’s masterpiece, no more relevant to its powerful composition than the reduced imagery on the postcards. I have bungled the heist. And like an adolescent mooning over an unconsummated love, I return again and again to that locked door, unwilling to accept the fact of its closure. The frustration drives me to seek Juan O’Gorman elsewhere. I find him in the Carnegie Library and on the Internet and in the brief autobiographical notes assembled and published by Antonio Luna Arroyo. Then, I discover O’Gorman has been in Pittsburgh—waiting for me all along.

So today in Pittsburgh, I look at the self-portrait of Juan O’Gorman tacked to the wall over my typewriter. He did this charcoal sketch in 1944, a couple of years after he painted that wall in Pátzcuaro and four years after his residence in Pittsburgh. He looks the same at thirty-nine as he did when he showed up in Pittsburgh at the invitation of the millionaire merchant, Edgar J. Kaufmann, in 1940. Black hair, a thick and unruly mop that seems to spring from his scalp. Eyes, within the large horn-rimmed glasses, glance to one side with a speculative wariness, the same look as in the mural. I already feel familiar with this man. The long face, especially with the glasses, resembles the silent-movie star Harold Lloyd. But the tense expression is that of a student awaiting the results of an examination or of a child awaiting the approval of a parent. The look could be holding back a joke, an amusement to be traded with Rivera. I’ve been told that the two men often tried to outdo each other with outrageous fancies.

Thin lips close tight on this fun. Let me say primly pursed lips, for I have now poked around in this history, already lifted a few facts, to come upon the hard, Irish puritanism of his father Cecil O’Gorman. I recognize in that stringent disciplinarian the reflection of my own grandfather, Tom Coyne, who raised me in Kansas City, though his stern rule skipped over my head to land heavily upon his wife and daughter, my mother. But his presence served me as a model of rectitude as he enacted the rightness of work. In Juan’s case his father’s discipline was exemplified by the blows of a ruler. “I was scared of him throughout my childhood,” O’Gorman recalls in the autobiographical notes published by Arroyo. “He punished me physically and on several occasions, hit me without motive.”

Perhaps the closed-mouthed mien of this self-portrait was fixed during those beatings, a determination not to scream or cry out that was to find release later in one of those inexplicable twists of human psychology. O’Gorman’s buoyant good humor, his laughter and fanciful storytelling, made him the center of any gathering. In this sketch, the stiff look is countered by the unbuttoned sport shirt, the collar spread wide to expose his throat and upper chest. Vulnerable and informal, the mode suggests an ordinary guy, a *payo* of the working class—one of those for whom, by 1940, he had built over a hundred schools and public buildings as one of Mexico’s important young architects. The houses for Rivera and Kahlo in San Angel were done in 1936, one painted red and the other blue. O’Gorman’s designs paid homage to Le Corbusier, and the exposed concrete of the factory-like facades supported an ideology as it housed people; the very candor of

the functional design was meant to improve the lot of its inhabitants—the workers. Also, the buildings were supposed to be easily maintained, could almost be hosed down. We look upon such earnest theories as quaint memorabilia of the past century, an epoch given to putting lofty abstractions into practice and sometimes with terrifying results. But how can any of us question the genuineness of O’Gorman’s conceits—his rather guileless habit, for example, of wearing a laborer’s coveralls when he painted—when so many of us today go about in custom cut blue denim?

In O’Gorman’s day, the furor of the 1910 revolution still heated up rallies in town *zocalos*, and the rhetoric often spilled over onto family dining tables—fathers and sons sitting at opposite ends. Such was the case in the artist’s family. Cecil O’Gorman was sent to Mexico in 1895 to seek his fortune as a chemical engineer with a British mining company. The old dictator Porfirio Díaz was attempting to modernize the feudal society over which he ruled by opening Mexico’s natural resources to opportunistic foreign investment. But according to family recollections, the senior O’Gorman never accepted his new citizenship—he wore English tweeds and a snap-brim fedora. “Regardless of residing in Mexico for fifty years, my father never adapted to Mexican culture because he always thought he would return to England. He was an incoherent man,” O’Gorman writes.

Incoherent or not, carting off the mineral wealth of Mexico in exchange for the country’s modernization was, for Cecil O’Gorman, a fair exchange—a Victorian model of raising the standards of the unwashed and unlettered. After all, the idea had worked

in Africa and the Far East so why not Mexico? This attitude not only sparked family arguments but also, in all probability, seated in the son's sensibility an outrage that drew him to Marxist thinking and shaped the vocabulary of his murals.

As for my grandfather, Tom Coyne—who also wore a fedora and wool suits in summer—he used the skills he had book-learned by candlelight in a Montana cavalry barracks to make his identity and fortune in Díaz's Mexico. Elsewhere, I have related how he landed in Tampico in 1894 with only these rudimentary lessons in civil engineering and a fierce determination to survive. It's a good story but not to be repeated here except for the mere coincidence of these two men, both Irish, both aliens, and both locating their destinies in Mexico at the same time. A peculiar affinity has existed between Mexico and the Irish, the history of the crossovers of the two ought to be reviewed, but for now I let my grandfather disappear into the jungles of the Yucatan and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. I am tempted to follow him, to tell his story again; however, time has covered the old pathways, and instead, I follow Juan O'Gorman to Pittsburgh. Why is he here? The answer will get me back to that wall in Pátzcuaro.

It is September of 1940 and he and Helen have been in Pittsburgh for five months. The war in Europe is only a year old but the Nazis have taken up residence in Paris, and England is seriously threatened. FDR is running for an unprecedented third term, and the Mexican artist and his wife have just been arrested in East Pittsburgh. They have taken a trolley to a point that overlooks a ravine called Turtle Creek to view a handsome bridge of stressed concrete that spans the valley. It is one of a thousand or more bridges that cross the rivers and connect the different topographies of the city.

They have also just been married in August though they have been living together for several years. Helen has friends in Chicago and they had traveled there from Pittsburgh for the ceremony according to her daughter from her first marriage. Helen Fowler is a counterpoint to her husband in almost every aspect. She was born in Wisconsin and has recently come from Washington where she was educated at the university, studying art and architecture. She has studied sculpture with Alexander Archipenko in Chicago, and she came to Mexico with a written introduction from him to Diego Rivera but she never uses it. She's a little shy about presenting herself and only a chance meeting one evening at the opera in Mexico City introduces her to Rivera and ultimately Juan O'Gorman. But for that happenstance, I would have no story to tell.

I have seen her before, of course. The blond hair wound tight around the top of her head, the high forehead and prominent cheekbones that set off large, rather fine eyes, blue I think. A generous mouth. The same face in the mural that looks away, though this image will not be painted for another two years. Such is the craft of my purloining.

I also know her from the men and women—mostly women—I have met in the biographies of artists, in my own experience and—out with it—in my father's life. They are talented people and made just a little mad by a whiff of their own talents; so they hang around the fires of other encampments, those of poetry or painting. I am thinking that Helen Fowler is one of these crazed souls. She has left her husband and child—perhaps a measure of this obsession—to go on a sort of Cook's Tour that lands her in Mexico City. She meets Rivera and he engages her to help him catalog his collection of Mayan artifacts, particularly the sculptures. She has taken a room in the basement of

the old inn across the street from the blue and red boxes where Rivera and Kahlo live and work. She's never seen architecture like their houses before. The architect lives just around the corner, Rivera is supposed to have told her. Would she like to meet him?

If this were fiction, a scene might be appropriate here; there's been enough exposition for now. The handsome architect and painter meets the American blond—both are free and their senses are pricked by the roil of Mexican politics; the passionate mix of revolution and art seasons their blood. It is a spicy moment. In Rivera's studio, beautiful women come and go; the actress Dolores Del Río is often a visitor. Trotsky and André Breton make brief appearances. The scene will have to be a shadow play, but I am dealing with shadows.

Let's say they've just been introduced in Rivera's studio. "I've never been to Chicago," O'Gorman might say to her in English. There's a party in progress. "The windy city I hear it called but it must be one of abundant beauty. Like its citizens."

"I'm not from Chicago," the American replies quickly. Her speech is blunt. "Wisconsin—far to the north."

O'Gorman's own words give me some assistance with this invention; I will turn his recollection into dialogue. I'll say he is holding a glass of dry sherry—he wasn't a heavy drinker but often sipped dry sherry—and the handsome blond has just fetched another cigarette. She is smoking Faritos, a Mexican brand that is particularly strong, and O'Gorman has bent toward her in a courtly manner to light it. "In 1933," he continues, "I married a Russian girl named Nina. She hadn't been to Chicago either. Her people sought refuge from the 1917 revolution in the USA. My marriage lasted five



Juan O'Gorman with Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo at a march protesting the American intervention in Guatemala, July 2, 1954. *Courtesy Sandro Landucci Lerdo de Tejada*

years, and the cause of our divorce was that she became bored with me. I had ambitions of becoming a great architect, and I was working ten to twelve hours daily.”

That wooden conversation, in English, is not typical of O’Gorman’s usual grace and dexterity with language, but I have transferred the actual words from his memoir to that party at Rivera’s studio. Blame it on Lytton Strachey! O’Gorman is a fabulous storyteller, all who remember him remember, but if I am to be authentic, not become too deceitful, then the reader must accept some awkwardness in the service of truth. The lies of fiction polish the dull moments of our lives, lull us into thinking our ordinary encounters are important and unique, our speech interesting.

Helen Fowler blows smoke toward the high ceiling of the studio. Is this handsome man serious or is he telling her some elaborate joke in the guise of personal information? Clearly, he is interested in her. Across the room the diminutive Frida studies her husband as he bends over an attractive woman, say, María Felix. He resembles a huge hound dog trying to climb into the film star’s lap. Kahlo’s single, heavy eyebrow lowers menacingly.

The visiting American is attracted to O’Gorman—despite the cardboard history I’ve put into his mouth. His self-effacing charm suggests a tenderness in him that appeals to her as it has already to several women. “He was very tender,” one of his former women friends told me. “Women like men who are tender.”

“I have studied sculpture with Archipenko,” Helen Fowler is answering his question. “I’ve come to Mexico to study the ancient sculpture. I am helping Diego with his collection. Sometimes I show tourists around the place. This place that you have designed.”