



# MindStormPhoto Ecuador 2016 pt 2

Burt and Evelyn Johnson

# MindStorm Photo Ecuador 2016 pt 2

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# MindStorm Photo Ecuador 2016

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## Music in Cuenca





# Music in Cuenca

There is an amazing variety of music talent in Cuenca, most of which you can listen to free. It is often hard to choose between competing performances, and there are more performances than we can realistically attend each week. It has been awhile since I have mentioned that fact in this blog, so I thought it was time to remind readers of the variety available. This week, there was another free symphony, which we missed. There were also several musicians playing rock, jazz, or pop, or oldies in several restaurants around town -- all either free, or with cover fees of \$5 or less, many which are listed on Itur's website, Cuyker.com.

The first free concert we did attend this week was with Karen Kennedy who performed at Teatro La Casa de la Cultura, shown above. Karen was a professional opera singer, performing around the world, including New York city, before settling with her family in Cuenca. We have heard her perform several times over the past years, and usually try to attend when we hear of her being scheduled. We understand that she has scheduled performances in Germany and Holland next month. She was joined on stage by Cosié Aquirre Saula on piano, and Santiago Zumbana on violin.

As always, the performance was magnificent. Unusually though, we were the only gringos in the audience. The large theater hall was about 70% full, and everyone appeared to be Ecuadorian. This performance was not advertised in the English speaking forums, so probably most of them were not aware of her performance.

# Music in Cuenca



**Colibri Conciertos** has been putting on "house concerts" for the past 10 months. These are usually held in private homes somewhere in Cuenca. Tonight there was such a free concert (however donations are requested to support the musicians) at **Mansión Alcázar**, a first class hotel here in Cuenca. As usual, this concert was sold-out (you do need to sign-up quickly due to limited seating) within the first 3 hours after it was announced.

# Music in Cuenca

There were four musicians performing tonight. Daniel Brito Acosta played the piano, Carlos Andrade the violin, and Eddie Jumbo the cello, and Sandra Echeverri was the soprano vocalist. All the musicians were beyond superb. The string work by Carlos and Eddie were amazing to watch, as well as listen to. Sandra's voice is pure and sweet, and is some of the best classical singing I have heard. Always the expert, piano music of Daniel tied the rest together.

At the end, there was a raucous and lengthy standing ovation from everyone in the audience. Very well deserved. Next time you hear of a "house concert" in town, jump in and sign up instantly. If you wait to have your coffee, you will be too late and will find yourself on the waiting list...

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, September 26, 2016

Music, Theater

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# Mayor's Gallery Art Reception



# Mayor's Gallery Art Reception

Last night was an art reception at the Mayor's Gallery(aka Galería de la Alcaldía) to kick off the weekend of the Cuenca Art Walk 2016. There was a fusion of more than 30 national and foreign artists who are living in Ecuador represented at the gallery, each with a single piece of their work. This exhibition stayed up during the entire weekend, so people could come and see the variety of styles and talent as part of the Art Walk (see [tomorrow's blog for more details on the Walk itself](#)). Some of the artists included Jorge Chalco, Alberto Soriano, Garry Kaulitz, Catalina Carrasco, Miguel Illescas, Maité Eusebio, Klever Moscoso, Ali Spence, Janda Grove, Lorena Duca, Ariel Dawi, Santiago Sutton, Cara Venn, Amelia Earl, and of course, Evelyn Johnson.



# Mayor's Gallery Art Reception



There was a good turnout, as both Cuencanans and expats came to meet the artists, and the artists could also mingle and catch up among themselves.



# Mayor's Gallery Art Reception



1500 copies of the yellow catalog detailing all the artists had been printed, and many people in the crowd had a copy to reference. You can download an electronic version of the booklet [here](#), if you wish.



## Cuenca Art Walk 2016



# Cuenca Art Walk 2016

Later in the evening, Cara Venn (the organizer of the entire Cuenca Art Walk 2016, shown at the podium upper left), gave a short talk, and then introduced the Ecuadorian folk dancing entertainment. Meanwhile, outside the beautiful Mayor's gallery (bottom left), we were having a typical rainy evening.

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Last Friday was the [art reception at the Mayor's Gallery](#) that launched the Cuenca Art Walk 2016. This was followed by a self-guided art tour of 55 locations throughout the historic el centro district of Cuenca, all day Saturday and Sunday. Evelyn Johnson and fellow artist Garry Kaulitz exhibited at the Casa Artesanal, AKA [Carolina Smokehouse](#) (the source of our bacon and a whole lot more!). Tamara and Bob also joined us, supplying their [Alaskan Style SHRUB](#). There was a good turnout for the entire art walk circuit, but whenever I returned to Evelyn's exhibit, it was always the most packed with people enjoying the wine (from Dos Amigos) and shrub tasting, pulled pork sandwiches, brownies, lots of goodies, as well as signing up for art courses with Garry. Evelyn sold a third of the 13 paintings she exhibited during the weekend, in a show that was intended to introduce the great variety of talented art we have in Cuenca, from jewelry, sculptures, paintings, handmade crafts, weaving, music, folk dancers, theater, to puppets. It also showed us that wine and fine art can be a great mix.



# Cuenca Art Walk 2016



Museo Pumapungo had a simultaneous event on Saturday, called "Noches de Shungo", which was packed with families enjoying plenty of activities and games for kids, the craft vendors, and lots of food vendors (I had a delicious and unusual slice of pizza from [In Situ](#)).



# Cuenca Art Walk 2016



Though paintings accounted for the majority of art displayed, two galleries in town exhibited some of the best metal sculpture art I have seen anywhere. We are still deciding which piece(s) we will be adding to our home...



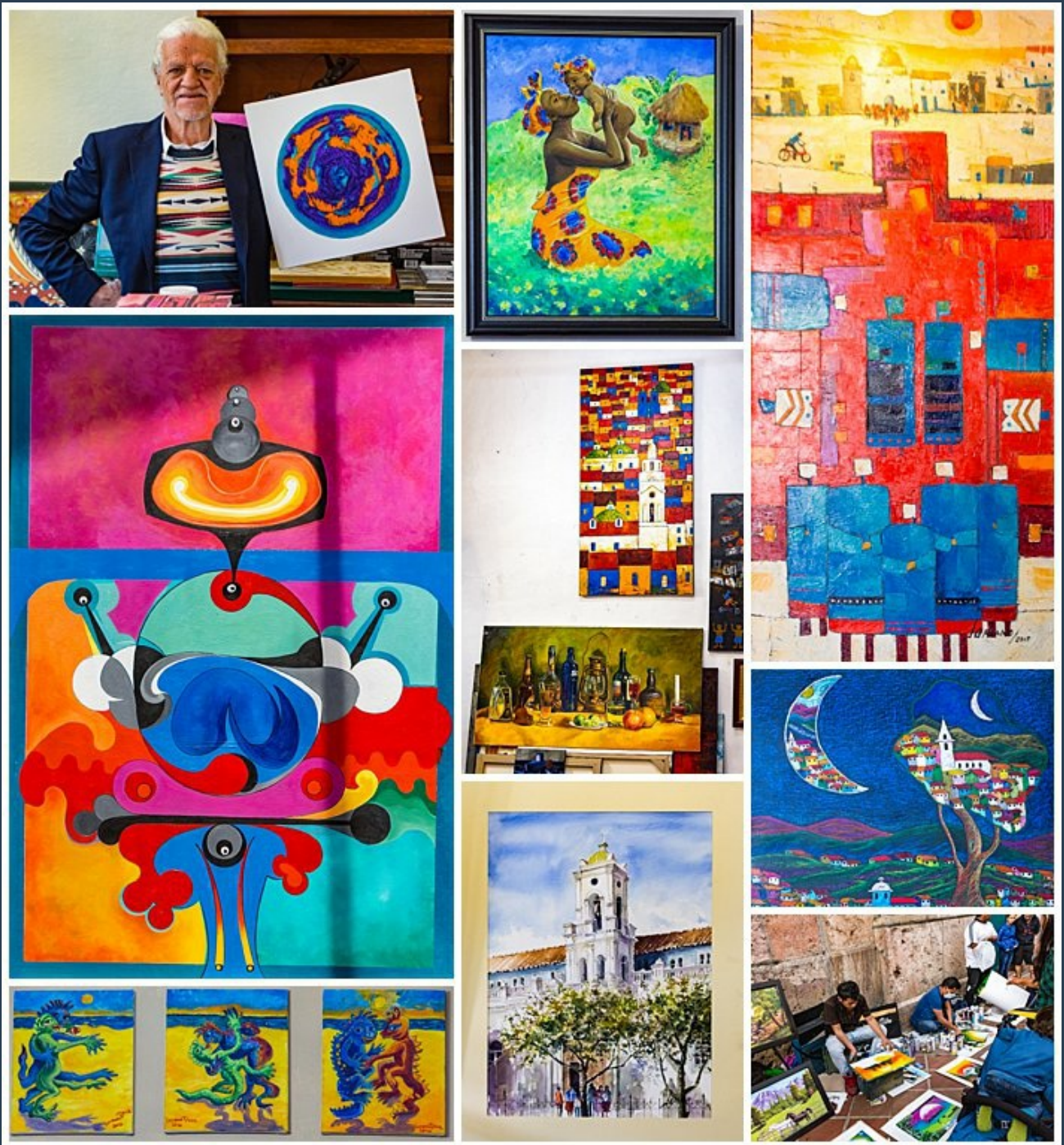
# Cuenca Art Walk 2016



With literally thousands of pieces of art on display, it is hard to pick a subset for this blog.



# Cuenca Art Walk 2016



This was the "Second Annual" Cuenca Art Walk, aka Caminata de Arte 2 in Spanish. The event is likely to continue to grow and become even more popular next year, so be sure to support the artists and the many small businesses.

## Brag – Winners...Life in Retirement...



This post is a bit of a personal brag for both of us. You have already read about the [Mayor's Gallery Art Reception](#) this past Friday, and the [Cuenca Art Walk 2016](#) that followed during the weekend. [El Mercurio](#) is a major Spanish Language Cuenca newspaper that we follow (usually from Jeanne's daily English translations in [CuencaHighLife](#)). This past Sunday, October 2, 2016, El Mercurio printed a 1/2 page article about the art walk, titled "*Caminata del Arte crea intercambios culturales*" (or "*The Art Walk creates an exchange of cultures*").



# Brag – Winners...Life in Retirement...

They commented on some specific artists in the art show, including Evelyn. In referring to one of Evelyn's favorite paintings, "*Recordando Su Vida*" (Recalling Her Life), El Mercurio wrote:

*Muestra de artistas naciones y extranjeros se fusiona y en una muestra son operadas por el público.*

*La norteamericana Evelyn Johnson muestra un perfecto retrato físico y psicológico de una mujer campesina, camino a la senectud, en su traje típico de chola...*

Which means:

*The show fused together the work of national and foreign artists. Evelyn Johnson perfectly captures the physical and psychological expression of an indigenous women, who is on her way to senescence [old age], wearing the traditional Chola Cuencanan clothing from the Andes.*



# Brag – Winners...Life in Retirement...



On another front, Ana Louise from [Coffee Club Spanish](#) (Burt's Spanish teacher) hosted an end-of-term photography competition for all her classes. The requirement was to show a photograph, and then write a Spanish language story describing the image, with more advanced classes requiring longer stories (Burt was in Intermediate 1 this past session, which is "level 4" in Ana's program).

# Brag – Winners...Life in Retirement...

Burt opted to display a storyboard, shown above, from our recent trip to Puerto Lopez. The story that I wrote was:

*Visitamos Puerto López en agosto, para observar a los pescadores y disfrutar de tiempo en la playa. El clima era cálido y agradable, con días claros y noches frescas. Había no hay mosquitos, que fue una agradable sorpresa.*

*En nuestra segunda mañana, llevamos nuestras cámaras para ver el pescado siendo traído. Como nos acercamos a la playa, podíamos ver los barcos llegar, rodeados por enjambres de aves (superior izquierda).*

*Cuando nos acercamos, vimos hombres que llevaban cubos de pescado desde el barco a las escamas y camiones. El pescado podría volar sobre los hombres, tratando de agarrar los peces en los cubos. A veces, los hombres se ejecute en parejas (media izquierda), con una persona que lleva la cubeta mientras que un amigo sería tratando de asustar a los pájaros. Otros hombres no tienen un amigo, y agitaría sus manos sobre la cabeza para tratar de salvar su pescado (inferior izquierda).*

*Había tantas aves que era imposible detenerlos a todos. Algunas aves, como la fragata (inferior derecha), se ciernen el cursor sobre el cubo, luego vienen con cuidado, levante la cubierta de protección, y robar un pez del cubo, antes de volar lejos.*

In English, that translates to:

*We visited Puerto Lopez in August, to watch the fishermen and enjoy some time at the beach. The weather was warm and pleasant, with clear days and cool nights. There were no mosquitoes at all, which was a pleasant surprise.*

*On our second morning, we took our cameras to watch the fish being brought in. As we approached the beach, we could see the boats arriving, surrounded by swarms of birds (upper left).*



# Is It Safe in Ecuador?

*As we got closer, we saw men carrying buckets of fish from the boat to the waiting scales and trucks. The fish would fly over the men, trying to grab fish from the buckets. Sometimes, the men would run in pairs (middle left), with one person carrying the bucket while a friend would chase away the birds. Other men did not have a friend, and would wave their hands over their heads to try to save their fish (lower left).*

*There were so many birds that it was impossible to stop them all. Some birds, like the frigatebird (lower right), would hover over the bucket, then come in carefully, lift the protecting cover, and steal a fish from the bucket, before flying away.*

## Is It Safe in Ecuador?



We have never before reposted someone else's blog article here, and I don't expect to make a habit of it. However, I read a blog today that is on a topic I have harped on [repeatedly](#), and is written better than I believe I have been able to do.

This article was written by [Jim Santos](#), and can be see in it's original location [here](#). I am reposting with his permission. Without further ado, the rest of this post was written by Jim:



# Is It Safe in Ecuador?

Recently, Rita and I took a week long exploratory trip up the coast, along the “Ruta del Sol” of Ecuador. When we announced our plans to friends and family back in the States, I was surprised at how often we heard some variation of the admonishment to “Stay safe!” Now I know that usually it is meant along the lines of “drive safely”, but sometimes there was a darker undertone as well, an idea that we should keep in mind we are in a foreign country, and therefore “not safe”.

That four-letter “s” word seems to be coming up all the time. In the US, politicians scream that you are not safe unless you vote for them. In online forums, expats always are being asked if it is safe where they live. I am constantly asked if large cities in Ecuador are safe, if riding the local buses is safe, are the cabs safe, is it safe to jog with my iPod, and so on.

What is this obsession with being “safe”?

Curious, I looked up the word in the dictionary. For those of you born after 1985, a dictionary is a book that contains most of the words of your language, listed in alphabetical order and providing information on pronunciation, definition, and usage. Not to be confused with a thesaurus, which is not a part of the female anatomy but is instead a book of synonyms. Synonym of course is something you can sprinkle with sugar on toast.

But I digress.

The word “safe” means: *1 – reaching base without being put out* – wait, that’s the wrong definition.

Here we go:

- 1. secure from liability to harm, injury, danger, or risk:*
- 2. free from hurt, injury, danger, or risk:*

# Is It Safe in Ecuador?

*3. involving little or no risk of mishap, error,*

Notice how often another four-letter word, risk, shows up there? People want to know if living in Ecuador is without risk. Well, that's any easy answer – hell's no! And guess what? Living in the US is also not risk-free. In fact, *living* is not safe!

Let's face it, the mortality rate for being a living person is 100%. You are not safe. You are going to die. This is such a sure thing, there's an entire industry based on making money off the fact that you will die. The insurance industry not only knows that you will die, they know the odds of when and how you will die, and so although they do pay out, they have tons of spreadsheets and auditors tracking the risks to make sure they charge you enough so that the house always wins.

What the insurance companies understand, and what the American people do not understand, is the idea of risk. There are degrees of risk, but the people as a mass don't seem to get it. They just want to be safe.

This tendency has been growing for a long time in the US. You can try to blame it on 9/11, and politicians certainly do like to use that tragedy for their maximum benefit, but I believe it only sped up a process that was already there. Before 9/11 there were still things like bicycle helmets, knee pads, elbow pads, etc for kids. There were warnings posted at DQ about the possibility of deadly peanuts lurking in your ice cream sundae, hospitals offering to x-ray Halloween candy (in spite of there never being a case of someone finding a razor blade), stranger danger alerts, and other indications. Look at the prevalence of something as simple as hand sanitizers, to keep you safe from germs.

Take my word for it, it was not always like that in the US. I mean, for years the most popular present for kids 10 or over was their very own Daisy air rifle. Just BB's, right? Ever get hit with one? You could punch through a tin can with a properly pumped Daisy air rifle. No, I blame the whole preoccupation with safety on one playful little item: Jarts.

# Is It Safe in Ecuador?

Again for that post-1985 gang, Jarts were an amusing little lawn game, fun for kids of all ages. The Jarts kit consisted of two plastic hoops, which you placed a set distance apart in the lawn. Then you took the six Jarts, which were small, hand held missiles with a very heavy metal tip, and gaily decorated plastic fins in two bright colors (for teams!). You then took turns, and I'm not kidding here, lobbing these missiles underhanded in big looping arcs while standing at one circle in an attempt to have it plummet down and pierce the ground within the opposing hoop. The tips were not particularly sharp, but the Jart – which was a shortened word for javelin dart, which I guess should have been a clue – could fall with a force as high as 21,000 pounds per square inch, if tossed high enough.

Fun? You bet! Safe? Not so much. Especially since each team stood behind their own hoop.

I had a set myself, and I remember playing a variation with a friend of mine, where we each stood with the hoop on opposite sides of the house. We proceeded to take turns lobbing our Jarts over the roof, blindly trying to hit the unseen target. Of course your opponent was on the other side so he could yell out encouragement or insults, as the case may be. This continued until my mother stuck her head out the door and yelled for us to knock it off before we (sing along with me) “put someone's eye out!”

There were, rather predictably, a number of injuries caused by this product. Enough so that they were finally banned from sale. They were definitely and demonstrably not safe, and appropriate action was taken.



# Is It Safe in Ecuador?

But getting back to the US and Ecuador, now we are talking about risks that are harder to define, and appropriate steps are not usually taken. For example, according to the CDC in 2014 over 2.6 million Americans died in the US. Almost half of them (1.4 million) died from two causes, heart disease or cancer. In that same year, 24 Americans lost their lives in terror attacks. That's almost 50% of all deaths due to heart disease or cancer, and about 0.000000092% by terrorists. That means you would be safer if TSA was confiscating knives at your local steak house instead of at the airport. But do you see Congress rushing to pass laws to make you safe from heart disease, or to provide better funding for research into causes and cures? Of course not. It is to their political advantage to make you afraid of something else.

Meanwhile here in Ecuador, the best stats I could find from the [State Department on violent deaths of expats in the year 2014](#) stated there were 6 reported. Granted, they openly acknowledge that these may not represent them all, just what was reported to the State. But still, only six. Of those half dozen, three of them were suicide, one was a traffic accident, and the remaining two were homicides.

Over the recent years it seems to me that the trend in the US has not been to make you safe from harm, it has been to make you feel as unsafe as possible. And Americans increasingly seem to want to feel safe. It's like the nation is entering into a second childhood, yearning to be enfolded in the trusted arms of an adult, and protected from all harm.

And again, that's not going to happen. You are never going to be safe. There will always be risk. What you need to do is decide what is the *real* degree of risk involved, and what are the potential rewards for taking that risk. Choosing to live overseas is definitely taking a risk, it is not a safe choice. But that does not mean you are necessarily any safer by merely staying where you are.

# Is It Safe in Ecuador?

So if you are considering life overseas, I suggest instead of trying to find reassurances from others that you just go and see for yourself. You don't have to pack everything and take off blindly. Take a vacation or two in your target country(ies), get out there and look around at the world and see for yourself what the situation is. Yes, you should take reasonable precautions, whether you are traveling to Ecuador, Italy, the Philippines or even Boston.

But for myself, living my life in fear, intent on staying safe, and risking regret that I didn't see and experience as much of life as I possibly could? Well, that's one risk that I don't want to take.

*Image courtesy of [www.retro-cafe.com](http://www.retro-cafe.com)*

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, October 7, 2016

[Ecuador](#), [Travel](#)

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# Carolina Smokehouse Meets La Yunta

## Carolina Smokehouse Meets La Yunta



We have mentioned the free cooking classes at La Yunta before. \$3 for a round-trip bus ride (or free if you drive yourself), and get a free cooking demonstration, along with some scrumptious bits of meal that fill you up enough that you don't need lunch.

# Carolina Smokehouse Meets La Yunta

Yesterday we opted to join them again on their almost-free bus trip to see how Sandy of [Carolina Smokehouse](#) uses her products for cooking. To be honest, I was skeptical, since we already use many of their products. Later I decided that it was a morning well spent!



Sandy started off with stuffed mushrooms. Snooze. Boring. NOT! I have made these for guests for the past couple years, but she used her spiced sausage instead of the Parmesan cheese that I have been using. What a difference! We just discovered a new standard appetizer for guests!



# Carolina Smokehouse Meets La Yunta

She then proceeded to show us how to make different types of biscuits, some with prosciutto and others with pulled pork fillings, and finally brownies. I can assure you that her mixes are of an "impossible-to-fail" type. I tried to make brownies for years here, and never got results I like. I now use her mixes, follow the instructions on the package, and the brownies have **always** been a hit with guests -- if they ever last long enough for the guests to experience them!

In each case, she made them with just a little different twist from how I have been making them. In each case, they took my "oh my, that is good" results to "I have died and gone to heaven" outcomes.

If you are in the area and have a chance, I strongly recommend you attend one of Sandy's (aka "[Carolina Smokehouse](#)") cooking demonstrations. They are held about once a month, are free, and give you little cooking tips you never knew you needed! You can contact Sole at [layuntatiendaycocina@gmail.com](mailto:layuntatiendaycocina@gmail.com) to get the schedule of upcoming classes.

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, October 15, 2016

[cooking, recipe](#)

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# Vistazo Magazine Article on Burt

## Vistazo Magazine Article on Burt



Vistazo is an Ecuadorian news magazine. The issue with yesterday's cover date (October 20, 2016) has an article about three photographers in Cuenca, of which Burt is the first listed.



# Vistazo Magazine Article on Burt



They asked for a few of my photographs to illustrate their article celebrating Cuenca's upcoming Independence Day, plus a few quotes from me around which they wrote the article. The text above is rather small and hard to read in this blog scan, so I transcribed it here:

## *In Spanish: Tres Miradas Sobre Cuenca*

Desde sus diferentes modos de verla, a través de sus lentes, tres fotógrafos de Cuenca comparten con Vistazo sus experiencias al capturar la belleza y el movimiento de la ciudad en la que viven, y que este 3 de Noviembre celebra el aniversario 196 de su independencia.

## *Festiva y Patrimonial.*

# Vistazo Magazine Article on Burt

A la izquierda: Una vista de la Catedral Nueva al atardecer, y abajo una audaz celebración con juegos pirotécnicos. Sobre esta líneas: detalle de un delicado trabajo artesanal en el pueblo de San Bartolomé, a las afueras de Cuenca y famoso por sus guitarras. Debajo: rostros de tradicional desfile de Paseo del Niño que se realiza cada víspera de Navidad.

## ***Burt Johnson***

“Cuenca no se puede capturar en una primera visita. Tiene grandes celebraciones en el año, cada una con su propio encanto y distintas posibilidades. Algunas son predecibles como el Paseo del Niño, la Independencia, el Corpus Christi, la víspera del Año Nuevo o el Día de los Inocentes. Otras son más difíciles de entender: eventos fascinantes entre vecinos y que personas a pocas cuadras desconocen. Le recomendaría a cualquiera que quería hacer fotos de Cuenca que siempre tenga la cámara lista, en el momento que menos espera se encontrará con un desfile o juegos pirotécnicos. Alguna vez me lo explicó un amigo” “Puede ser una boda, un divorcio, un nacimiento un funeral... Acá todo se celebra.”

Además es una ciudad declarada por UNESCO patrimonio de la humanidad, tiene más de 50 iglesias católicas que son interesantes sujetos fotográficos, tanto durante el día como cuando se pone el sol.”

Burt Johnson es un ingeniero de software jubilado de California, Estados Unidos. Hace tres años se radicó en Cuenca junto a su esposa Evelyn, y decidieron disfrutar de su retiro volcándose en las actividades artísticas que el trabajo postergó: ella en las artes plásticas y él en la fotografía.

## ***In English: Three Perspectives on Cuenca***

From their different ways of seeing through their lenses, three photographers of Cuenca share their experiences capturing the beauty and movement of the city in which they live, as this November 3 celebrates the 196th anniversary of its independence.



# Vistazo Magazine Article on Burt

Festival and Heritage.

Left: A view of the New Cathedral at sunset, and below a celebration playing with bold fireworks. This line: detail of delicate craftsmanship in the village of San Bartolomé on the outskirts of Cuenca, famous for their guitars. Below: faces from the traditional Christmas Eve parade, the Traveling Child.

Burt Johnson

"Cuenca cannot be captured on a single visit. It has great celebrations all year, each with its own charm and possibilities. Some are predictable, such as the Paseo del Niño (Traveling Child), Independence Day, Corpus Christi, New Year's Eve, or Day of the Innocents. Others are more difficult to understand: fascinating events in the neighborhoods, which are unknown just a few blocks away. I would recommend to anyone who wanted to take pictures of Cuenca to always have their camera ready. When you least expect it, you will come across a parade or fireworks. A friend once explained to me "It could be a wedding, a divorce, a birth, a funeral ... They celebrate everything here! "

Cuenca has been declared to be a World Heritage city by UNESCO, and has more than 50 Catholic churches that are interesting photographic subjects — both during the day and after the sun sets. "

Burt Johnson is a retired software engineer from California, United States. Three years ago he settled in Cuenca with his wife Evelyn, and decided to enjoy their retirement returning to artistic pursuits that work postponed: she in her painting and he in his photography.

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## Evelyn Johnson's Art Show Articles

# Evelyn Johnson's Art Show Articles



Tomorrow marks our 3rd anniversary of moving to Cuenca to start our retired life. In researching what to say in tomorrow's post, we came across two articles about Evelyn that never made it into our blog. Both were articles that came out in March 2016, just as we were preparing to leave for Turkey for a three-month home exchange, and as Evelyn was getting ready for her first solo painting exhibition.

# Evelyn Johnson's Art Show Articles

The first article, above, was in the March 9, 2016 issue of *Diario El Mercurio*, the local Cuenca Spanish newspaper, titled "*Ecuador Inspires Evelyn Johnson*," which talked about her solo exhibition, which was opening that night.

— expat artist —

## Evelyn Johnson

### A Relentless Pursuit of Excellence

By Dave Johnson  
Photos By Burt Johnson

There is an urban myth about an art history student whose assignment was to write a 2,000 word essay on Michelangelo's statue of David. As the story goes, he posted a couple of pictures onto a piece of paper and wrote the following: "It is said a picture is worth a thousand words. Here are two of my favorite pictures of the Statue of David." The myth goes on to suggest that the student received an A for his creativity and outside-the-box approach to the project. This story has inspired me and I have used the premise to guide my career. Whether or not it is true is academic – the premise is dead on.

I was thinking of this story as I climbed the stairs to interview local expat artist Evelyn Johnson. I had met her briefly a few weeks prior on a bus trip to Ingapirca and Devil's Nose. I had heard from others that know her that she is a brilliant artist. I had seen her art on her website ([www.mindstomphoto.com/art](http://www.mindstomphoto.com/art)) and while I thought it was good, I wouldn't have gone as far as saying it was brilliant. But then too, rarely do pictures of artwork accurately portray the depth and emotion behind each brush stroke. And never do they tell the story of the artist that painted them. In my 25+ year as a journalist and magazine publisher, I have had ample opportunity to interview artists, but in all my years I have not had an ethereal experience equal to what I felt when I first laid eyes on Evelyn's work up close and personal. Part of me wants to stop here, tell you that her art transcends words and leave you with a few pictures. This, however, would not even begin to tell the story because, as I discovered, there is such an intense amount of depth and emotion in Evelyn's art that really needs to be experienced. Understanding this, I will do my very best to share mine with you.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Evelyn's husband Burt who is, in his own words, a hobbyist photographer. After seeing his photography, referring to him as a hobbyist is akin to referring to a Ferrari as a car. Burt's travel and studio photography are some of the best I have ever seen. I bring this up because Evelyn uses Burt's and her own photographs as the foundation of her works of art. Because both Burt and Evelyn have an uncanny way of capturing the raw emotion of their subjects in their photography, it is abundantly obvious and equally poignant when transferred to canvas via brushstroke. This emotional transference, in my humble opinion, is what makes Evelyn's work absolutely brilliant. Each and every piece from the blue-footed boobies to the roosters to the indigenous people she paints evokes emotion. Combine this with the mesmerizing way she combines colors and I was almost waiting for the subjects to walk, or in the case of the tortoise and crabs crawl, off the canvas and into the living room. Life-like is a term thrown around by those that review art, but in the case of Evelyn's work the term doesn't quite fit. Sure each has a life-like quality, but her way of bringing the subjects to life is more surreal or dream-like.

Perhaps Evelyn's background explains why her art is so exceptional. She grew up in a traditional Chinese family where the folly of an artistic career was discouraged. In school, Evelyn was allowed to pursue art and even won awards, but her artistic ambition was put to the side for a more practical



Tortoise - Tortoise (from the Galapagos)



One Gallin - Two Roosters (in the market)

— page 22 | cuenca expats magazine —



# Evelyn Johnson's Art Show Articles


expat artist

career that included working at Apple Computer, it was during this time when Evelyn experienced Steve Jobs' relentless pursuit of perfection. As the head of Apple's real estate department, Evelyn witnessed Jobs scrap a huge project midstream at great cost to go in an entirely different direction, which was closer to his idea of perfection. Combine her professional career with growing up poor, and her desire to become successful despite her upbringing, and one realizes where her drive to be exceptional in everything she does comes from. Add passion that grew from not being able to pursue her dream and the result is, as I experienced, art that is truly brilliant.


Evelyn has shown her art in shows with other artists but she has never had her own show, until now. Her exhibit, Visions of Ecuador: Landscapes, Animals and People (Visiones Del Ecuador: Paisajes, Animales, y Gente) opens at Galeria Lantazabal (located on Calle de San Sebastián 180 y Mariscal Sucre, Parque de San Sebastián here in Cuenca) on Wednesday, March 9, 2016 from 6-9 PM. If you missed the opening, you can still "feel" her art first hand until her show ends on April 5, 2016 (the gallery will be open Monday to Friday: 9:00 – 13:00 / 15:00 – 18:00 and Saturdays: 10:00 – 13:00). Evelyn is the first North American expat to have been invited to show at this prestigious Ecuadorian gallery.

At this point I could include that she has studied with renowned master artists in many mediums, including oil, pastel, charcoal, acrylic, watercolor, and clay sculpture. I could tell you that she is currently working with Alberto Soriano, a master Peruvian artist. However, standing before her art and experiencing it on an emotional level, as I did, somehow makes these things unimportant. Certainly the journey is relevant, but in Evelyn's case it is eclipsed by the sheer magnificence of the end result, her art. As the character in the urban myth suggests, a picture really is worth a thousand words. In Evelyn's case though, if you stop there, you will miss out on the visceral experience her art will surely provide. But don't take my word for, see for yourself.


Artist Evelyn Johnson




True Amigos - True Friends (these three people were in front of the market in Cuzco)



Paisaje Andino - Andean Landscape



Reflexiones - Reflections (This is the painting of the Solly Lightfoot Crab and it's reflections in the Galapagos)



[www.cuencaexpatmag.com](http://www.cuencaexpatmag.com) | page 23

The other article about Evelyn was a two page spread, shown above, in [issue #8 of Cuenca Expats Magazine](#), a local English language monthly magazine that covers news of interest to expats in the city.

, October 22, 2016

# Evelyn Johnson's Art Show Articles



*Families still wash clothes in the Tomebamba river that flows through Cuenca*

Hard to believe where the time went, but today marks our 3rd anniversary of the date we landed in Cuenca to start our retirement. We start with a near empty slate every week, and our calendar is booked by the end of the week with us wondering how it went by so quickly. This blog, which started as a series of short notes to let friends know what is going on, now has 376 total posts, and averages over 500 readers per day. We now have taken over 36,000 photographs within Ecuador, and our total photograph collection has grown to over 165,000 images. Here are some random thoughts on how these three years have been spent.

## 3 Years In Ecuador – How Time Flies...

**Spanish.** When we first arrived, I had a newly broken ankle, and immediately started spending time with various doctors and then physical therapists -- none of whom spoke English. I figured that would give me a good way to learn the language. Unfortunately, I later realized that I was really only learning vocabulary related to body parts (ankle, foot, heel, leg, etc) and level of pain. Not very useful in daily interactions once I was back in circulation. I then tried to "just pick up the language" in daily interchanges at the mercado, etc, without a lot of actual success. I finally broke down and started taking formal class lessons about a year ago. I am still not fluent, but I can now go into the mobile telephone office (Movistar) and handle account problems entirely in Spanish, as well as have moderate conversations with taxi drivers. Not as far as I had hoped, but honestly, better than I expected. (Evelyn started studying with a 1-on-1 instructor right from the start, plus taking painting instructions from a non-English speaking instructor, so she is further along than me.)

**Photography.** When in California, I was heavily involved with the [Berkeley Camera Club](#) -- a club with highly talented people that pushed me to my limits to improve my photographic style. To win in the twice-monthly competitions there, I spent a lot of time and effort in my home studio. I brought most of that studio here to Cuenca with us, but find I spend very little time there now. The local Cuenca camera club is at a much lower level of talent, and my lack of Spanish fluency made it hard for me to really follow what was going on anyway. Though we both still photograph quite a lot, these days it is mostly oriented towards creating images for this blog. However, Burt was recognized for his talent as a photographer by an Ecuadorean glossy news magazine and published recently.



# 3 Years In Ecuador – How Time Flies...

**Art.** Evelyn finally has the time to delve into her painting, and has also found a local instructor that has helped her improve her work tremendously. There is a very active art community here, and they convinced her to have her first art show in 2014, in which she shared an exhibition with two Peruvian artists. That was such a success that she agreed to a second show -- this time solo -- in 2015, and then a third small show this year. Her work sells extremely well (setting sales records at the most recent solo gallery exhibition), which has helped to build her confidence. Her most recent show included a rave review in the local Cuenca newspaper too. She has decided to target no more than one show per year though, as they are a lot of work to produce, and she sells so many paintings that it takes her that long to build her inventory back up to the 30+ works of art needed for a good solo exhibit.



*Murals seen in cities around the world*

# 3 Years In Ecuador – How Time Flies...

**Travel.** We have always been energized by travel and seeing new places. Now that we are retired, we have the time to do that much more than while we were working -- where we only had 3 weeks to see a country then rush back to work. Now we can spend a month in one place, then another month somewhere else later in the same year. We recently returned from spending 3 months in Turkey. Since arriving here in Cuenca 3 years ago (today!), we have taken 5 separate major trips within Ecuador. We have also made visits to Peru, Colombia, Argentina, California, Florida, New York / New Jersey, Iceland, Amsterdam, Turkey and Cyprus. (We have 6 countries planned for 2017, so stay tuned for details).

**Volunteer.** There are lots of opportunities to volunteer in Cuenca, but for various reasons, we have both kept our efforts there in the artistic area. We made a memorable trip with a **volunteer surgical team** into the Amazon, producing publicity photos for them to help with their fund raising efforts. I had never expected to be allowed inside an active surgical operating theater to photograph doctors in action. We have also helped creating publicity images for a music festival, an ecological festival, and a couple of "art walks" here in Cuenca.

**Cuenca.** This is home. I think that really says it all. With all our world travels, we have never visited a place outside the US that felt like home... until we landed here. We no longer have a car -- and surprisingly don't miss it one bit. In California, we would drive 1/2 mile to the local market or movie theater. Now we routinely walk 4 to 6 miles per day, and don't think twice about it. Our house has no heating or air conditioning -- and doesn't need either (though I do have a small ceramic heater by my desk that I turn on a few nights per year when there is a chill in the air). We have more friends in Cuenca than we did in California -- partly because we are now retired and have more time for them, but partly also for other reasons too complicated to go into here.



# 3 Years In Ecuador – How Time Flies...



*Murals around Cuenca, Ecuador. There are literally hundreds of them.*



# 3 Years In Ecuador – How Time Flies...

***Articles About Us.*** We have found ourselves published in local newspapers and magazines a few times too. Just yesterday, Burt was featured in an Ecuadorian magazine, [Vistazo](#). Evelyn received rave reviews in both the [Cuenca Expats Magazine](#) and recently in [El Mercurio on her painting](#) at the Mayor's Art Gallery, and [Burt won a local photo contest](#) the same week.

***Retired life in Cuenca*** has been much better than either of us expected, and the time has flown by. Expect another similar update a year from now... if we are not traveling or too busy to write at the time...

***Stay Tuned*** tomorrow for part 2 of this reminiscence...

# 3 Years In Ecuador – How Time Flies...



*Mushrooms Stuffed With Cheese Are a Guest Favorite Appetizer*

When I wrote our [3-year anniversary blog](#) yesterday, I forgot to add a section on food and the joy of cooking, which has been a major theme in our lives since we arrived in Cuenca.

## Burt's 3 Years of Cooking

***Mercados.*** From the start, I have shopped for fresh fruits and vegetables from the mercado located closest to our apartment, 12 de Agosto, about 4 blocks walking from our apartment. Fresh food is everywhere, and the lack of processed foods (ready-made) compelled me to learn how to use fresh produce. I learned that some vendors had better produce than others, most (but not all) charged the same to gringos and locals, and there are now 3-4 vendors that I buy from regularly, who offer me “yappas” (their term for adding a little extra) as a thank you. The vendors selling the large, scrumptious, strawberries are always a joy to see. When we were in Colombia, we went on an exotic fruits tour at a local mercado, giving us a chance to taste various exotic fruits we didn't have the nerve to try on our own. After the tour, I even made maracuya ice cream.



# Burt's 3 Years of Cooking



## *Homemade Maracuya Ice Cream*

**Cooking.** Evelyn cooked for the first 30 years of our marriage, with me barely able to boil water. During an extended unemployment period after the internet stock bust in 1999, it seemed only fair that I should try to learn to cook, since Evelyn was then the only one bringing home a salary. With some encouragement from Pauline (Evelyn's sister) who presented me with my first "[4-ingredient cookbook](#)", I discovered that I actually could cook, and, in fact, like to cook. We decided that, since Evelyn cooked for the first 30 years of our marriage, I would cook for the next 30. I am halfway through that period...

# Burt's 3 Years of Cooking

***Adjusting to high altitude cooking.*** Some of the earliest frustration was adjusting times for cooking and baking, whether it was boiling water for pasta, or baking a pie crust. I joined a Facebook group called [Food and Cooking in Ecuador](#), where there are a number of gourmet cooks who are willing to share. Now, whenever I have a cooking question, there is always someone online who can answer the question, helping with issues of what ingredients to substitute, or changes to make due to the 8500' altitude here. I now periodically add a particularly good recipe I have developed, to my blog, already adjusted for this elevation. There are currently [22 listed there](#).

***Finding expat foods.*** When we first came to Cuenca, we found that the bacon flavor that we loved in California did not exist. In fact, the bacon found at Supermaxi and the local supermarkets was bland. We had a similar withdrawal for other favorite food items that we were accustomed to getting in the US, such as English muffins, spicy sausage, spicy cheese, etc. In the past 3 years, many expats have started up new business enterprises producing many of the foods us expats crave, and it's only rarely we find ourselves unable to obtain a favorite food or ingredient now.

# Burt's 3 Years of Cooking

***Cooking schools.*** I make a point of trying to make at least one new meal each week. Some of these new recipes are found on various internet cooking blogs that I read. Others come from the cooking classes I now frequently attend. I have gone to a dozen or so such classes here in Cuenca, and have learned how to cook Ecuadorian dishes such a locro de papa (a thick potato soup) and seco de chivo (goat stew). Other classes have taught me how to make various American, Italian and Peruvian meals. However it's always the little hints or secrets that are not in any cookbooks that I really appreciate. When we were in Istanbul recently, we both took a **Turkish cooking class**, where we learned (among other dishes), Manti (ravioli in Greek yogurt, often eaten for breakfast). We also learned to use a "Turkish pinch" for spices -- three fingers picking up as much spice as they can hold. Since that is maybe 4 times as much spice as the "American pinch" (thumb and forefinger grabbing spice), we began to realize why many of the spices in my earlier meals were barely noticeable.

***Exploring new restaurants.*** When we first visited Cuenca in 2012, there were only a handful of great restaurants, mostly Ecuadorean cuisines. TripAdvisor showed something like 50 restaurants in town. Since then, the diversity of the types of cuisine available has grown astronomically, and TripAdvisor currently shows 362 restaurants. The cuisines now include great seafood, sushi, Thai, Italian, Indian, Russian, fusion, and even comfort foods such as hamburgers, fried chicken and American-style pizzas. The annual turn-over of restaurants has been staggering, as the start up costs to open a new enterprise are low (under \$1K in some cases). We still regularly have "almuerzos" for lunch, which run from \$2.00 to \$4.00 for a 5-course meal. We also go out to dinner a couple times a week to experience new restaurants in town (and to help keep the better ones in business). In fact, we are heading out to Prickly Pear, another new restaurant a couple blocks from us, as soon as I finish writing this.



# Burt's 3 Years of Cooking

PS: We just returned from dinner. We have always realized there were a lot of restaurants in our neighborhood, but decided to actually count tonight. Our destination was four blocks away. Enroute, along that four block stretch, we counted 41 separate restaurants! One of these days, we will make a 4-block grid and try to actually count the total number of restaurants in that range. I am betting there will be more than 150 within 4 blocks of us...!

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## The Russian Circus is in Town



The Russian Circus (Circo de Rusia) is in town this week for the Cuenca Independence Day celebration. We went to the Sunday matinee show yesterday, and had a grand afternoon. There were no animals (other than a small dog masquerading as a lion), however there was cotton candy, candied apples, popcorn, hot dogs and chili eggs. This circus is along the lines of a lower budget [Cirque du Soleil](#) -- a venue we have seen many times in the States, and always loved.



# The Russian Circus is in Town



As with most circus performances, we love watching the reaction of the audience, especially the kids. One little girl emulated the performers in the ring and the mom did everything she could to keep the little girl from running into the ring. During the 150 minute show, the kids (including the older kids like us) were enthralled with the talented acrobats, the jugglers, the quick change performers, and of course, the clowns.



# The Russian Circus is in Town



# The Russian Circus is in Town

Before the show, rides on the aerial slings were sold for \$5 (upper left) and kids lined up for the chance to be part of the circus. Of course, selfies are everywhere (upper right), and the circus is no exception... Starting the show, and appearing throughout during set changes was the inevitable clown, with his ferocious lion (lower left). The lead clown frequently pulled people from the audience -- some of which were playful (middle left), while other times, the volunteer was left in the center stage minutes after the stunt was completed, which was very humorous for all, except maybe the volunteer.... The lead clown later showed himself to be an accomplished juggler(juggling plastic wash basins), with his assistant (middle right).





# The Russian Circus is in Town

And, of course, what circus would not be complete without a series of high-wire acts. The show opened with the entire entourage of (very Russian-looking) performers entering the ring (upper left). As the show progressed, there were several high ring and wire performers.



We spent most of the afternoon either smiling or slack jaw in awe with the skill of the performers. We heartily recommend anyone in Cuenca who enjoys being a kid again to see this high quality act. (And, be sure to ask for your senior discount.)

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, October 31, 2016

Ecuador, Event, Festival, Theater

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## CID 1 – A Parade and Magic Show





# CID 1 – A Parade and Magic Show

The battle for the independence of Cuenca was held 196 years ago, on November 3, 1820. Though the battle only lasted one day, in typical Ecuadorian fashion, the celebration lasts three days each year. One of the first events of this year's celebration was the *Desfile Estudiantil*, or *Student's Parade*.





# CID 1 – A Parade and Magic Show

Most of the students in the one-hour parade appeared to be middle school or high school age, with each school having one to three groups of dancers in various matching costumes.



Here is a 1 minute clip with examples of several of the dancing groups.

There were also a few marching bands and floats in the parade.



# CID 1 – A Parade and Magic Show



After the parade was completed, I walked to another location where another event was being held. I never could find that other celebration, but did find that the Tranvia (Cuenca's new light rail train) work was continuing at full pace, regardless of the festivities. This project has been plagued with problems -- mostly of political origin -- and the mayor has put the workers on overtime to try and complete it by mid 2017.

# CID 1 – A Parade and Magic Show



We ended the day by attending a show titled "*A Night of Comedy and Magic*." We have seen a few magic shows in Cuenca, and they are almost always entertaining. From the show title, we had expected three magicians performing magic with a touch of comedy. Unfortunately for us, instead it started with an hour of stand-up comedy, all in Spanish. The theater was packed with Ecuadorans laughing and clearly enjoying the show, but our Spanish was limited. We picked up a word here and there, but it came too fast and with too much cultural nuance for us to really appreciate any of the humor.

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, November 2, 2016

Event, Festival

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## CID 2 – Military Parade





# CID 2 – Military Parade

The Cuenca Day Independence celebrations continued this morning with a military parade. Apparently, the military parade only occurs every two years. Prior to this year, it was very difficult to discover what special events were going on, and catching them was mostly through serendipity, unless you read the newspapers or listened to radio in Spanish. This year, there were 50,000 copies of a **150 page booklet** available at *special locations*, plus online, which made it much easier to plan to catch events such as this.

As with most parades in Cuenca, this one started late. What was more unusual was the barricades along the sidewalk, with the military police enforcing the audience to stay behind them. While most parades have the participants and audience freely co-mingling, the MPs made sure there was clear separation this time.





# CID 2 – Military Parade

Another half-hour went by with nothing happening in the parade, but when I asked an PM (upper right), he insisted that more was coming. Sure enough, eventually the PM got control of the crowd again, moving them back to the sidewalks. The light military then arrived. These involved the Ecuadorian Special Forces, in camouflage fatigues, some with masks, some with rappelling gear (upper left). Others were riding bicycles or motorcycles, for urban maneuverability.





# CID 2 – Military Parade

The heavy artillery unit ended the parade, complete with bazookas (upper left), artillery (upper right), anti-missile rocket launchers (lower left), and anti-aircraft guns (middle bottom). The faces of these soldiers looked ready for a major war movie (middle).



Most of the audience stayed on the sidelines patiently to watch the parade...with vendors hawking plastic seats, umbrellas, bubble makers, baseball caps, food and drinks, with the military police trying to keep a path clear for the parade vehicles.



## CID 3 – Soap Box Derby & Markets





The 2016 Cuenca Independence Day blog concludes with a look at the annual soap box derby. This race always starts on Calle Larga, just a little over a block from our apartment. The contestants race down this gently sloped road for 4 blocks, then down a steeper incline for 2 blocks, make a high speed left turn onto 12 de Abril, and continue another half dozen blocks to the finish line. This is our third time seeing this race.

Today it was raining lightly, which added an element of slippery risk to the race, and the umbrellas came out. The race went on as scheduled (well... as close to "on schedule" as anything in Ecuador is...). After several heats of car racers, a group of four men in drag, plus one dressed as a Cardinal ran on foot behind them. I have never understood the significance of that last group, but they have been the trailing act for every race I've seen to date. (Two prior races were reported [here](#) and [here](#))

# CID 3 – Soap Box Derby & Markets





# CID 3 – Soap Box Derby & Markets

I started watching the audience who were also patiently waiting for the start of the race. One family with four kids was clowning around and started hamming it up when they saw my camera (middle row). The parents, clearly enjoying themselves with their kids, beamed when the lens turned towards their family. Just before the race started, a group of three mimes came along, and toyed with the audience, accepting tips in an open hat to have their photos taken. They were good enough that I anteed up a bit to enjoy the fun.





# CID 3 – Soap Box Derby & Markets

Arts and crafts were being sold throughout the city during the three day Independence Day celebration. Many were under city-supplied white tents to provide protection from the sun and occasional rain. Others were in the open, such as the market at the Broken Bridge. There were literally hundreds of such tents and this year (more than in prior years), there appeared to be more "crafts" and lower quality art than in years before.





# CID 3 – Soap Box Derby & Markets

The Broken Bridge (all of the above block) was probably my favorite area this year, with some better art work and some pleasant music being played by street musicians (lower middle and lower right). We stayed away from the battle of bands throughout the city, as the music there is extremely loud and distorted, with little focus on quality. This year, the higher quality art and food booths were concentrated around the Pumapunga Museum, the Mercadito behind the Todos Santos church, and the plaza next to the Catedral Nueva across from Parque Calderon.

I recorded this one song at the Broken Bridge, as a reminder of the pleasant afternoon.

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, November 4, 2016

Event, Festival

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## Expats Musical Comedy at Fishbon





# Expats Musical Comedy at Fishbon

Tonight's show was a repeat of the sold out performances from 10/30-11/2/2016, which was produced by Laura Inks-Bodine and directed by Clay Bodine of [Fishbon del Sur](#). Clay Bodine introduced the show by talking about how some ambitious expats got together 6 months earlier and wanted to produce a musical comedy. The result was a zany journey of two new expats, Maureen and Frank, confronting the challenges of adapting to a new culture and dealing with the family in the US. Bill Scott was the composer, and Cindy Benson played Maureen, both of whom have had Broadway experience.

The excellent singing, dancing and choreography, coupled with a multi-media presentation of scenes so familiar in Cuenca, made for an entertaining evening. It was hilarious for those of us who have experienced shopping for an apartment and walking 4 flights of stairs for a "view", the spitting healers, the shamans, the fast-talking sales agents, Sno-ball the cuy (guinea pig), experiencing the mercado scene with exotic-looking fruits, unrefrigerated chickens and roasted pigs, and dealing with the parasitos. It was delightful seeing the amount of creative talent, and knowing that expats can choose their creative paths in Cuenca.

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, November 11, 2016

[Theater](#)

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## House Concert – The Charango and Estefani



Tonight was another House Concert from [Colibri Conciertos](#), which are hosted in private homes or boutique hotels in Cuenca. Mara Gano (lower right) organizes these special monthly events featuring talented local (and frequently world-class) concert musicians. This month, 30 guests were invited to the home of Greg and Charlene Redenbacher.



# House Concert – The Charango and Estefani

Guests were treated to hear a rare performance combining the charango and piano. The charango is a 10-string instrument, a small Bolivian/Andean relative of the guitar and ukelele. This performance featured Adrian Ortiz on charango (middle left and bottom left), Estefani Ortiz singing South American songs (upper left and right), and Daniel Brito (the pianist and lead musician at every house concert) on keyboard (top middle and bottom middle). Gloria Uyaguari has been Evelyn's Spanish teacher for the past three years, and is the mother of Estefani and wife of Adrian. The family asked us to record the performance, which we were happy to do.

In all, 15 videos were made of 15 musical pieces performed. They can all be seen on my Facebook timeline ([burt.johnson980](#)), or they can all be seen [here on Vimeo](#).

One of the songs performed tonight was Angel de Luz. If you are interested, [here are the lyrics for the song](#), in Spanish, of course.

[Stephanie Ortiz sings Angel de luz](#) from [Burt Johnson](#) on [Vimeo](#).

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, November 12, 2016

[Event](#), [Music](#)

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## Orchid Wall 2016



The **Orchid Wall** flower show is on display this weekend, running through Sunday, November 27 at the Casa de la Provincia, on the edge of Parque San Blas. As I write this, the show still has one day for you to catch it. If you like flowers, and orchids in particular, you should set aside some time to attend.



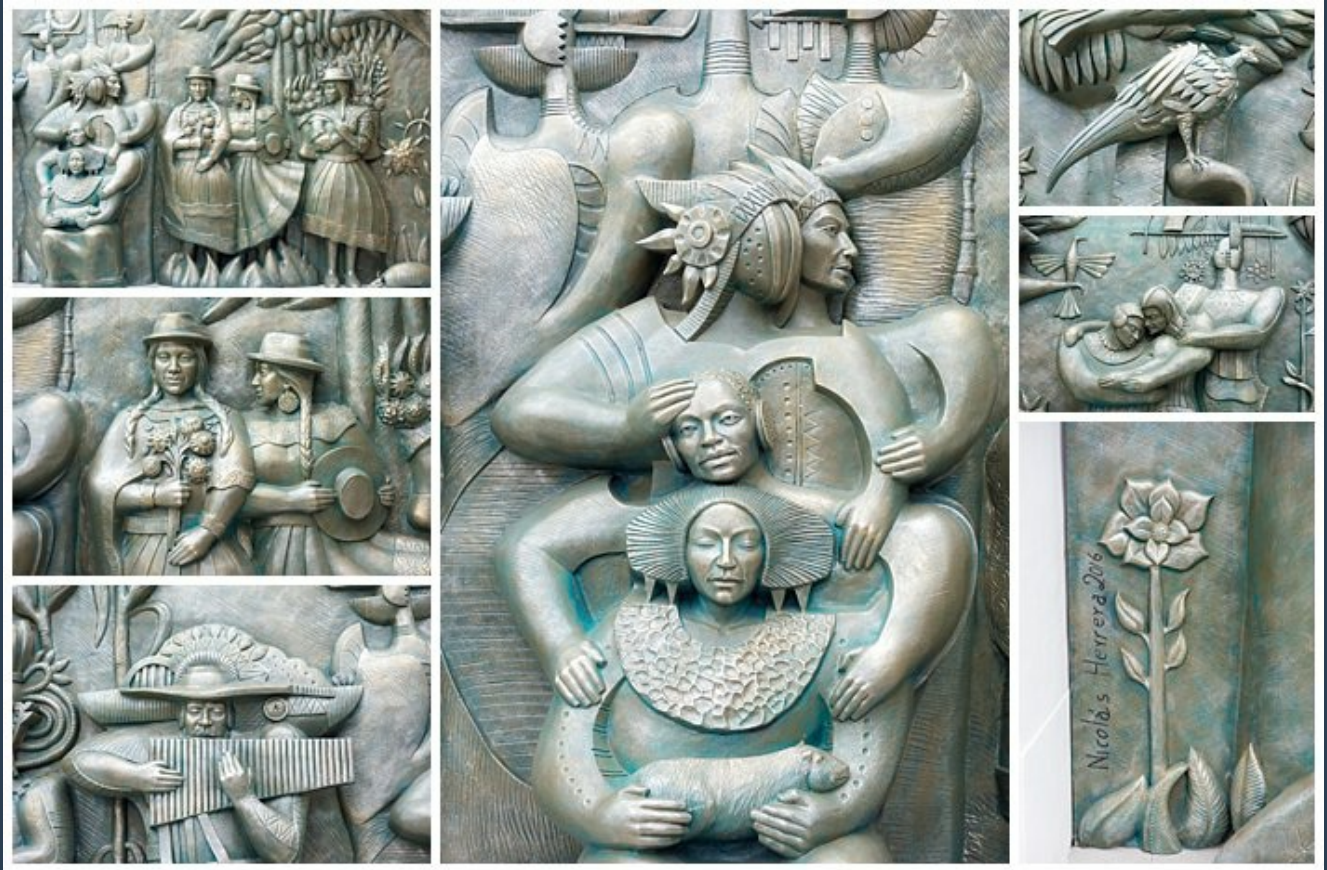
# Orchid Wall 2016

**EcuGenera** is the largest grower of orchids in Ecuador, and is one of the main backers of this show. They claim to grow more than 6000 varieties of orchids, many of which are on display. There are many that are color variations on a theme, such as shown above.



# Orchid Wall 2016

*Others are completely different, and I would not have identified as orchids if they had not been labeled as such.*



*Though technically not part of the orchid show, the metal relief mural in the Casa de la Provincia is also worth seeing.*

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, November 26, 2016

Event, Festival, Flowers

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## Festival of Lights



# Festival of Lights

Last night was the Festival of Lights (Festival de Luces) at [Santo Domingo Plaza in Cuenca](#). This is an annual event, honoring *Our Lady of the Rosary*. However, in past years, we always heard about it after the event. This was the first year we learned about the event in time to attend.

The schedule showed that the candles would start to be placed at 6PM. Since we know that almost all Ecuadorian events start late, I wandered over a few minutes past 6 -- only to discover that the setting up was already well under way, with students already 3 blocks from the church lining them up along the roadways. To my further surprise, every part of the schedule was almost exactly on time.



# Festival of Lights



A mass was given at 7:00 PM, and doors opened about 6:30. I was able to enter and see the interior of the Santo Domingo church (above right column). I tried to also find stairs to the upper floors for an aerial view of the lights, but was stopped by a nun who told me "*Está prohibido.*"

# Festival of Lights

