

## Mexican equestrian marvels

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Forget the Marlboro man and Annie Oakley. You want real macho and "You go, girl!" attitude, check out Charrería culture, where dancing horses, trick roping and life-threatening leaps from galloping horse to galloping horse are done in the flamboyant elegance of charro attire for man, woman and horse alike.

"Arte en la Charrería: The Artisanry of Mexican Equestrian Culture" opens Friday, June 19, at the International Museum of the Horse at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington and continues through Sept. 11.

It includes 300 objects, from spectacular sombreros to black-tie charro suits, magnificent dress spurs, fantastic decorated saddles and high-style "working" dresses; from the wide ruffles of *adelita* dresses to the embroidered *china poblana* dress and *rebozos* for women and *sarapes* for men.



A gala saddle, possibly from the 20th century, is fantastically decorated.

A majority of the objects in "Arte en la Charrería" date from the late 19th century. All are from the collection begun in the 19th century by Gumaro Gonzalez, a landowner in Nuevo Leon, Mexico. The family continues to build the collection, which is the most important collection of charro saddles in Mexico.

The charrería is a nearly 500-year-old heritage that reflects the Spanish introduction of horses and cattle to the New World and that, by the 19th century, had developed into formal competitions and celebrations pitting one ranchero against another in skills similar to rodeos of the American West. Today, charrería is the national sport of Mexico.

The tour of "Arte en la Charrería" that began in 2008 and ends in 2011 marks both the bicentennial of Mexico's independence from Spain and the 100th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution.

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