

[View this email in your browser](#)

tucson
MEET OUR
makers

OK - we have to spill the beans. We're thrilled to announce that Omni Tucson National Resort, the home of the PGA Tour Champions Cologuard Classic, has undergone a complete reimagination of the property. The rooms, the restaurants, the lobby, the spa - it's ALL new (and believe us when we say that the updates are impressive). Get all the details in our What's New release, linked below.

Now, to meet Jessica Gonzales, one of Tucson's most talented muralists who is redefining the city's aesthetic with every stroke of her brush.

[What's New](#)



Meet Muralist Jessica Gonzales

Ask Jessica Gonzales her favorite place and she'll likely tell you her art studio.

She describes it as the place where the practiced, procedural part of her is shelved – the place where her creativity is untethered.

It's also the place she reveals her truest self – through paintings with themes that are often fantastical, unearthed from her own dreams, featuring hues so vivid they appear to be taken straight from an Arizona sunset and women so extraordinary they appear to be otherworldly.

This is the place where the 75 murals Gonzales has painted throughout Tucson were born.

On the mid-January morning we chat, she's excited that tomorrow, a collaboration between her and fellow Tucson muralist Rock Martinez, will begin to take shape.

It's a 4,000-square-foot mural that she and Martinez will paint on retainer walls on the Rillito River portion of the Chuck Huckelberry Loop, a multi-use path that's popular among road cyclists, runners, and walkers. When it's complete, the mural – which depicts the importance of water to wildlife, vegetation, and humans in the Sonoran Desert – will be the largest mural in the Pima County Public Art Collection.

It represents one of many firsts for Gonzales. It's the first time Gonzales will collaborate extensively with another artist. It's also the first time she'll paint with aerosol, a favorite technique of Martinez's, but one that Gonzales, who prefers to paint with brush and acrylic, has little experience with.

But firsts don't frighten Gonzales – they motivate her.

"I always want to make sure I'm challenging myself. I want to paint an object I've never painted or use a slightly different color palette," Gonzales said. "I'm proud that my work is recognizable from a style perspective, but I want to continue to explore new techniques and compositions along the way. That's the dance I'm doing now as an artist – pushing the envelope, while still ensuring my work is recognizable."



She says stretching herself is a point of pride in her career.

Time and time again, she's proven she's a master at braving Tucson's heat and working around the summer monsoons and winter storms (like the one that so completely filled the Rillito River in early January that one of three retainer walls for her collaboration project is now completely inaccessible).

She's mastered impossible deadlines, like when her project for Cristela Alonzo's Netflix special *Middle Classy* received the green light. Though she spent months planning and conceptualizing the mural with Alonzo's team, Gonzales had only five days to complete it in Tucson, then assemble it in L.A. – an even more impressive feat when you consider she started painting on Christmas Day.

"I didn't think it was doable," said Gonzales. "That taught me a lot about my capabilities."

And she's mastered spontaneity, like with "Seeds of Wonder," a mural that she painted live – first at Centennial Hall in Tucson and then at South by Southwest in Austin – before it was installed at her alma mater, the University of Arizona.

Though her artistic capacity coupled with her uncanny drive are major contributing factors to her success, she admits she has another secret weapon – her husband Dakin Martin. Martin is a former commercial painter and one-time carnie, whom she met more than a decade ago while she was employed by Tucson Thrift Shop.

They've worked together since the very start, when she received her first commission from the City of Tucson for a mural *The Path Unpaved*. Martin assisted with filling in large areas and painting the straight lines, something Gonzales says he's "exceptionally talented at" for the abstract mural that depicts three portraits of women in a desert setting.

Since then, Gonzales and Martin have been inseparable, and though she is the brainchild and master technician of every piece, Martin is steadfast in his personal and professional support.



This summer, the duo will take their talents on the road for their first ever mural road trip, painting commissions from Tucson to Northern Michigan.

“I hope it’s the beginning of many painting road trips to come,” said Gonzales, who says travel is one of the most foremost sources of inspiration for her subject matter.

The sense of wonder and discovery that Gonzales feels while on the road is central to the themes in her murals, which in many cases have an almost Alice in Wonderland quality to them.

Take for instance her mural “Imagination, Navigation: Under the Sonoran Sea”

at Tucson bookstore Antigone on 4th Avenue. The mural depicts the power of a girl's imagination while she's reading. Marching out of her book is a blowfish that transforms into a barrel cactus, an octopus that doubles as a tarantula, and a swordfish that morphs into a hummingbird.

"There is a degree of fantasy with everything I do because of the wonder and curiosity resulting from my childhood," said Gonzales, who lived in Europe with her family from the ages of 6-12. "Where I grew up in Germany was magical. There were cobblestone streets and fields filled with cows. We traveled all the time and were constantly trying international food."

Yet, Gonzales is the first to admit that the place that has had the most significant impact on her is the place she's called home since she was 12 – Tucson.

The desert imagery in her murals is a testament to this, as is her ongoing list of projects with the county, city and University of Arizona.

With every brushstroke, Gonzales continues to redefine Tucson's aesthetic for the better. And though she's already completed 75 murals in and around the city, she has no intention of slowing down anytime soon.

"I love my community," Gonzales said. "Tucson is my culture."

To see Gonzales' impressive portfolio firsthand, take the Mainly Murals Downtown Walking Tour or visit the all-new The Tucson Gallery at Proper Shops, featuring original art, posters, and prints by Tucson artists like Gonzales, Ignacio Garcia and Joe Pagac.

Like What You Read?

As they say, the more the merrier.
Share our Meet our Makers
Newsletter with your friends in the
media, who can subscribe to our
monthly emails [HERE](#).



Copyright © 2023 Visit Tucson, All rights reserved.

You are receiving this email because you asked to receive updates on what's new in Tucson.

Our mailing address is:

Visit Tucson
115 N Church Ave # 200
Tucson, AZ 85701-1130

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).