

Cactus Wren and Nopal, 2016, Acryls on canvas, 72 x 57 in



**Onloaded:
Frank
Gonzales**
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Frank Gonzales usually, but not always, makes paintings of flora and fauna which inhabit the Sonoran Desert where he was born, raised, and now again lives and works after living away for over a decade. Like 15th and 16th Century Northern European painters and more recently in the 19th Century with American ornithologist, naturalist, and painter John James Audubon and 20th Century British botanical

artist Margaret Mee, Gonzales is a keen observer of the natural world. Unlike his predecessors, his prodigal return to the desert has fueled a passion for painting freely - for himself rather than for a fictitious audience - in a visual language that breaks from his figurative training and defies being labeled a realist or representational painter. His paintings engage and delight viewers with an immediate familiarity of subject matter but then deliver a one-two punch with color bursts that are at once surprising and jolting. His canvases are like two dimensional playgrounds for joyful application and moving around of colorfully juicy paints; his mark making and “glitches” result from being playful, unrestricted, and also unintentional.

Gonzales scours books, periodicals, and the Internet for photos to create his own imagery that become a play between real and artifice. He says, “I like to combine elements that may seem believable picture-wise, but wouldn’t normally thrive in real life.” He continues, “My compositions are never thought out much beforehand. I like the spontaneity of starting with a background color or single image as a jump off point for the rest of the painting. One image will spark another and the process takes shape from there. I find this way of working to be both exciting and uncertain. My various marks and color glitches mimic this uncertainty resulting in visual stillness and movement.”

In his newer work, Frank has pushed outside his comfort zone by becoming more selective in his mark making, using new tools, painting early in the morning before work, and by changing the shapes of his marks and the tonality of colors. As a result of bumping up against new boundaries by taking risk, being more reflective in his approach to art making, and building technical prowess, Gonzales’ maturation process as a visual artist continues on an impressive upward trajectory.

Gonzales graduated from Mesa Community College and went on to earn a Bachelor in Fine Arts degree from Laguna College of Art and Design in 2003. His work is included in both private and public collections around the world including the Ampersand Boutique Hotel in London and the Orange County (CA) Children’s Hospital. Frank’s work has been featured in numerous publications including *Juxtapoz*, *Boooooom*, and *Colossal*. In 2010, his art work was featured on the cover of American Art Collector magazine. In addition to managing a thriving professional practice as a visual artist, Frank works as an exhibition designer and preparator at Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum, Mesa, Arizona.

Ted G. Decker
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