



"I work with symbolic forms which display my proud Mexican heritage. I strive to elevate the human spirit by using primitive and natural forms reminiscent of Mayan, Aztec and domestic influences from the Old World."

Gustavo Torres

S C U L P T U R E

Born in Guadalajara, Mexico, Gustavo Torres brings alive the majesty of his Mayan and Aztec influences in his bronze sculptures. Mr. Torres harmonizes character with fluidity and emotion. The rich and fluid textures of his work, glorify goddesses, flamenco dancers, bullfighters and other ethereal figures, which are themselves rich in movement, light and shadow, and expression. The spirited personalities of these romantic figures seem to come alive, so charged are they with energy, vitality and form. His sculptures are characterized by their long bases rising up into delicate, sensual figures that pose in gestural and evocative ways. Such technical skill and harmony are reminiscent of an older, more classical tradition and attitude of sculpture.

Mr. Torres has been working in sculpture for over ten years, primarily in patinas, mold making, detail waxing and metal finishing. He was trained at the Instituto Cultural Cabañas in Guadalajara, Mexico. From 1991 through 1992, he trained with sculptor Richard McDonald in his studio in Carmel, California,

and helped oversee the production of McDonald's 1996 Olympic Games monument, "The Gymnast." Gustavo Torres's work is in numerous private collections and is on display, in several galleries in California and Nevada.

In addition to producing one-of-a-kind works of art, Gustavo Torres debuts his first limited edition of ten sculptures entitled "Woman on the Wheel III". This special limited edition series marks an exciting new turning point in his career.

A. *Contemplation*, 19", Bronze, Unique, ©1996


B. *Mujeres Mayas*, 16", Bronze, Unique, ©1996

C. *Angel on Wheel*, 45", Bronze, Edition 7, ©1997

His work is both new and old at the same time. While some have compared his elongated figures to those of Alberto Giacometti, Gustavo downplays any similarities. He admits the great Giacometti, whose pieces now fetch millions of dollars, was an influence, but he says the Nuns of Guadalajara were more so. Gustavo grew up in Mexico and attended private catholic schools that played heavily on his early art education. When he began to show an interest in art, religious symbols were his subjects, especially when he began to sculpt. At the time, most of the statues created in Guadalajara were religious in nature, so that's what a young Gustavo grew up doing.

His university art education was academic and traditional, until his senior year, when a professor from Europe introduced Gustavo to abstract figures and design. It opened up a whole new world and Gustavo began to see the possibilities of bronze. It was at this point that he began to develop his own style....a combination of primitive and abstract. Although his sculptures were a far cry from the blatant religious artifacts he made as a boy, many of his sculptures, even today, evoke a certain spirituality. Gustavo sees it as a blend of his ancient Spanish culture and his devotion to the mysteries of his maker. Gustavo says, "Art without spirituality is nothing."

There are, however, contradictions. From one-winged angels to the female form, Gustavo approaches them with both reverence and a certain lustiness. Gustavo calls that "spiritual balance." Respectful of his past and looking to the future, Gustavo is a man who moves easily from one world to the next.... in more ways than you might expect.



This is Gus' world. Call it his day job. This is the tough, gritty, and dirty world of a working foundry. This is where it happens; where a sculptor's ideas become reality. And it takes an army of people to make it happen, all of them with their own unique talents.

The Monterey Sculpture Center is located in a beat-up old warehouse out past the Marina Airport. Owner Charles Fischer says it's a perfect location: lots of room and far away enough from people to avoid complaints. It is also just about as far removed as you can get from the refined world of fine art galleries. In here it's all about work, back-breaking work done by men who may not look like, but are artists in their own right.

Take John Flury. He's in charge of pouring. He's the man. If he's not there, they don't pour, and for good reason. Pouring molten bronze, heated to a temperature of 2200 degrees, is not only difficult, it's dangerous, too. An artist entrusts his work to John. If he screws it up, it's back to square one, and that costs money. On average, Gus spends about \$2000 getting one sculpture ready for sale. That's out-of-pocket expense up front. So when it comes to pouring the bronze (Gus calls it liquid gold), John is the guy to do it. He has spent twenty years refining his craft and his boss says he's the best. And he taught himself. When he started decades ago, there was no school; it was all on-the-job training.

Up until about 40 years ago, almost all bronze casting was done either in New York or in Italy using a process called investment casting. The Italians pretty much mastered the process and apparently were very secretive about it. Charles Fischer says as a young artist he became interested in bronze casting and wanted to learn how to do it. He traveled to Italy to see first-hand how the masters did it, but was disappointed; "They rushed me through the foundry. I saw very little. Clearly they didn't want me to learn too much." The Italians had a corner on the market and they weren't about to give it up easily, but that all changed about 30 years ago with the creation of a new process called ceramic shell casting. The newer technology was borrowed from commercial casting, and now accounts for about 95% of all casting done in commercial art foundries (See page 61).

GUSTAVO TORRES

Ceramic Shell Casting

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● An artist creates a sculpture in clay.

Polyurethane, or silicone rubber, is painted on the clay, creating a mold.

The original sculpture is removed from the new mold and replaced with hot wax. After the wax is cooled it is taken out, forming an exact replica of the original clay sculpture.

The wax is then sprued. Wax sprues and gates create channels through which the molten bronze will travel.

- The wax replica is then dipped into a vat of slurry (powder silica and water) followed by a coat of one to three different grades of fine to coarse silica sand. This is repeated 8-12 times.



- The ceramic shell is then heated and the wax melted out. The bronze is melted in a graphite container called a crucible to approximately 2200 degrees and poured into the shell.



- The shell is removed with hammers and chisels. The gates are cut off and the remaining sculpture is sandblasted. Air tools are used to finish the sculpture to its intended surface texture.



- The bronze is then covered with patina (a type of paint). Various chemicals are applied at high or low temperatures to create unlimited colors.



SCULPTURE

Charles Fischer was in on the first wave of American foundries that began popping up around the country. He set up shop in two barns on land that now belongs to Monterey Bay Aquarium. When the Aquarium moved in, Fischer moved his operation to a space below the old carousel on Cannery Row. In the early days, Fischer says, there was a lot of trial and error as he and his team learned the in's and out's of bronze casting. The new technique was easier but far from simple. Slowly, they got better and business picked up. By the early 1990's the art business was booming and Fischer and his operation landed in their current location in Marina. He had 47 employees and they still couldn't keep up with demand. The economy was booming and artists were selling. Then came September 11, 2001. Fischer says overnight, business dropped 40%.

Gus remembers it well. After 9/11 he didn't sell a piece for more than a year. It seemed no one was in the mood to spend money on art, especially expensive art. Working in the foundry got Gus through the tough times and although he is selling well now, he still works in the foundry part-time. He likes the foundry because it allows him to be involved in every part of the creative process. He says there is much more to a sculpture than meets the eye, "Most people don't realize how much engineering is involved, especially in big pieces. You have to make sure they're stable." Gus oversees every step of the process with his own pieces and with others. He says it keeps him connected with his art, but it also helps pay foundry costs. "I don't take much money home. I get my check and sign it back to the company." His sculptures sell for between \$3500 and \$10,000, but keep in mind production costs amount to about 25% of the sale price and the gallery takes another 50%. Gus is not getting rich, but is starting to sell pieces on a regular basis and getting closer to his goal of full time artist. Still, even when that time comes, Gus says he will be in the foundry when his pieces go into production. "I like to be in the gallery and talking to people who like my art. I also like to be involved in the other side. For me, the two sides, it's normal." The two worlds of Gustavo Torres are converging at just the right time.

Gustavo Torres painting at the foundry.
Currently showing new works at the
■■■■ Art Association.

