

ARTS & CULTURE

# Carlos Rosales-Silva mural transforms San Antonio Museum of Art lobby

by **Damien Dennis**  
August 22, 2023



Artist Carlos Rosales-Silva and assistant Cassidy Fritts make final touches on his large mural as part of the San Antonio Museum of Art's Gateway series. Credit: Scott Ball / San Antonio Report

The San Antonio Museum of Art's lobby is getting a refresh thanks to New York-based contemporary artist and educator [Carlos Rosales-Silva](#).

The 3,000-square foot mural spans the length of the museum's Great Hall and is titled [Pase Usted](#), Spanish for "welcome in" or "please come in." The mural launches SAMA's new *Gateway* series, an ongoing campaign

commissioning contemporary artists to temporarily transform the museum's lobby area into a vibrant, inviting experience for visitors.

With over 35 gallons of paint used to tackle the massive piece, the project was no small feat. But for Rosales-Silva, whose paintings, installations and murals are described as “exploring the vernacular culture in the American Southwest, Western art history canon, and the political and cultural intersections between them,” pushing the boundaries of his craft is just a part of how he works. *Pase Usted* is his 11th mural and his largest to date.

“The mural acts as two big portals, or ‘gateways,’ on either side of the actual entrance to the collections,” said Rosales-Silva as he described his months-long journey to deciding on the archways depicted in his piece.

Rosales-Silva's expert ability to tie time periods and historical context together also shines through when he describes the wave-like pattern that repeats along the mural's edge.

“There's a shape that repeats on vessels in almost every collection; from the pre-Columbian section to the Chinese ceramics and Greek motifs. It shows up on seemingly mundane objects like a jar or bowl,” he said.



Cassidy Fritts, an assistant to Rosales-Silva, makes finishing touches to the mural *Pase Ustet* that spans across SAMA's Great Hall. Credit: Scott Ball / San Antonio Report

During his discovery process, the idea came to him that the museum itself is a vessel, one that holds culture, people and even educational possibilities. “I thought, why not turn the entire museum lobby into the outside of a vessel that you’re entering into?”

When discussing his inspirations behind the colors of the mural, Rosales-Silva said “They are specific to my obsessions, one of which is retinal colors. If you stare at the blue and the red for a while, they will actually begin to physically vibrate your eyes. It’s quite fascinating.”

He also spoke about his love for San Antonio’s Central Library, as well as for the building’s designer, renowned architect, Ricardo Legoretta. “It’s been something I’ve latched onto and has been really important for my development as an artist.”

Rosales-Silva has taken his culturally and historically-inspired talents across the United States and Mexico — from Los Angeles to San Antonio’s own Art Pace, all the way up to the 15th floor of the Empire State Building in New York.

His mastery is easily spotted. Lana Meador, associate curator of modern and contemporary art at SAMA, saw Rosales-Silva's work during his 2018 residency at Art Pace, and through his local exhibition gallery partner, Ruiz-Healy Art, she championed bringing him on for the project.

“Carlos is a brilliant colorist and draws from a broad range of sources — such as the natural environment, built environment, art history and material culture — distilling all those inspirations into vibrant abstractions”



Artist Carlos Rosales-Silva Credit: Scott Ball / San Antonio Report

She said that while Rosales-Silva is based in New York, his upbringing in El Paso, status as an alumnus of the University of Texas at Austin and familial ties to San Antonio highlight his distinct Texan roots. He also got help with *Pase Usted* from local muralist, Cassidy Fritts, who served as Rosales-Silva's assistant for the large-scale project.

“Carlos has transformed the museum's lobby,” said Meador when describing the unique perspective Rosales-Silva brings to the *Gateway* series. “Instead of the previous stark white walls and cavernous space, the mural immediately provides a sense of warmth, a sense of place, and creates a dialogue.”

SAMA visitors can experience *Pase Usted* through Sept. 14, 2025.

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