

Tia L. Flores

I refer to this piece as my pandemic refuge. The concept visited me several nights in my dreams. The woven vessel symbolizes our connection to our ancestors and to one another. The three turtles represent Mother Earth, present, past and future. The feathers represent the Great Spirit. At the onset of the pandemic while everyone around the world sheltered in their homes experiencing the same threat, our beloved planet was able to breathe again.

Biography

A fourth generation Nevadan, Tia Flores is known for her culturally themed pyrographic calabaza sculptures that depict the vast beauty of the Nevada desert and its natural inhabitants. As a nationally recognized artist, her artwork has been featured on HGTV's *That's Cleaver!*, *Voices of America*, and PBS *ArtEffects*. Tia is one of a handful of female artists featured in the book, *Women Artists of the Great Basin* by Mary Lee Fulkerson.

Spurred by a desire to know more about her heritage, Tia's designs are a reflection of her two families; from her maternal grandmother, her work captures the untamed characteristics of the vast Nevada desert. And from her paternal grandmother, she incorporates the rich cultures of the Aztec and Navajo people and their love and appreciation of nature.

During Tia's time as an arts educator, she created an integrated art curriculum, *ArtSciMath* to assist her students with spatial reasoning skills and to stimulate critical and innovative thinking. As an arts education advocate, Tia has presented at several national educational conferences stressing the importance of student access to arts education and arts integration as a vehicle to improve student engagement, self confidence, and academic achievement.

As an emerging artist in Reno, Tia was able to navigate the various aspects of becoming a working artist with the assistance and guidance of the Sierra Arts Foundation. A couple decades later, Tia returned to Sierra Arts as their Program Director.

In 2018, Tia was invited to travel to Peru to work with a group of women in the remote Ayacucho river village deep in the Amazon jungle. This unique adventure provided Tia the opportunity to assist the women in creating a sustainable craft made from the natural materials from their environment to help support their family's income and the village's economy. Tia returned to the village in 2019 and again in March 2020.

Art making has always been a vital part of Tia's life. She believes that the arts are essential to individuals and their community. The arts play a significant role in a community's identity and its economic development. The arts create unique opportunities and can take you places you never thought possible... like the Amazon Rainforest. - Pyrographic Calabaza Sculptures TiaFlores.com