

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST

BY COLLEEN RINGER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RACHEL OLSSON



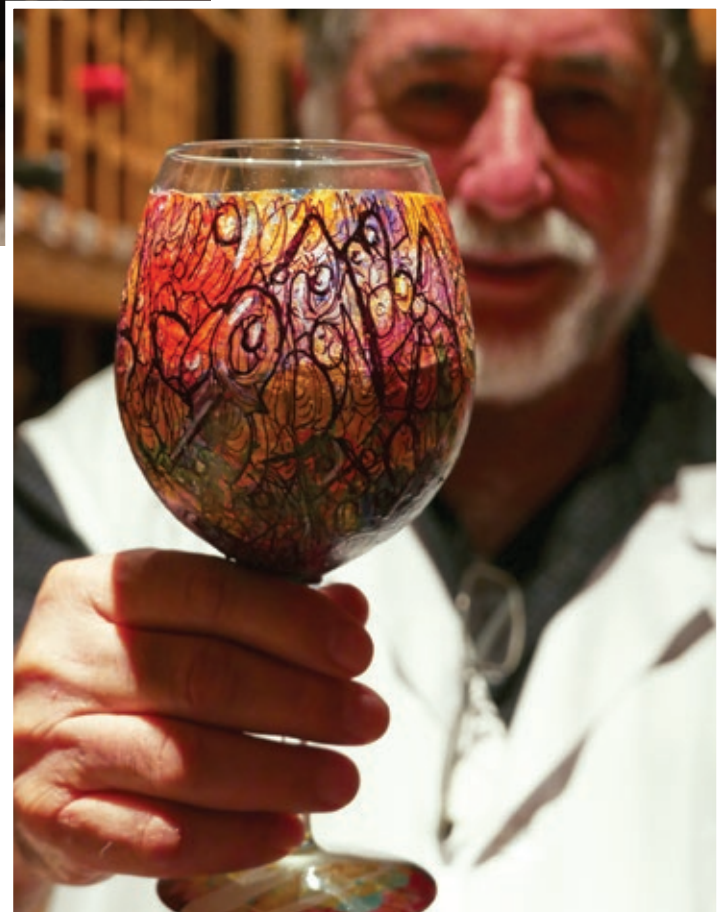
THE BRILLIANT WORK OF NELSON GARCIA-MIRANDA

The coffeepot near the desejo hostess stand is covered in streaks of vivid color — stark white, sunny yellow, bright green. But it's not used to dispense java ... not even close. It's a work of art, and it was painted right here at the resort.

Nelson Garcia-Miranda, Resident Artist at The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa, tells the stories behind this and his other works through an interpreter. He is vibrant and full of life — the perfect parallel to the colorful, surreal pieces he creates in a style he calls "Cubanidad."

"This style is primarily about communication, stories, and metaphors," says Garcia-Miranda, who was born in Cuba and came to the United States in 1999 as a political exile. "It's like a book, but instead of words there are lines and colors."

Wineglasses, plates, spoons, and coffeepots serve as the artist's canvases. And then there are the more traditional pieces. His paintings line the hallway that leads to desejo; they hang on the restaurant's walls, even in the bathroom. He creates them in acrylic and Indian ink, either on canvas or on paper.



TOAST OF DESEO
Nelson Garcia-Miranda finalizes one of his acclaimed artworks, many of which are on display at deseo.

Five nights a week, Garcia-Miranda can be found at his station — an easel set up in deseo’s lounge — painting away as guests check in for dinner and stop to admire his work. Some want to know where he gets his inspiration; others want to know where they can buy one of his pieces.

It’s quite a change from his early days at the restaurant when Garcia-Miranda worked as a dishwasher. He had to make ends meet in his adopted country, and he was committed to his job. But when he mentioned to Chef de Cuisine Roberto Madrid that he had been a professional artist in Cuba, Madrid immediately asked to see his work.

Recognizing the wealth of talent they had in Garcia-Miranda, Madrid and the resort developed the prestigious position of Resident Artist specifically for him. And surprising though it may seem, even Garcia-Miranda’s days as a dishwasher inform his work today. “Some of the things I experienced during that time I take as inspiration for my paintings,” he notes.

It’s been 50 years since Garcia-Miranda graduated from Cuba’s Escuela Nacional de Instructores de Arte and went on to receive a master’s degree in painting and engraving. Over the years, his work has graced walls in Havana, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Argentina, and Japan.

Since settling in at deseo, he has seen his work evolve. He’s using more colors, he says, and there’s more detail. His painting, “La Vitrina,” which tells the tale of his grandparents’ cupboard, is a perfect example. As a child, he wondered what the sound of glasses clanking within the cupboard meant. His grandparents told him it was nothing to worry

about — they were simply talking to the elves. As he grew up, of course, he realized that the telltale rattle had less to do with fairytales and more to do with his grandfather pouring himself a glass of rum. But the perceived magic of the cabinet persisted.

From the furniture in his grandparents’ house, to the spices used in cooking, to his days as a dishwasher — anything and everything has the potential to serve as a muse to Garcia-Miranda. And when those inspirations make their way onto one of his whimsical, fantastical canvases, deseo guests and all who view his work are richer for the experience. 🌟