

## **Bio**

Tom Ortega was born in Houston, Texas in 1961. He studied painting and drawing at North Texas State University before pursuing an advertising degree at Texas Tech. After relocating to Arizona in the late 80s, Ortega exhibited in Scottsdale and Phoenix art galleries, including the Elaine Horwitch Gallery and Bentley Gallery. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally in Dallas, Houston, Denver, Mexico and Bulgaria and featured in Art in America, NY Arts, and Phoenix Home & Garden. Tom is a community activist, serving on the boards of Audubon Arizona and First Place AZ, a nonprofit dedicated to adults with autism and developmental disabilities.

Tom Ortega's paintings and wood constructions reveal personal narratives through a history of materials and a playful yet profound exploration of form and color. Nearly recognizable dreamlike images appear and disappear with weathered surfaces activated by gestural and layered mark-making. There is a freedom in his work that can be attributed to his admiration for folk art traditions. Finding potential in the discarded, Ortega transforms an economy of materials into expressions of whimsy and wonder.