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FEATURE





# GRIMANESA AMORÓS SCULPTURE LIGHTS UP SCOTTSDALE WATERFRONT THIS SUMMER

**AA** BY LYNN TRIMBLE

THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2015 | 2 HOURS AGO



Rendering for *Golden Waters* by Grimanesa Amorós.

*Courtesy of Scottsdale Public Art*

owntown Scottsdale will be a bit brighter than usual this summer, thanks to a new temporary public art installation along the [Scottsdale Waterfront](#), a portion of the Arizona canal that's become a hub for shopping, entertainment, and City of Scottsdale projects including festivals and temporary art installations.

Golden Waters, created by New York- and Peru-based multimedia artist Grimanesa Amorós, is a site-specific sculpture comprising 80-feet of tubing threaded with LED lights. It's located adjacent to the Soleri Bridge on the southwest corner of Scottsdale and Camelback Roads, where it will remain through this September. Like Shana Koenig's Jellies in the Sky, Cacti in the Water, elements of Golden Waters actually hover above the water.

It's a factor that distinguished the piece from others proposed for the site after Scottsdale Public Art issued a call last year for both 2015 **Canal Convergence** and summer works, according to Kirstin Van Cleef, outreach and temporary projects manager for Scottsdale Public Art. Several earlier works at the site — including those by Jeff Zischke, Karrie Hovey, and Erin V. Sotak — floated on the water instead.



Installation view of Golden Waters where it's attached to Soleri Bridge.

Nearly parallel lines jut out from the sculpture's point of origin at the Soleri Bridge, then arc and dip in roller coaster fashion to form the bulk of the piece that's suspended above the water using cables. Installation started on Thursday, June 4, the day after Amorós arrived in Scottsdale, and was still underway when we stopped by to talk with her the following Tuesday.

Amorós was working with more than a half-dozen other people, including Scottsdale Public Art staff and members of her own team donning black T-shirts bearing her last name in big block letters. Her husband and 18-year-old



daughter, who studies fiber arts at Rhode Island School of Design, were among them. They used a table set-up under a tent, layered with tools and other supplies, as their command center. At times they communicated by walkie talkie. Others were busy making adjustments to the installation using a single pontoon, so Amorós was able to pause for a bit and talk about her work.



Artist Grimanesa Amorós pauses from installation work for Golden Waters along the Scottsdale Waterfront.

Wearing large sunglasses, a floppy white hat, red cotton clothing, and black mesh athletic shoes, she was clearly prepared for the desert heat. Several pieces of jewelry hinted at her eclectic style: five tiny but elaborate earrings, a small golden heart necklace gifted by her daughter's best friend, a thick band of cloth and beaded bracelets. Most of the bracelets, she says, were given to her by priests at various temples she visited while in Asia. Most were shared with a blessing, which she says she appreciated, despite not embracing any religion. Instead, she says, it's all about trying to be a good human being.

It will look a bit fantastical once completed, but her site-specific sculpture was created and installed using rather mundane materials: four sizes of line into which strings of LED light are fed, cable that keeps various parts of the sculpture suspended over the water, giant metal clamps that anchor parts of her piece to the bridge as needed, and large industrial-use twist-ties that connect bits of tubing. Amorós notes that while she starts with a detailed plan, it's important to incorporate the natural bends and curves the tubing takes as she's placing it.

Curious about how long it takes to create such a piece, we asked Amorós to estimate the number of hours she'd have spent on Golden Waters by the time installation was complete. She'd never been asked before, she told us. But she would talk with Van Cleef later in the day to do the math. A few hours later we got the word: Amorós estimates her team will have spent 4,000 hours on Golden Waters by the time it's fully installed this coming weekend.



Kirstin Van Cleef of Scottsdale Public Art (left) talks with Grimesa Amorós on the Soleri Bridge along the Scottsdale Waterfront.

Scottsdale Public Art notes that Amorós' work, which uses light and technology to explore themes of identity and community within architectural spaces, has been exhibited in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. She's used LED technology in site-specific installations in New York City, Madrid, Mexico City, and Hong Kong.

Born in Peru, Amorós currently lives and works in both Peru and New York City. She's spent time along both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, so her practice has long been informed by experiences with water. As a child, she loved being enveloped by foaming water filled with bubbles that later inspired several large-scale sculptures that look like clusters of bubbles in assorted configurations. Amorós says she discovered the wonders of light "by accident," while working on a project in Iceland. Unable to sleep one night, she went outside and witnessed an incredible display of lights in the northern sky. Tempted to grab her camera, she decided instead to simply stay in the moment. But she longed to share the moment with others, and it's informed her practice ever since.



The installation team uses a pontoon to access various elements of the Golden Waters sculpture.

Her impulse toward art-making began during childhood. Amorós recalls becoming obsessed with maps, which she loved to draw in beautiful detail, when she was just 10 or 11 years old. It prompted her mom to hire a private teacher, who taught Amorós to paint landscapes — first in oil, and later with acrylics.

Amorós says she felt dissuaded from pursuing a career in the arts given its reputation for being a tough way to make a living, so she majored in psychology during college. But she quit just three weeks shy of earning her degree, realizing as she heard other students describe various types of patients with great fervor that she simply didn't share their passion.

She recalls going outside one day, looking up at the clouds, and conjuring a favorite work by Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. "In a week," she says, "I was in New York City." She opted against going to art school, and studied instead at The Art Students League. Today her practice includes sculpture, video, lighting, and sound.





Installation view of Golden Waters looking south along the Scottsdale Waterfront.

Several factors informed the artist's creation of this specific work — including time spent driving around the city to get a feel for local architecture and nature, and her recognition that the ancient Hohokam Indians were one of the first cultures to rely on irrigation canals. Her artist statement for the piece explains that the "vertical and horizontal lines on the structure aim to express a metaphor that the dynamic balance between urban and natural forces can be experienced simultaneously."

Scottsdale Public Art presents a Q&A with Amorós from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 18 at Hotel Valley Ho. The evening includes complimentary hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Tickets are [available online](#) for \$20. Find more information on the [Scottsdale Public Art website](#).

<http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/arts/grimanesa-amor-s-sculpture-lights-up-scottsdale-waterfront-this-summer-7400905>

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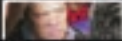
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