


one sees color differently; it's in our heads. We process it differently. We see color by context inside our visual cortex."

Throughout his life and his career, Chávez has taken many risks. "To grow, you have to take risks," he says. "Without that, there is no growth. The most repeated phrase in the Bible is 'do not fear.' I once went two years without selling a painting. Once you're commercially viable, galleries have certain expectations so there's a tendency to paint the same thing over and over. I recognized what was happening and said, 'I'm not going to do this.' I pulled all of my work from the galleries and started painting on my own. I need to be in love with my subject matter."

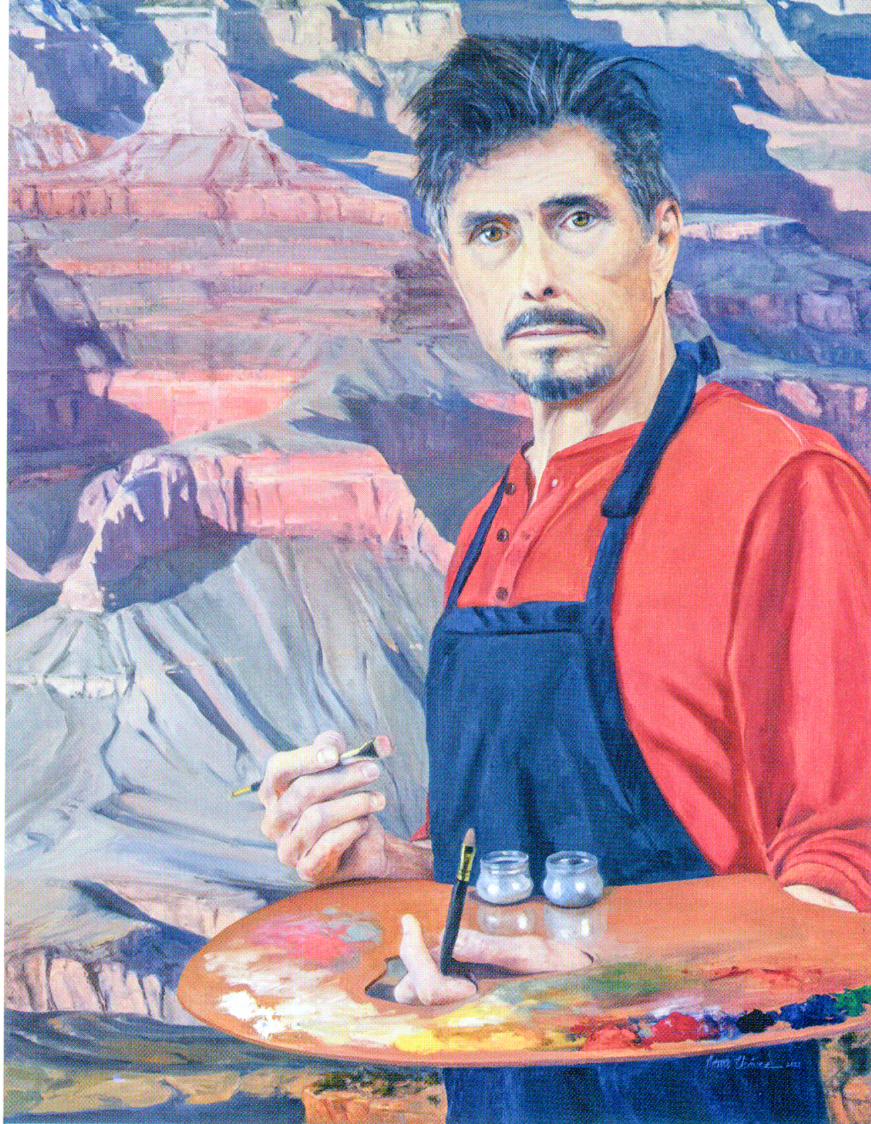
Chávez, who will turn 74 in a few months, and his wife Patricia, a cosmetologist and professional dancer, live in Santa Fe, are surrounded by the land he loves. They met at a dance class, dancing the Tango, and their friendship turned to romance and, eventually, to marriage. "The Tango is one of my greatest passions," he says. "We dance well together. We came in sixth in the Tango USA World Championship in 2016 and eighth in 2018."

Chávez is clearly a man of many talents but what he is most passionate about is painting. "It drives me," he says. "I never get tired of creating a 3D illusion on a 2D surface."

Asked about the highlight of his career, Chávez responds quickly, saying, "It was a two-man show with my friend and Western artist Grant Redden at the Booth Western Art Museum [in Cartersville, Georgia]," he says. "I was so honored. That museum is world class. Seth Hopkins, the museum's director, and his entire staff are exceptional in every way."

Looking back on his life and his career, Chávez says, "Life is what you make it. You have to stay on track, stay focused, and move forward." 

*Vicki Stavig is editor of Art of the West.*



*Self Portrait, oil, 40" by 30"*

*"The Grand Canyon is one the most beautiful places on earth, one that I feel a deep sense of awe and diminished ego when in the presence of this geologic planetary giant. I've spent many hours, weeks, and years painting and contemplating this wonder of the world, and so I felt moved to paint my self portrait with the Temple of Zoroaster in the background, located just above and to the left of my figure."*



*Near La Bajada, oil, 36" by 60"*

*"The La Bajada Escarpment lies between Santa Fe and the Cochiti Pueblo in New Mexico. It's a beautiful, rugged basalt cliff about 600 feet high above the valley floor. This painting is an outcropping at the mid-southwestern edge of the escarpment. I felt that this unassuming quiet spot was the perfect respite to paint."*