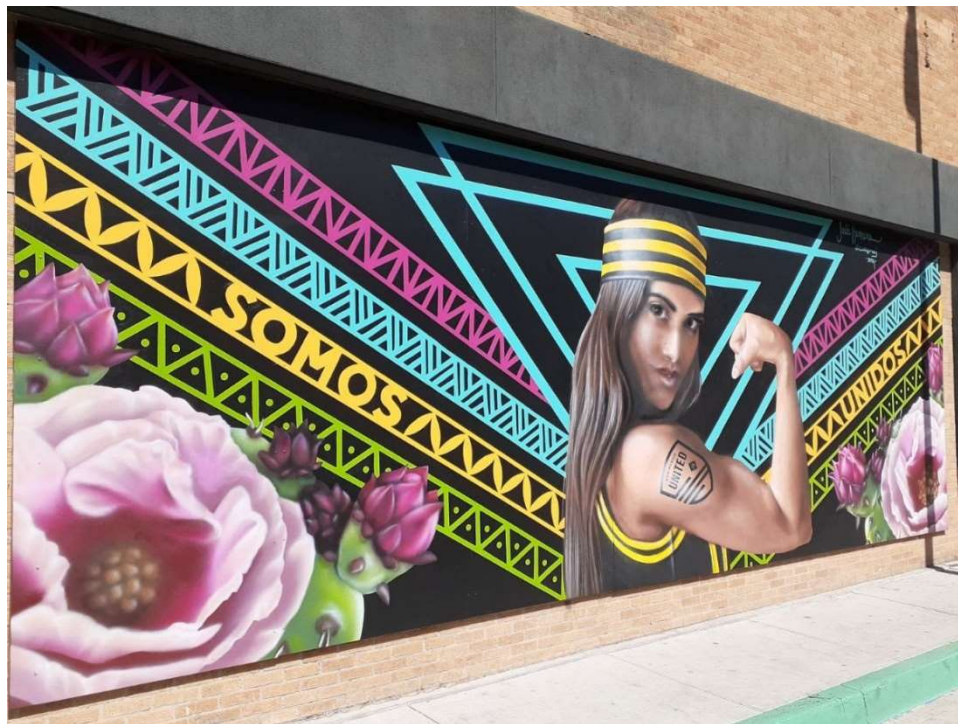


New mural celebrates New Mexico United's female fanbase

Tuesday, July 20, 2021



With "Her Strength," artist Jodie Herrera honors the women who root for New Mexico's home soccer team.

A new mural at Fifth and Central honors an often-overlooked demographic: The female fans of a men's soccer team.

"Her Strength" is the result of a collaboration between New Mexico United and artist [Jodie Herrera](#), who recently finished painting the east wall of the 505 Central Food Hall across from the KiMo Theatre.

"I'm not usually a sports fan, but I feel like United's very different," Herrera told DAN. "[The fans] are showing up not just for soccer, but for each other. It feels like they're showing up to support New Mexico."

When United approached Herrera with the commission in late 2019, the team's leadership had no specific vision for the final piece beyond recognizing their fans.

"The thing that makes United what it is, is the community," said Josh Lane, United's creative director and the project's coordinator. "As we thought about how to celebrate that, we went back to part of our mission statement, which is bringing New Mexicans together in a way they've never been brought together before, specifically through the connection of art and sport."

Beyond that, Lane and United CEO Peter Trevisani gave Herrera full creative freedom.

She chose to depict a woman flexing in the style of Rosie the Riveter, an icon of female strength in historically male-dominated spaces dating back to World War II, when she was used to recruit women into defense industry jobs. The figure is framed by prickly pear blossoms, signifying resilience in rugged environments, Herrera said, as well as a series of triangles, which have long been used as a symbol of femininity.

"I wanted it to center around the female experience, [as all my work does](#). And I wanted it to represent New Mexico in an authentic and a powerful way," Herrera said. "When I go to the games, I see just as many mothers and females and nonbinary people and folks that identify as female at the games, as the male fanbase."

If you don't catch her design's soccer affiliations at first glance, look again: The geometric patterns include the bright colors of United's most prominent sponsor, the art collective [Meow Wolf](#), while the yellow stripe includes the team's rallying cry, "SOMOS UNIDOS."

And, of course, there's the prominent "UNITED" tattoo on her shoulder.

"The only thing we really knew we wanted was for the subject to have the United tattoo," Lane said. "We gave her those notes, and she took them and turned them into just a masterpiece, as far as I'm concerned."

"It's been great seeing all of the different reactions," Herrera said of the various passersby on Fifth. "They were like, 'We're taking my grandma! My mom's going, my aunties are going.' It's just - it's for everyone. And these people, they didn't really love sports before, but they do [now] because it feels like it's for us. It's for all of us."

—*By Karie Luidens*

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