

Stars align for Oldsmar couple who have winning design for art project

Oldsmar used resident survey for latest public art installation at sports complex

By JEFF ROSENFELD, Tampa Bay Newspapers - Feb 14, 2023
Updated Feb 14, 2023

OLDSMAR — The city’s latest public art project — a 16-foot-tall metal sculpture titled “Winners Way” designed by local artists Gus and Lina Ocamposilva — will represent the very definition of public art.

The colorful, star-shaped piece depicting five athletes in action was selected from a pool of 50 applicants following a nationwide call to artists that included very specific requirements for the project. It is tentatively scheduled to be installed at the [Oldsmar Sports Complex](#) sometime this summer.

The parameters included making the piece interactive and appropriate for the Tampa Road site, which is home to the city’s [BMX Supercross](#)



[track](#)sports and sports fields that attract thousands of guests annually. The guidelines were set after Oldsmar officials conducted a survey asking residents for their suggestions.

“It’s such a cool project because we surveyed the public about what kind of art they wanted to see, and we then did a Request for Proposals based on the public’s recommendations,” [City Manager Felicia Donnelly](#) said.

According to the city’s website, the survey received 208 responses “and resulted in the selection of interactive art.” Fifty artists responded and submitted portfolios. A committee appointed by the City Council narrowed the field to two candidates for the project, before selecting the Ocamposilvas design.

“The committee selected local artists Gus and Lina Ocamposilva based on their response to the call to artists,” Donnelly said. The married couple “really captured the spirit of what we were looking for.”

During a tour of their Bayview Boulevard studio on Feb. 2, the Ocamposilvas spoke about being chosen to design and build a public art piece in their own backyard.



A mockup of Gus and Lina Ocamposilva’s metal sculpture was shown to a small group of Oldsmar officials and residents Feb. 2. The couple plan to design the piece at their Bayview Boulevard studio and then assemble the segments at the Oldsmar Sports Complex this summer.

“We were very proud to be part of this wonderful project,” Lina Ocamposilva said. “The purpose of the piece is to help people feel belonging, like this art is ours.”

Gus Ocamposilva, a professional artist who trained in Barcelona and met Lina 20 years ago when she modeled for him, said the opportunity to work in Oldsmar was nothing short of magical.

“Something magical happened to us when we saw that call to artists,” he told the small committee, which included Donnelly, [Oldsmar Arts Coordinator Joan Byrne](#), [Leisure Services Director Chip Potts](#), and former [City Commissioner Linda Norris](#). “We thought, we live in Oldsmar and they’re looking for things we love — interactivity, movement, artistry, and poetry. So, it felt like this call to artists was made for us.”

The Ocamposilvas’ enthusiasm for the project was evident as the couple gave a walk-through of their

process, which involves cutting, bending and welding 4-inch aluminum tubes into what will become a striking, scalable metal sculpture painted in red and white.

“We love aluminum because it’s hard to work with,” Lina said with a smile. “Most artists don’t (like it) because it’s hard to work with and it’s more expensive than steel. But we like the challenge.”

“It’s a tough process because aluminum is very difficult to weld because of the heat,” Gus added.

They explained they’ll build the segments in the studio and then assemble them at the site, where the sculpture will have a stone pathway leading up to its high-traffic location at the entrance to the complex.



Lina Ocamposilva also noted the piece will be built to withstand strong winds, and exuberant kids.

“The call to artists said it had to be interactive, so we had to think what a child could do with our art,” she said. “They will be able to climb it like a playground, or walk or dive around it. It can be admired from different angles, and we are aware of hurricanes and the forces of wind, so our sculptures all have parts to make them extra sturdy.”

Byrne, the longtime Largo parks official who took over as Oldsmar’s art director last year, said the City Commission recently approved the contract, paving the way for the Ocamposilvas to start Winners Way.

“Today they received the final contract, and now they can truly begin,” Byrne said, adding the couple spent a lot of time at the facility researching the property and “taking everything in.”



When asked for a timeframe for completion, Lina Ocamposilva said it would take three to six months to build and three hours to install, while Gus added the concrete base needs to be set for seven weeks before the sculpture can be installed. Then they plan to stand back and take in the public reaction.

“Every one we make is like our baby,” Lina said. “When we install it, we don’t want to let it go!”