



Artist Cassie Tucker's watercolor of elaborate door handle, titled "Oberhofen Castle." CASSIE TUCKER

# Creativity is key

## Cassie Tucker's watercolors open door to castle mysteries

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On an excursion to Switzerland with her daughter, watercolorist Cassie Tucker found herself admiring more than the elegance of the country's historic castles. Her eyes were drawn to every brass lock and handle as she passed through elaborately carved doorways.

Tucker photographed the craftsmanship and detail, her mind immediately pondering how to replicate the robust woods and metals in watercolor. As her ideas began to take shape, she also considered the contrast between the castle's luxurious upstairs and the locks and chains of the dungeon downstairs.

"It just struck me, that whole idea of

### If you go

**What:** "Exodus...locks, latches, and longings" Watercolor Paintings by Cassie Tucker

**When:** 5-8 p.m. through Jan. 10

**Where:** HUBS & HOPS, 209 Remington Ave, Thomasville, Georgia

**Contact:** For more information, visit <https://hubsandhops.com/>.

going in, shutting the door, and the details reflecting the people that are privileged to enter," says Tucker, who began a five-year process of photographing locks and doors. "I would take pictures and store them away. I just knew I was going to come back to that because I like things that have the spirit of something long ago."

Whether it was observing the

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Artist Cassie Tucker became intrigued with images of doors and locks on a visit to Switzerland's castles. PROVIDED

# Tucker

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architecture of England, France, Italy, or the historic buildings and homes of Savannah and Apalachicola, Tucker steadily built a visual library of locks. Her solo watercolor exhibition “Exodus...locks, latches and longings,” opened at Thomasville’s Hubs & Hops in December and features more than 20 of her original works.

Tucker says she was struck by the rustic nature of Hubs & Hops’ newly expanded indoor space and felt it as the perfect setting for this particular show.

## Behind the locks of ‘Exodus’

Tucker describes “Exodus” as exploring the dichotomy between the accessible and impenetrable as it linked to her thoughts on relationships, passions, and “the universal journey of living.” Her painting of an ornate door handle titled “Oberhofen Castle” sold during the exhibition’s opening night.

“That was achieved by 25 plus layers and some very fine brushes to get the contrast I wanted,” says Tucker. “I was delighted that I sold five pieces. My whole interest in art is sharing and it just ignites something in me when I hear what it does for people.”

Tucker can remember the first time she dipped her hands into paint in preschool. Compelled by the feeling and texture of the media, she continued to paint throughout school, and eventually earned her bachelor’s degree in studio art from Florida State University.

While she looked up to mentors in her program like Professors Ed Love and Mark Messersmith, she never imagined she’d step into a career as a teacher.

## Teaching high school art

Post-graduation, Tucker spent time volunteering in the art room at Buck Lake Elementary school and a lightbulb went off. She went on to pursue certification and earn her master’s degree in art education shortly thereafter. After 24 years of teaching high school art, Tucker will retire this January.

“People say you can’t teach and also do your art, but I couldn’t not do both,”



“Escape,” one of Cassie Tucker’s watercolors from “Exodus...locks, latches and longings,” at Thomasville’s Hubs & Hops, which features more than 20 of her original works. CASSIE TUCKER

says Tucker. “The benefits are just so critical for human development. To me, art is essential because it helps a young person develop. The nature of the arts helps young people figure themselves out.”

In deciphering her own unique voice in art, Tucker experienced a range of media from photography to ceramics but has dedicated 30 years to watercolor. In that time, she has exhibited at five solo shows and been a part of Gadsden’s regional art exhibit as well as the Tallahassee Watercolor Society’s annual Tristate show.

Tucker is drawn to watercolors’ wandering qualities and can get lost in a piece for several hours. She enjoys balancing the finer details and with allowing the paint to meander on the paper, every movement purposeful or unintentional is welcome.

“I always told my students to let accidents unfurl and look at them not as ac-

cidents but as wonderful,” adds Tucker. “They’re the thing to me that makes it unique because you’ll never be able to replicate that accident.”

## Music helps inspire

Artists like Georgia O’Keeffe, Winslow Homer, and Andrew Wyeth top Tucker’s list of inspirational artists. She especially loves the expressive, loose nature of Egon Schiele, and Austrian painter.

In addition to visual inspiration, she always listens to music when she’s in the studio and has recently filled her playlist with atmospheric jazz pieces so as to not be swayed by lyrics. She admits that many of her titles are pulled from songs and was played Bob Marley’s “Exodus” during the opening night of her show.

While the art in “Exodus” originates in faraway places, there are some pieces that hit closer to home. Tucker found a jar of keys that had belonged to her



“Grandpa’s keys”: Cassie Tucker found a jar of keys that had belonged to her grandfather and felt it was an interesting foil to the locks and doorways. CASSIE TUCKER

grandfather and felt it was an interesting foil to the locks and doorways.

As she painted the keys, she ruminated on how culture has moved away from these more manual, hand-crafted instruments. Looking to the future, she is excited for this show to travel to FSU’s College of Medicine on Jan. 10. She also has her sights set on her next steps through whatever open doors lie ahead.

“I see the term exodus as a journey and I’m at this age in my life where you look more backwards rather than forwards,” says Tucker. “I’m feeling comfortable in that spot and it’s amazing that this show is occurring the month I’m retiring and the month my daughter just had her first child. Here we have another kind of exodus. It feels full circle.”

*Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area’s umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).*