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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF INTERIOR DESIGNERS ARIZONA SOUTH



## Reality bites

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When a new reality TV home show hits screens this month, two designer sisters will be doing what they love: giving back. By Gillian Drummond. [doing what we love](#). We believe in giving back to the community that gives to you.

## CURRENT ISSUE

### CONNECT



2012, 2013, 2014 Arizona Press Club Award *winner*



Carla Turco, left, and Florencia Turco De Roussel, right, are in demand by TV producers. Photo by [Dominic Arizona Bonuccelli](#).

When sisters Carla Turco and Florencia Turco De Roussel hit TV show screens this month, they like to think the show will be more than just another piece of reality television.

The pair will appear as part of the crew of designers in *Fix It and Finish It*, a show that follows the fixing up of various homes and yards. Florencia, an interior designer and owner of the firm [Within Interior Design Studio](#), is not a big fan of reality TV remodels. But this one, she says, is different.

"The other shows don't show the process. This is a one-day remodel and [viewers] are watching us sweat and curse and throw things around. Plus, this is doing small bits of the house, things

that are manageable.” The crew of 10 to 30 people is largely made up of local designers and contractors, and the designers all mucked in, says Florencia.

When producers approached them to take part in the show, Florencia was drawn to it for another reason. “It gives back. That’s what I’ve always wanted to do with my company. I’ve wanted to have a non-profit piece to my company. What we’re doing is making people’s dreams come true,” she says.



Carla, far left, and Florencia, second from left, on the set of *Fix It and Finish It*. Photo courtesy of Florencia Turco DeRoussel

## Fix It and Finish It



Giving back is one of the mantras at **88 Cushing**, the shared work space Carla and Florencia have created in Tucson’s Old Barrio district. The others are accessible design, and doing what they love. And it seems the world – and TV producers, in particular – are taking notice.

The sisters got their first taste of TV remodeling shows earlier this year when they took part in an episode of the Food Network’s **Food Court Wars**, a face-off between budding restaurant entrepreneurs. Carla and Florencia were asked to design the winning food court space in a Sierra Vista mall.



Carla on the set of *Food Court Wars* in Sierra Vista, Arizona. Photo by Nontextual Matters

They appear in six episodes of *Fix It and Finish It*, three of which will air next week (starting September 8 on [KOLD News 13](#)). The producers filmed four episodes in Tucson and from here Carla and Florencia followed the crew to Montgomery, Alabama for two more.

Carla runs web and graphic design firm [Nontextual Matters](#) in Tucson. But with a degree in architecture and a hand in many of her sister's design decisions, she felt more than comfortable stepping into interior designer shoes for the shows. An added bonus? The presenter of *Fix It and Finish It* is Antonia Sabato Jr, an actor in *General Hospital* and *The Bold and the Beautiful* and one of Carla's childhood crushes. The three bonded on the shows and remain friends.



A selfie with Carla's teen crush, Antonio Sabato Jr. Photo courtesy of Carla Turco

Although a decade divides the sisters (Carla is 44, Florencia 35), these last twelve years have seen them grow closer than ever. They work together, work out together, help each other with their respective businesses, and socialize together.

They arrived in Tucson in 2002, both graduates of Louisiana State University. Carla, newly divorced, was looking for a change. Florencia's then-boyfriend and now husband, James DeRoussel, had moved here.

So Florencia and Carla decided to give it a go. Their first thought? The city was quiet compared to New Orleans. "My first year I hated it. I was still in my 20s and used to partying and having something to do all the time," says Florencia.

Despite their reservations, they found their lives flourishing here. It helped that there is a strong Hispanic community in Tucson. As Argentinians in New Orleans (they moved to the USA when Carla was 15 and Florencia was 5), they never fit in, they say. "I still miss the culture and the people but that lessened a little when I moved to Tucson because I was better accepted as an Argentinian," says Carla.

In 2005 came Hurricane Katrina and the mass exodus from New Orleans. After two hellish weeks of not being able to contact their family there, Florencia and Carla persuaded their parents, their brother and his family to move to Tucson. At the same time, the sisters witnessed Tucsonans coming together and making charitable contributions to their old home.

"That's when it clicked for us. We saw how people were helping our personal friends and family," says Carla. It was time for them to give back to their newly adopted home town. They taught classes in self-defense and empowerment to women and girls in Tucson. And they got involved in the likes of [Safos Dance Theatre](#), Arizona Public Media, productions of [The Vagina Monologues](#) in Tucson, and fundraisers for the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona.

At the same time, they were creating their own shared work space, [88 Cushing](#), in an historic building on Cushing Street in Tucson's downtown. Carla's and Florencia's design firms are the anchors of the space, and over the years they have also leased to other designers. Currently they share with Tucson Expediting & Development and Transact Commercial Furnishings. The open-plan office with outside courtyard space – originally a Chinese market at the turn of the 20th century – is regularly used for parties and business get-togethers.

Charity featured heavily in the sisters' upbringing; growing up, they and their brother were taught to help others, and they witnessed their family sending money back to relatives in Argentina. Today, they may not always have money to donate to charity, but they have time. Says Carla:



88 Cushing, the shared work space the sisters have created in Tucson. Photo by Gillian Drummond

“Our time is precious, so giving our time is worth far more than giving \$5 here or here.”

Television is not new for Carla. She spends what spare time she has acting, and has appeared in several television commercials. Credits include the Fox reality TV show *When Women Ruled the World*, regional and television ad campaigns, small films, and voiceover work in Spanish. This Fall she will appear alongside friend and photographer [Dominic Arizona Bonuccelli](#) in the new series of *Ex-*

*Wives of Rock*. Among the cast is Athena Kottak, ex-wife of Scorpions drummer James Kottak and sister of Tommy Lee. Athena and James are both clients of Carla's.



Carla Turco. Photo by Addie Mannan



From left to right: Carla Turco, Athena Kottak and photographer [Dominic Arizona Bonuccelli](#) on the set of *Ex Wives of Rock*, returning to TV this Fall. Photo courtesy of [Dominic Arizona Bonuccelli](#)

Carla is the go-getter of the two, according to Florencia. “Carla’s [attitude] is so brave and ‘let’s do this’. I’m more ‘Let me see now...’.” Carla doesn’t rule out a move to a bigger city – particularly Los Angeles – to develop her acting career. But she is all about keeping things real

– particularly in the sometimes unreal genre of 'reality TV'. "With reality TV, once you fake it it comes through. It's not going to come out right. When you're real and you're showing your emotions, people like it," she says.

Likewise, Florencia is building a reputation as an interior designer who keeps her feet on the ground. She's a fan of Target, and known for helping clients on small budgets. Her clients range from residential to commercial, and have included [Hush](#) salon and spa and [Habitat for Humanity Tucson](#).



Florencia Turco DeRoussel. Photo by [Dominic Arizona Bonuccelli](#)



Habitat for Humanity's Tucson headquarters, designed by [Within Studio](#). Photo by [Dan Francis](#).

Florencia discovered interior design while studying pre-med in college, in preparation for medical school. "I had to take an elective. I'd never even heard the words 'interior designer' before. But it just clicked." She switched majors and now, she says, satisfies her inner science nerd with the problem-solving and math that come from designing spaces. As well as the Tucson studio, Florencia's company has an office in Montgomery, Alabama headed up by colleague Natalie Toy.



Hush Salon and Day Spa, designed by Within Studio. Photo by Christopher Bowden Photography

The sisters' brother never did settle in Tucson, instead returning to New Orleans. But both their father and mother pursued careers similar to what they had in New Orleans. Father Carlos runs [Belle Epoque Upholstery](#), and mother Elena is a retired neuroscientist who worked in research at the University of Arizona. Each Sunday evening they have a family dinner with their parents.

They talk with gratitude about Tucson and its inhabitants, not only for giving their parents a new start, but for allowing them to feel settled. "I feel accepted here," says Florencia. "I feel understood."

**\* *Fix It and Finish It* will air on KOLD News 13 in Tucson on September 8, 9 and 10. More info [here](#). Find [Non-Textual Matters](#) and [Within Interior Design Studio](#) at 88 Cushing Street, Tucson.**



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## Comments



**Florencia DeRoussel** says:

September 3, 2014 at 3:40 pm

Thank you for the lovely article 3Story! Brought tears to my eyes truly! =) Happy Birthday!

[Reply](#)



**Susan Mulholland** says:

September 3, 2014 at 2:35 pm

I am a proud mentor of my Florencia! way to go.....giving back is more than just a mantra it's a necessity especially when you are a member of profession that isn't perceived as one for the masses.....the truth is as an interior designer we are always thinking how can we make someone else's interior space more sustainable, happier & useful not to mention more beautiful!

Susan Mulholland-Mulholland Art & Design Commercial Interiors & the Arizona Builders Alliance  
Volunteer Day Committee Co-Chair for 2013 & 2014

[Reply](#)



**Florencia DeRoussel** says:

October 1, 2014 at 2:00 pm

Thank you Susan! =)

[Reply](#)

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