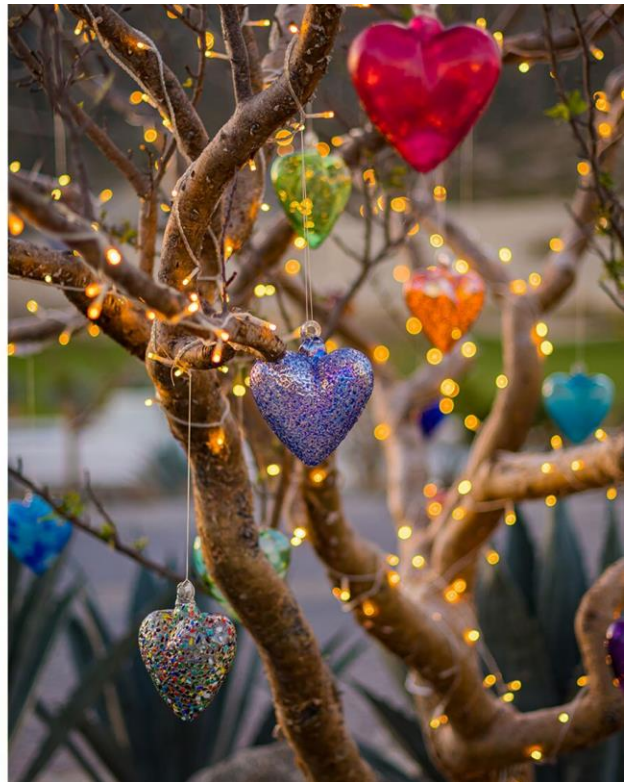


# How One Mexican Artist Is Recycling a Resort's Empty Bottles Into Beautiful Glass-blown Hearts

Glass blower Israel Bautista's hearts have become a symbol of love across Mexico.

By T.J. Olwig  
April 02, 2021



Credit: Pueblo Bonito Resorts

While sun-seeking travelers hardly need incentive to revel in a vacay tippie or two, guests at the [Pueblo Bonito Pacifica Golf & Spa Resort](#) in [Cabo San Lucas, Mexico](#) can sink even deeper into their beach chairs knowing the life of their ice-cold cerveza — and that just-killed bottle of tequila at the swim-up bar — doesn't end in the pool's trash bin, or even worse, a brimming wasteyard.

Instead, as seen throughout the picturesque [Quivira Los Cabos](#) property, its empty bottles reincarnate into colorful — and sustainable — ornaments of love, hanging like tropical fruit atop

poolside palms and the tabletops of its fine-dining eateries. Even the native flora at the dramatic on-site [Quivira Golf Club](#), considered one of the top courses in the world, sparkles like a desert Christmas tree.



Credit: Pueblo Bonito Resorts

That's because Pueblo Bonito Resorts offloads its used glass products to third-generation local artisan Israel Bautista, who creates vibrant pieces of art from the recycled materials — up to 150 pieces each day — for the hotel to buy back and display at each of its five Los Cabos properties.





Israel Bautista  
| Credit: Pueblo Bonito Resorts

The art of glassblowing, brought to Puebla, Mexico by the Spanish centuries ago, has long been a revered art form south of the border. Born into a family of potters and ceramicists, Bautista began his glass-blowing instruction as a teenager and, like any career, started at the bottom "sweeping the floor and cleaning bottles," he remembers. By the time he was 23, he bought an oven and opened his own studio. Today, he and seven other artisans operate the [San Miguel Blown Glass Factory](#).

Some time after, the food and beverage manager for Pueblo Bonito Resorts visited the factory looking to spruce up the hotel's roster of restaurants. That's when Bautista proposed his recycling idea. The decision was not only a no-brainer, it was a win-win for both businesses and the planet.



Credit: Pueblo Bonito Resorts

"When guests learn about our recycled glass program and see what an example Pueblo Bonito Resorts sets for sustaining and protecting the environment, they become inspired," said Operations Manager Armando Garcia.

The forward-thinking recycling initiative has earned Pueblo Bonito Resorts recognition for its commitment to environmental sustainability. Above all, Garcia notes, guests are captivated by Bautista's hearts. The allure has turned a cultural symbol in Mexico into a universal take-home gift.



Based on traditional Mexican and Catholic motifs, the hearts draw inspiration from the Sacred Heart, the spiritual icon of divine love for humanity.

Delivered by the ton to his mountainside studio in the village of El Arenal, where resort guests can visit for a tour and have their own crack at glass-blowing, Bautista cleans and crushes thousands of bottles into tiny shards of rainbow-colored glass. The bits resemble a heaping bowl of Fruity Pebbles. Then, over a roaring 2,000-degree oven, Bautista and his craftsmen melt and mold each heart by dipping long tubes into the molten glass and blowing bubbles. Ten minutes later, a heart is born, before it cools for an additional fourteen hours.



Credit: Quivira Los Cabos

"There's no school for this," Bautista says about the craft. "We have to be very careful — hearts can break easily during the process."

From ornaments to vases to candleholders, the handmade hearts, available in a variety of winged-shapes and eccentric, translucent colors, have gone from being sold solely at the hotel brand's various gift shops to major cities and airport terminals throughout Mexico. The attention and feel-good appeal for Bautista's art has taken the artist by surprise.



Credit: Pueblo Bonito Resorts

"We never thought we would have so much success with the heart," admits Bautista. "I always say: 'What is made by hand is made with the heart. And here at my place, every single piece is made by hand.'"

The secret to sustainability, it seems, is love.