

# Phoenix Artist Jennifer Campbell on Arizona Stereotypes That Turn Out to Be True

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Troy Harris

*Every other year, New Times puts the spotlight on Phoenix's creative forces — painters, dancers, designers, and actors. Leading up to the*

*forces – painters, dancers, designers, and actors. Leading up to the release of Best of Phoenix, we're taking a closer look at 100 more. Welcome to the 2016 edition of 100 Creatives. Up today is 79. Jennifer Campbell.*

Jennifer Campbell's to-do list reads something like: Art, sleep, repeat.

"I get up, which is the first challenge because I'm a really talented sleeper," the Mesa Community College art gallery coordinator says of her typical routine. "Weekdays I'm at work organizing and daydreaming about the future of MCC art gallery. I come home to my studio and I write all my ideas for projects down, I stitch a little or paint for a while and keep working until I stumble onto an idea that I can't stop thinking about."

At 28, the Phoenix-based artist is taking a break from exhibiting her own work to explore new ways of presenting her illustrations. "At first glance, my work is lighthearted," she says. "I like to play with innocent subject matter; often working in an illustrated, simplified way, but the undertones and themes of my work are more serious."





"I like working with my hands, often on time-consuming projects that can't be duplicated twice," Campbell says.

*Jennifer Campbell*

Such was her last show at Practical Art, "Les Femmes Fierce," which highlighted the achievements of women explorers including Nellie Bly and Annie Londonberry. The works paired illustrations of the pioneers with embroidered badges that honored their achievements and were reminiscent of those awarded to Girl Scouts. "I like working with my hands, often on time-consuming projects that can't be duplicated twice."

And she has plenty keeping her busy over in Mesa, where she was offered the coordinator job in December 2015. Previously, the U.K.-born Campbell studied intermedia at ASU and went on to work at Tempe Center for the Arts' gallery and later at the Pyle Adult Recreation Center, where she programmed special events.

"Supporting yourself solely on art can be a difficult feat in the art world, and jobs in the creative fields often have a sea of applicants," she says. "Being a younger person, I feel like a wonderful opportunity has landed in my lap and I look forward to putting my whole being into it."

Currently, she's working on organizing the gallery's fall exhibition schedule, a biennial faculty exhibition that will run September 19 to October 7 and will highlight new works from artists teaching at the school, and an invitational alumni show that will run October 24 to December 2 and will bring together works from former students working in the arts all over the world.

"The gallery has the flexibility and potential to become an incubator for the creation of thought-provoking, multidisciplinary work," Campbell says. "My personal mission is to get students from all disciplines engaged in the space, whether they are interested in the arts or not, to demonstrate that creativity is another form of problem-solving and higher learning."



Campbell's currently working on new methods for displaying her illustrations.

*Jennifer Campbell*

**I came to Phoenix** on a Boeing 747 with an accent, a bag of “Percy Pigs,” and the soul-swallowing dread that can only exist in the mind of a 12-year-old girl moving to a foreign country. In my mind, I imagined Arizona as vast, uninhabitable territory filled with rattlesnakes, cowboys, and guns. I was mostly right.

**I make art because** I have an uncontrollable desire to explore, create, connect, try wild ideas, and learn random facts.

**I'm most productive when** I have an approaching deadline. I'm a great problem-solver when I am under pressure.

**My inspiration wall is full of** Pantone color samples, illustrations, and textile works by female artists I admire, maps to places I have been and have yet to visit, children's toys, and embroidery floss in every single color.

**I've learned most from** not listening to the tiny, perfectionist introvert that lives in my brain.

**Good work should always** challenge both the artist and the audience. I love that tender area in the creative process between "near complete mental breakdown" and "wow, this is kind of a good idea."

**The Phoenix creative scene could use more** permanence. I think this is a trying time for the art community in Phoenix; a lot of galleries are being pushed out by development. There are some amazingly talented movers, shakers, and collectors in the Valley. As a community, we need to engage their powerful voices and innovative ideas to keep the presence of the arts in Phoenix (and surrounding vicinities, I'm looking at you Mesa and Tempe).

*The 2016 Creatives so far:*

100. Nicole Olson
99. Andrew Pielage
98. Jessica Rowe
97. Danny Neumann
96. Beth Cato
95. Jessie Balli
94. Ron May
93. Leonor Aispuro
92. Sarah Waite
91. Christina "Xappa" Franco
90. Christian Adame
89. Tara Sharpe
88. Patricia Sannit
87. Brian Klein
86. Dennita Sewell
85. Garth Johnson
84. Charissa Lucille
83. Ryan Downey

82. **Samantha Thompson**

81. **Cherie Buck-Hutchison**

80. **Freddie Paull**

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