

Case Study: Mesa Community College

Posted by [Dan Kamys](#) | Feb 1, 2017 | [Articles](#), [Features](#) | [0](#)



The vision of Mesa Community College's arts sector included transforming two adjacent buildings into a world-class and acoustically correct performance space. Taking an adaptive approach to the project, a shuttered movie house and its neighboring building underwent an expansion that resulted in the reuse of a prominent space for the enjoyment of the community. It also expanded the space to 24,550 square feet.



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By repurposing a beloved community landmark and emphasizing the properties that make the Sonoran desert so unique, the design of college's performing arts building embraces many of the elements that are important to the community. However, it still delivers a superior space for theater and musical performances and other events.



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Two separate-yet-related concrete masonry shells, as well as a steel frame, comprise the design of the college's new Performing Arts Center (PAC). Using concrete masonry is a crucial element within the 450-seat building's design, as these two shells are created to achieve goals that are independent of each other while still working well together. Metal stud framing provides a foundation for cement stucco that is unpainted and raked. This is paired with concrete masonry that is left exposed to provide visual appeal.





With a nod to George Gershwin's iconic "Rhapsody in Blue," a new masonry wall on the building's north side gently unfolds into an ascending diagonal. Both this wall and an east exterior wall are designed in a running bond pattern.

This gentle waterfall formation allows attention to be drawn to the northwest corner's downspout as well as the entry courtyard's vertical marquee. The marquee wall, with its blending of units of grey concrete masonry with charcoal units at a crucial diagonal fold, lifts the sign up. As a result, the wall is placed front and center so it cannot be missed.





Different masonry types are also highlighted within the interior shell, ranging from a basic grey block to charcoal. As an acoustical structure, this shell needed to provide superior reflection and distribution of sound, a visually rich experience and be exceptionally durable. The side walls of the interior of the PAC were designed as a series of convex, scalloped curves to allow sound waves to wafted evenly over the audience within their seats.



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The Mesa Community College's Performing Arts Center is the winner of numerous prestigious awards, including a 2015 First Place Award of Excellence from The National Concrete Masonry Association, a 2015 Excellence in Masonry Merit Award from the Arizona Masonry Guild and a 2015 market winner of the Design Is...Award.

Words: Masonry Magazine
Photos: Bill Timmerman