

# Mesa Arts Center celebrates new exhibits with literature-themed festival

Laura Latzko, Special for The Republic | [azcentral.com](http://azcentral.com) 12:12 p.m. MST September 6, 2016



(Photo: Photos by Corinne Geertsen)

Many visual artists draw inspiration from other artistic forms. New exhibits at the Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum highlight the connection between the literary and visual arts.

The museum will celebrate the grand opening of five art exhibits inspired by literature during a campus-wide kickoff event at the Mesa Arts Center on Sept. 9.

Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum curator Patty Haberman said the exhibitions give patrons a glimpse of different forms of contemporary art influenced by the written word.

"What we try to show is relevant, thought-provoking pieces that start a dialogue," Haberman said.

Every year, the museum unveils new exhibits, and the center as a whole celebrates the upcoming season with a festival highlighting visual and performance arts styles.

"Every second Friday in September, we open with a big bang, and we want a mini grand opening every year," Haberman said. "I think people enjoy it too because they get a taste of everything that we're doing and what's to come."

During the festival, a Project LIT stage will have spoken word, digital music and improv comedy performances from local groups such as Phonetic Spit, AZ Beat Lab and Humor Writes.

Humor Writes blends improv comedy and creative writing in after-school programs for middle-school students. Humor Writes founder Tristan Gandolfi said the art of improv comedy can spark students' creativity and help them to be able to express themselves in their own vernacular.

During the festival, the Page Coach will have hands-on activities and children's book giveaways for kids.

Local muralist, painter and chalk artist Kyllan Maney will lead an "Alice in MAC Land"-themed public art project that uses the windows of the arts center as a canvas.



Corinne Geertsen, *Submarine*, Digital print on archival photo paper. (Photo: Photos by Corinne Geertsen)

Leading up to the event, Maney painted in black gesso images of "Alice in Wonderland" characters such as the Mad Hatter, Alice and the Cheshire Cat, which guests will color in.

"I love to see how people respond to it. I love to see what people will take from it, or how they will interpret or change it," Maney said. "Instead of people just coming and seeing the art, I think people want to come and be a part of it."

Rachel Bowditch of Vessel will return to the center with a collection of five looks inspired by "Alice in Wonderland," "The House of Spirits" by Isabel Allende, Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist," Madeleine L'Engle's "A Wrinkle in Time" and fairytales by Hans Christian Andersen.

During the atmospheric performances, five performers will move through the arts center in dresses with corsets and light-box hoop skirts, in colors, patterns and fabrics that capture the essence of the stories behind them.

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The festival will have live music from indie rock group Vintage Wednesday, a singer/songwriter showcase by Alice Cooper's Solid Rock, live artist demos, food trucks, local author book signings and pop-up dance performances from CaZo Dance Company.

The museum's main gallery will showcase the group exhibition "Off The Page," a series of ceramic and glass pieces, digital artwork, photographs and sculptures looking at the interconnections between visual art, literature and storytelling.

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In the North Gallery, visitors will find Mesa-based artist Corinne Geertsen's "The Footnote Chronicles," a series incorporating digital collages from the Mesa artist and short stories, poems and thoughts inspired by her work.

To create her digital collages, Geertsen uses photo editing software to extract images from 19th-century studio portraits and bring them into her own photographs. Her work is made up of hundreds of layers.

Written pieces within the exhibit come from people around the world, including a local newspaper columnist who is acting as caregiver for his mother with Alzheimer's disease.

Located in the Dr. Ruth Tan Lim Project Room, Vancouver-based artist Dina Goldstein's "Disillusioned" series brings together pieces from two different series. Fallen Princesses offers through tableau vivant photography a satirical, modern-day perspective on how war, cancer, the eradication of indigenous cultures, obesity, pollution, plastic surgery and the demands of family life would impact fairytale princesses' lives. Gods of Suburbia explores the role of religion in a modern-day society influenced by technology, science and secularism and humanizes religious icons such as Hindu goddess of prosperity and wealth Lakshmi.



Corinne Geertsen, *The Borrower Bird*, Digital print on archival photo paper. (Photo: Photos by Corinne Geertsen)

The SRP Permanent Collection Gallery will feature a series of 10 drawings by Tucson-based artist Daniel Martin Diaz inspired by his interpretation of John Milton's epic poem "Paradise Lost." Diaz's work has a similar style as scientific diagrams but incorporates pages from anatomy, botany and religious books from the 1800s. In his series, Diaz explores the role of technology, religion and authority figures in people's lives and juxtaposes

seemingly unrelated concepts.

"I've always been interested in science, history, philosophy and the human condition. These are concepts and ideas that resonate with me. When the creative process begins, these ideas are churned and purged as an expression through my work," Diaz said.

In the South Gallery, patrons can explore New York artist Béatrice Coron's "WordWide Wanderings," a collection of papercuts informed by stories and texts from around the world. Inspiration for the central piece in the collection, a nine-yard-long papercut work, came from Italo Calvino's "Invisible Cities." Coron said all of the pieces in her collection, including a papercut dress with quotes about couture and a Neverland piece drawing from different versions of "Peter Pan," have deeper meanings and stories.

"What I'm doing really is visual writing. I tell stories visually. So, everything is a story," Coron said.

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## 2016 Mesa Arts Center Season Kick-Off

**When:** 6-10 p.m. Friday, September 9.

**Where:** Mesa Arts Center, 1 E. Main St., Mesa.

**Admission:** Free.

**Details:** 480-644-6500. [mesaartscenter.com \(http://mesaartscenter.com\)](http://mesaartscenter.com).

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