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**Mesa Announces Proposals Selected for Main Street Prototyping Festival**  
Innovative Project Employs Arts-Based Community Design



**July 12, 2017 (Mesa, AZ)** – Mesa Arts Center today announced the selection of 20 proposals for the City of Mesa's first prototyping festival – Main Street Prototyping Festival, slated for Nov. 17 and 18, 2017. Artists, architects, designers, students, makers, urban planners and others have been selected to create temporary projects that activate public space and engage the community toward enhancing connectivity and vibrancy in downtown Mesa. Planned prototypes include concepts for gathering places, virtual reality experiences, structures that offer space for interaction, performances, places to play and share in art making, and ways for passersby to offer feedback about their community. Each project will be allocated \$1,000-\$3,000 for design, fabrication and project management.

The free community festival is funded by a prestigious Our Town grant for \$75,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts. Through Our Town, the National Endowment for the Arts provides grants for arts-based community development projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and help transform them into lively, beautiful, and sustainable places with the arts at their core. Prototyping festivals are a relatively recent tool being employed by forward-thinking cities, and have been held in only a handful of municipalities in the last couple of years, including San Francisco and Denver.

In addition to the prototypes, artists Erin V. Sotak (Scottsdale) and Sophia McGovern (Tempe) were selected to lead residencies with the Grant Woods Boys and Girls Club of Mesa and CARE Partnership near downtown to create community-generated projects that address neighborhood aspirations, needs and opportunities. The residencies are the first steps in a larger initiative that will seek to strengthen the connections between downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods, and to help these residents develop relationships with organizations and resources available to them in downtown.

At the culminating festival, where the prototypes will be installed in the heart of downtown Mesa between Country Club Drive and Sirrine Street, residents will be invited to provide feedback and

vote for their favorite prototypes, and those they feel will provide the most benefits to downtown and its visitors.

The City of Mesa, Mesa Arts Center (MAC), Neighborhood Economic Development Corp. (NEDCO), Local Initiatives Support Corporation Phoenix (LISC) and Downtown Mesa Association (DMA) are collaborating to engage creative minds and the community in testing ideas that respond to dreams, needs and desires of citizens and visitors. “The beauty of this project is that it enables experimentation with a variety of potential enhancements that can impact both community and economic development,” said Cindy Ornstein, Director of Mesa’s Department of Arts and Culture and Executive Director of Mesa Arts Center. “This way, residents and visitors get to explore and respond to ideas in the flesh, and future investments or longer-term testing can be based on knowledge of what worked and the needed adjustments that may make it work better.”

Jeff McVay, Downtown Transformation Manager, said of the project, “The prototype festival is part of our Downtown Lab (D-Lab) that tests and develops solutions uniquely suited to our very special urban center. Many creative initiatives and events, and several other prototype projects have been a part of this process and we look forward to seeing how the community would like to activate downtown Mesa.”

### **Selected prototypes and project descriptions:**

#### **AZ Dragoneers**

Prototypers: Nathaniel Jack Greene, Susan Bendix, PhD, Alex Kohli, Erin Magorian, RuthAnne Greer, Renee Aguilar, Deven Williams

AZDragoneers will install a white, blank dragon puppet surface in the Mesa Art Center courtyard and provide the tools, materials and education for the public to contribute to their own unique example of a transformational representation. Performance of the puppet will occur at regularly scheduled intervals, and the public will be invited to participate as performers as well. The final performance will be considered the completed representation of the prototyping, design and construction developments made throughout the event by the local community and are intended to represent the desires and ideals of the shared community with respect to transformation.

#### **Binary Adder**

Prototypers: Milton Williams, Morgan Williams

The Binary Adder is a large mechanical adder powered by billiard balls with two inputs. Participants will use a hand crank to change the input number, then pull an extremely long execute addition lever (like a slot machine) that would load the billiard balls into the binary registers – expressing the sum in base 2. The balls will mechanically recognize registers that are already full and be launched into a difference direction, hitting a noisemaker and visually displaying the concept of “carrying” to the next column.

## **Car Tune Playground**

Prototypers: Suzanne Woodford, Dobson Montessori School

This interactive drumming center will feature repurposed tires converted to drums by wrapping them with layers of heavy duty shipping tape, combined with a variety of car parts, such as fenders and steering wheels, that will become rhythm instruments to contrast with the bass percussion of the tire drums. Community members will be invited to play, and familiar “car tunes” such as “Little Deuce Coupe,” “Mustang Sally” and “Low Rider” will be played while docents instruct the participants in easy to learn beats that can be played to the music.

## **From a Different Lens**

Prototypers: Michael Baker International, Nicholas Chen, Stephanie Cheng, Susan Harden, Matt Klyszeiko, Madison Roberts, Jenna Tourje, Scott Waltenburg

From a Different Lens is the use of virtual reality to display different design scenarios for the north/south alley between Main Street and the service alley directly south of Main Street. The idea has two main components; to show potential improvements that can be made to the alley to activate this space, and to use it to create connections to – and unexpected experiences within – downtown Mesa.

## **Idea Portals**

Prototypers: Conscious Creative & Co.

Brightly-colored beacons will be painted by 300+ kids at the Boys & Girls Club and will draw crowds with bold, thought-provoking questions like “What’s your favorite prototype at this event?” and “What kinds of programs would you like to see at Mesa Arts Center?” Like giant survey questions, ideaPortals will feature arcade-style multiple-choice buttons and other interactions based on the types of feedback gathered. During the festival, 6-12 portals will be placed in strategic areas that will challenge event-goers to “find all 12 portals” and continue the conversation online.

## **Interactive Canvas Project**

Prototypers: André van Belkom

From a digital kiosk by Mesa Arts Center on Main Street, a visitor will be able to take a portrait with friends and family or paint a digital picture, which is then transmitted to a projector casting the image onto the large canvas canopy hanging overhead. During the day, the canvas structure will provide shelter from the sun, and at night comes to life with color and imagery. The project will give a playful character to the site; encouraging students, resident artists, visitors and the public to share their expressions through interaction, activating downtown Mesa. The additional lighting from the illuminated canvas creates an inviting environment and allows the people to exhibit their own creation, mural, poem, or even a selfie.

## **Living Topography: Creating Vertical Shade in Downtown Mesa**

Prototypers: Colwell Shelor/180 Degrees Landscape Architecture

Shade is an essential element in creating walkable and more livable communities, in making cities comfortable places to walk, bike, live, work and play. This prototype is an artistic, interactive vertical shade panel installation that will not only provides protection from the harsh horizontal rays during the morning and late afternoons, but also serves to showcase the people of Mesa as vital collaborators in “shaping” the identity of the City. The vertical shade panels are reminiscent of the pin impression toys we all loved as children – a constantly changing, life-sized sculpture where people can imprint their entire body in action – an expression of the vibrancy, art and diversity of its people.

### **Los Abuelos**

Prototypers: Cultural Coalition, Inc., i.d.e.a. Museum

Cultural Coalition will partner with the i.d.e.a. Museum, El Rancho del Arte and Guerrero Elementary School to engage the youth of Mesa and produce a Parade or Paseo featuring larger-than-life puppets, musicians, masked performers and participants. “Los Abuelos” is meant to bring Mesa’s diverse community together to create wearable masks that represent our unique ancestries. The project includes storytelling, mask-making, and a performance platform to include Desert Sounds Mariachi, Ballet Folklóricos Quetzalli, Ballet Alegria, and Ollin Yoliztli Dance Academy. Everyone will be welcomed to participate.

### **Mesa Contractor’s Monument Bridge**

Prototypers: Tim Boyle, Jim Harman, Steven Jarman

The Mesa Contractor’s Monument Bridge is a landmarking public sculpture that celebrates the most common building materials: 2x4s and TJI roof beams. Construction is the largest enterprise of Mesa. Contractors come from all countries and all walks of life, making construction sites the most diverse and multilingual. This bridge will celebrate the contribution of contractors from all countries to Mesa.

### **Mesa Heart Hopes and Dreams**

Prototypers: Dr. YoungJu Lee, Eric Hultquist, Jaime Glasser

A welded, heart-shaped, skeletal steel frame, will be covered with steel mesh (safety-coated with plastic). Individuals will be encouraged to envision their personal hopes and dreams as well as the future of the community, and to write these visions with a variety of colored sharpies on strips of repurposed fabric remnants. As the heart is filled in with the addition of each fabric element it becomes a tangible reminder of our collective hopes and dreams for ourselves as the heart is solidified and brought to life.

### **Mesa Speaks Stage**

Prototypers: Lenika Rivas, Rachel Collay, Angelica Williams, Alyson Hulet, Anna Mohr Almeida, Katie Clontz, Alan Rivas, Bailey Smith

The Mesa Speaks Stage is a raised platform stage framed in reused, welded metal with recycled mosaic around the edges. Mosaics, made from reclaimed glass and tiles, will spell out what makes Mesa such a vibrant community, with words like “imagine,” “innovate,” and “listen.” These words invite citizens to take the stage and express themselves. The raised platform stage will have a chalkboard backdrop with space for ideas, art and community contributions. The open platform stage invites anyone to express themselves as they walk through downtown. The intention of the open space is to build a sense of community in Downtown Mesa, and enhance the character of the surrounding communities by demonstrating innovative ways people can interact.

### **Neighborhood Free Library**

Prototypers: Jose A. Benavides, Mark Lymer

Free libraries often act as casual meeting places as people walk their dogs and stop to see what the latest books are in the box. The Library installation will be sculpturesque in form and tell its own story. The artist team will not 'censor' the theme but rather help it become visual.

### **Noodle**

Prototypers: Madison Strakele, Carlos Terminel, Clayton Maxey, Nick Althouse, Ryan Fickenscher

Noodle is intended to liven up one of the underserved alleyways of downtown Mesa. The concept is comprised of a 50-foot undulating tunnel created with a series of colorful varying archways. Festival-goers can walk through the tunnel to gain passage from Main Street to Pepper Place, encouraging them to explore the entirety of the downtown area.

### **Tapas: Breath and the Beat**

Prototypers: Chris Dastan

"Tapa," is the primary percussive surface of a cajon. A cajon is a box-shaped percussion instrument with 6 sides. One side has a sound hole cut into the back and the front is the “tapa.” Utilizing this percussive instrument as a physical “voice,” the installation visitors will be invited to play this instrument by first tapping the rhythms of their breath, then their heartbeat, followed by any other emergent performance. A series of digital/physical interactions will connect two remote cajones and human participants to create a hybrid rhythmic portal.

### **The Mega Mesa**

Prototypers: Jaime Glasser, Nikki Davis

The MEGA M.E.S.A. (Mesa Enormous Spiral Art) installation consists of two different sized functioning spiral art devices that create linear graphics on the sidewalk and on paper. Based on Spirograph, different sizes of gears can be interchanged to create different types and sizes of design. Drawing a design is interactive, as multiple people standing at various points around

the framework are required to hand off control of the gear to complete the drawing. The design of the MEGA M.E.S.A. encourages teamwork and promotes interaction between those from different backgrounds and generations.

### **Think Stem Machine**

Prototypers: Thomas Saxon, Rebecca DeLong, Scott Blevins, Westwood Robotics

Encouraging the community to be innovative and explore new ideas, this transparent, plexiglass box features information panels for participants to learn more about the Think STEM Machine and its various processes. Local students will design the inner workings of the machine with a goal of audience engagement. Participants will be challenged to complete mechanical sequences such as a series of pulleys and tubing to place a ball on a spiraling track or the process of placing cubes on one side of a lever to counteract a weight on the other side. Each completed sequence will animate the machine motivating the user to learn and get creative to continue the task.

### **Tinker Scape**

Prototypers: Milagros Zingoni, Master in Interior Architecture students

This project will explore the relationship between design and build, academia and community, theory and practice, and learning by making and playing. The graduate studio in Interior Architecture will collaborate with youth from the City of Mesa through a series of workshops to explore culture through the eyes of children as the first phase of the design process. Design *with* rather than designing *for*, not only has a greater impact in the sense of belonging of the installation, but it also exposes the youth to a college and community outreach experience. Tinker Scape offers the opportunity for social practice and collective action between children from the City of Mesa and MIA students in the ideation process of the installation.

### **Wayward Beasties Art Car**

Prototypers: Sam Ogden, Macy McKenny

Wayward Beasties is an experiential vehicle made up of a giant turtle with a mouse riding on its head. Simon the Turtle is a MOOP-hungry monster (Matter-Out-Of-Place aka trash, litter, refuse, garbage, etc.). He will gobble up bottles, cans, feathers, cigarette butts, and any other stray bits participants feed him. Not only will he transport wayward wanderers, Simon provides a friendly way to Leave-No-Trace! Wayward Beasties and the rest of the Turtle Team will spend the duration of the event cleaning up trash and encouraging participants to do the same. The project hopes to encourage environmentalism and the principle of leave-no-trace in Mesa, the greater Phoenix area, and beyond.

### **Weaving Community**

Prototypers: Marianne Levin, Abby Queal, Erin Magorian, Eric Hultquist, Randy Leon

Artists and community members will create cylindrical weaving pieces. A short, finished piece may suggest different animals or objects and can be embellished as such. Other ideas may emerge as the community participates. A significant component of the prototype is the action of “giving and receiving.” Each weaver receives the strand from the person to the right, and after looping the strand, passes it to the weaver at left. The weaving produces a circular web or “spool knitting” with the placement of weavers subtly underscoring the connection and wholeness of the community.

### **Woven Light Bridge**

Prototypers: David Avatara, Brain Korsedal

The Woven Light Bridge is a new style of fabric consisting of diamond patches of spandex stretch fabric. The fabric is translucent and will light up from the LEDs creating a pleasing, slowly fading, interwoven rainbow of light. The LEDs are not covered with fabric and face straight out from the structure lighting up the whole area and providing a pleasant place to congregate at night.

Mesa Arts Center is located at One East Main Street in downtown.

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### **About Mesa Arts Center**

The Mesa Arts Center mission is to inspire people through engaging arts experiences that are diverse, accessible, and relevant. Owned and operated by the City of Mesa, Arizona’s largest arts center is recognized as an international award-winning venue. The unique and architecturally stunning facility is home to four theaters, five art galleries, and 14 art studios and an artist cooperative gallery. For more information, visit [mesaartscenter.com](http://mesaartscenter.com).

**Mockups, renderings and images of most proposed prototypes are available immediately upon request.** Contact Casey Blake at [casey.blake@mesaartscenter.com](mailto:casey.blake@mesaartscenter.com).

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### **Main Street Prototyping Festival website:**

<https://www.mesaartscenter.com/mesaprototyping>