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Mesa Arts Center kicks off 19-20 season with community celebration

FLOURISH: The Art of Life on Earth

Five new exhibitions opening in Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum

Friday, September 13

Mesa, AZ (August 9, 2019) – Mesa Arts Center will mark the start of its 2019-20 season with a free, family-friendly festival titled FLOURISH: The Art of Life on Earth, Friday, September 13, 2019, 6-10 p.m. The event is inspired by five, flora and fauna-themed exhibitions opening in Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum the same evening.

Features of the festival include: performances by Phoenix-based musical acts Citrus Clouds, Hot House Orchids, Paper Foxes and Bogan Via; a second stage featuring performers and storytellers Tony and Violet Duncan; atmospheric performances by Katharine Simpson; additional performances in Mesa Arts Center's water feature by CAZO Dance Company; five contemporary art exhibitions in the Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum; artist demonstrations in glass, jewelry, ceramics, printmaking and blacksmithing/welding studios; shopping in The Store, an artist's cooperative gallery, featuring items by Arizona artists; hands-on activities provided by i.d.e.a. Museum, Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix Zoo and Liberty Wildlife; food vendors such as Udder Delights, Paletas Betty, Freak Brothers Pizza, Soundbite food truck and more.

Details of each upcoming exhibition are listed below.

Flora & Fauna

Botanicals and Animals in Contemporary Art

Sept 13, 2019 – Jan 26, 2020

Flora and fauna refers to the Western art history classification for plant and animal life, with the exclusion of the human species. From bacteria to large land and sea mammals, this exhibition celebrates nature and its enduring influence in art. While many contemporary artists are instinctively drawn to various environments and the creatures that inhabit them, others are inspired by the climate change discourse and global movement to raise awareness about the human impact on the planet.

Photo Ark

Joel Sartore

Sept 13 – Nov 24, 2019

The *National Geographic Photo Ark* is an ambitious project committed to documenting every species living in the world's zoos and wildlife sanctuaries—inspiring people not just to care, but also to help protect these animals for future generations. In addition to creating an archival record for generations to come, the *Photo Ark* is a hopeful platform for conservation and shines

a light on individuals and organizations working to preserve species around the world. Featuring the work of National Geographic photographer and *Photo Ark* founder Joel Sartore, the exhibition will include twelve images from the *Photo Ark* as well as a few examples of Sartore's other work for *National Geographic* magazine, which feature the animals in the wild. The *Photo Ark* exhibition is organized and traveled by the National Geographic Society.

The Memory of Birds

Carol Eckert

Sept 13, 2019 – Jan 5, 2020

Arizona artist Carol Eckert mines the iconography of mythology and art history, expanding and evolving a body of work that focuses on the resonant connections between humankind and the natural world. Ancient fables and allegories find their way into her art, along with references to cabinets of curiosity and 17th century still life paintings. Employing the simple textile process of coiling, Eckert constructs works layered with the complexities of mankind's response to nature.

*Carol Eckert is a 2018 North Gallery proposal winner.

Medieval Piñata

Roberto Benavidez

Sept 13, 2019 – Jan 12, 2020

California sculptor Roberto Benavidez is known for his elaborate, fine art piñatas that play on themes of race, sexuality, art, sin, humor and beauty. Inspired by art history, Benavidez's latest work brings to life the fanciful creatures found in Hieronymus Bosch's iconic painting *Garden of Earthly Delights* and the whimsical marginalia found in various illuminated medieval manuscripts. The exhibition features a dozen of Benavidez's enchanted sculptures, made from papier-mâché, crepe paper and wire.

Biophilia

Mary Meyer

Sept 13, 2019 – Jan 26, 2020

Mary Meyer is an Arizona artist who specializes in mixed media sculpture and installations. Strongly influenced by a background in traditional stone carving, she uses meditative processes and materials to illustrate our physical kinship with the flora that surrounds us. In *Biophilia*, the artist emphasizes the innate human need to find stillness in our daily lives and reconnect with the quiet energy that is our true nature. The installation carries hundreds of hand-built clay seed and leaf abstractions that beckon the viewer to pause, be present and recognize themselves within these humble constructs of nature. *Mary Meyer is a 2018 proposal winner.

Mesa Arts Center is located at One East Main Street in downtown Mesa. There is no charge to attend the Season Kickoff Festival or the Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum's opening, and parking is free. More information can be found at MesaArtsCenter.com or by calling 480-644-6500.

The season kickoff event is generously sponsored by SRP, APS and Crescent Crown Distributing.

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About Mesa Arts Center

Mesa Arts Center, owned and operated by the City of Mesa, is a unique, architecturally stunning facility located in the heart of downtown Mesa. Arizona's largest arts center is home to four theaters, five art galleries, and 14 art studios. Guests, patrons, and students come to Mesa Arts Center to enjoy the finest live entertainment and performances, world-class visual art exhibitions, and outstanding arts education classes. The Mesa Arts Center mission is to inspire people through engaging arts experiences that are diverse, accessible, and relevant. For more information, visit [mesaartscenter.com](https://www.mesaartscenter.com).