



Media Contact:

Kristin McLeod

480-644-6622

kristin.mcleod@mesaartscenter.com

Editor's Note: Images available [here](#).

**Ray Villafane's *Strange Encounters* Exhibition takes over Downtown Mesa
October 17 – November 8, 2020**



October 5, 2020 (Mesa, AZ) – Mesa Arts Center is thrilled to announce internationally acclaimed sculptor, pumpkin carver and creative installation designer Ray Villafane will install his *Strange Encounters* exhibition in downtown Mesa from October 17 – November 8. Just in time for Halloween, this extraordinary exhibition will feature Halloween carvings, humorous vignettes and creepy characters in 15 installations outdoors and in store windows throughout downtown Mesa, all visible out of doors for safe, distanced family fun.

The *Strange Encounters* Map, which will be available online and at locations throughout downtown Mesa, will include a fun scavenger hunt with clues for identifying items in the displays. Find them all and enter to win prizes! PLUS an online instructional video will be created by Ray Villafane and provided FREE to the public, sharing Carving Tips for elevating your Jack-o-Lantern to a work of art AND how to use natural & recycled materials to create fun Halloween yard installations.

The Ray Villafane *Strange Encounters* exhibition is presented and generously supported by Downtown Mesa Association in partnership with the Mesa Department of Arts and Culture, and also sponsored by Mesa Councilmember Jennifer Duff, Visit Mesa, The Grid, Habitat Metro, Okland Construction, CORE Construction, Debby and Mike Elliott, Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, Rose Law Group, Wist, and Pew and Lake. Special thanks to Alice Cooper's Teen Rock Center.

Mesa Arts Center is located at One East Main Street in downtown. More information can be found at MesaArtsCenter.com.

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About Ray Villafane

In 2003, Ray Villafane began to pursue a career as a commercial sculptor. Within a couple of years, he had transitioned from a school teacher to a full-time commercial sculptor with clients such as Warner Bros. / DC Comics, Marvel and McFarlane Toys. As Ray started to dive deeper into sculpting, his pumpkin carvings began to come alive with character. Images of them and his process went viral,

catching the attention of many people, including some at the Food Network. In 2008 Ray contributed to the launching of a series of successful pumpkin carving shows with the network. Over a decade later, the success of this genre of shows has continued to thrive.

As the pumpkin carving gained momentum, Ray began to focus his attention on events. He found himself exploring a wide range of unconventional mediums such as sand, sticks, rocks and recycled materials. These various ingredients would eventually come together in the creation of a magical world of whimsical characters and clever storytelling. Each fall Ray has gathered a small team of artists to help build an immersive, one-of-a-kind experience with its roots in pumpkin carving, scarecrows and more. Ray's works have been on display throughout the world. He has carved at the White House, Heidi Klum's annual Halloween party, Ocean Park Hong Kong and many more. He holds two Guinness Book World Records and has also been recognized by Ripley's Believe It or Not.

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 multidisciplinary arts center is home to four theaters, five art galleries in the MCA Museum, and 14 art studios. Guests, patrons, and students come to Mesa Arts Center to enjoy the finest live entertainment, performances and festivals, world-class visual art exhibitions, and outstanding arts education classes. Mesa Arts Center's mission is to inspire people through engaging arts experiences that are diverse, accessible, and relevant. For more information, visit mesaartscenter.com.