

MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S NEW ART GALLERY HAS A SERIOUSLY IMPRESSIVE COLLECTION

BY LYNN TRIMBLE

THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2016 | 3 HOURS AGO



Entrance to the new Mesa Community College Art Gallery.

Lynn Trimble

Visitors who take a left after walking into a new gallery space in Mesa will encounter iconic images created by William Wegman, an artist renowned for using his own Weimaraners in his compositions. They're displayed across from *Red Vapor for Ripe Strawberries*, a 2013 oil-on-panel piece by Phoenix artist Rachel Bess.

Nearby, works by local artists Frank Ybarra and Joe Ray share a wall with a piece by Alexander Calder, an artist famed for making kinetic sculptures using mostly red and black geometric shapes. It's enough to merit a serious double-take – especially considering that the gallery is located on the campus of [Mesa Community College](#).

The 4,600-square-foot MCC Art Gallery, which opened on February 24, is located on MCC's Southern and Dobson campus. Funded through a 2004 Maricopa County Community College District bond initiative, the gallery was designed by DWL Architects + Planners, Inc. as an exhibition space and learning lab for students pursuing art-related careers.





Portion of the interior of the new Mesa Community College Art Gallery.

Lynn Trimble

The gallery's inaugural exhibition, "50 Years of Collecting: Selections from the Mesa Community College Art Collection" features artwork purchased or donated to the college since 1965, according to Jennifer Campbell, art gallery coordinator for the new venue.

Campbell says the permanent collection was started by Gene Corno, now retired and 91 years old, who was part of MCC's original art faculty. It includes close to 500 artworks – mostly drawings, paintings, photographs, and prints. These works, she says, have been purchased over the years through a student activity fund.

The college also owns works of student art purchased through a student art show talent scholarship awards program, Campbell says, and pieces donated by various entities, including Phoenix Institute of Contemporary Art.



Cookie Drawing, a 1975-1976 piece by Mary Shindell, is part of the MCC Art Gallery collection.

Mesa Community College Art Gallery

The exhibition includes *Cookie Drawing*, a 1975-1976 graphite, Prisma ink, and photo transfer on d'arches paper work by Mary Shindell, an artist born and raised in Mesa who now works out of a shared studio space in the Phoenix warehouse district.

Shindell recalls attending MCC during "the late '60s or early '70s," praising the quality of instruction she received there before going on to earn a BFA in painting at Northern Arizona University and an MFA in drawing at Arizona State University. She'd considered becoming a teacher, but pursued art in part because of the encouragement she received from several MCC faculty members.

Recently, Shindell completed three new works of public art, including a temporary installation at the Chandler Tech Shop and two

permanent installations for Valley Metro. Her *The Memory of a Tree is Strong*, comprising deep red water-cut steel art panels inspired by childhood memories of Mesa pecan groves, is part of a new pop-up park located along the Central Mesa light rail line.

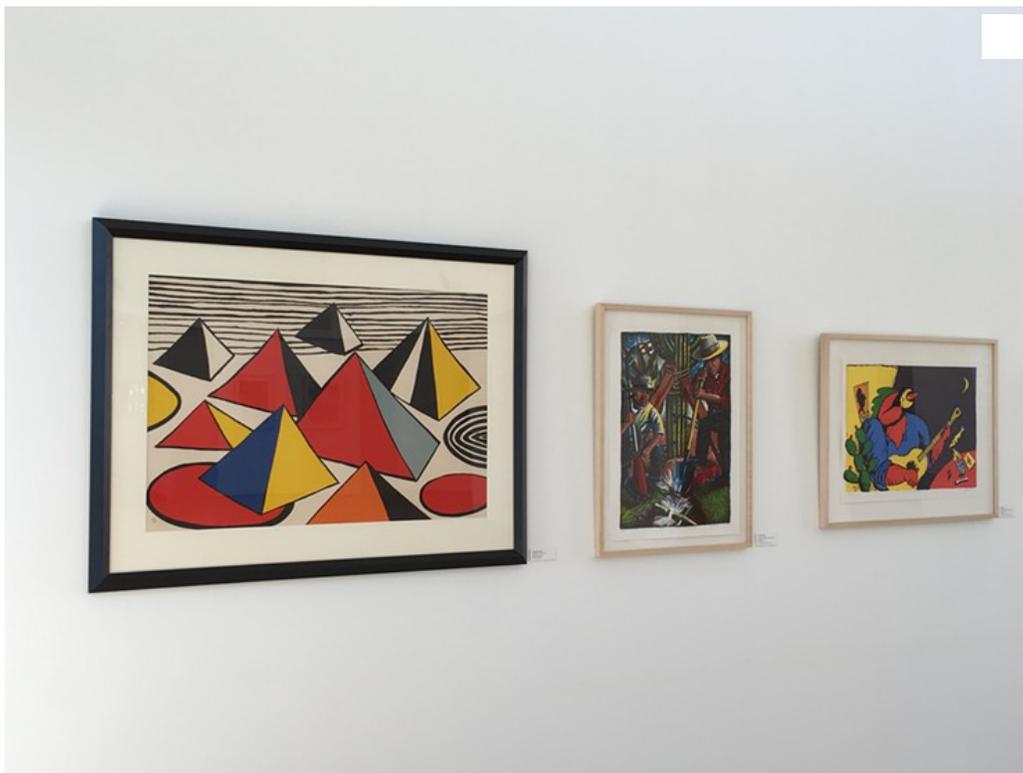


Newly-opened Mesa Community College Art Gallery.

Lynn Trimble

She's yet to see her work on view at the gallery, but plans to pay a visit soon. "The gallery gives a certain level of professionalism to the actual practice of art," Shindell says. "Students can see what's going on with other artists, and it gives experience to students who want to work in galleries or museums."

"I think they bought my piece in 1976," she says. "I was in graduate school, and the MCC art history teacher was buying art for the collection." Shindell learned several years ago that her piece had been reframed, saying it's a sign that they take art preservation and conservation seriously.



Works (L to R) by Alexander Calder, Frank Ybarra, and Joe Ray exhibited at MCC Art Gallery.

Lynn Trimble

Several artists featured in "50 Years of Collecting" – including Rachel Bess, Enrique Chagoya, Mark Klett, and William Wegman – are

represented by [Lisa Sette Gallery](#) in Phoenix. But Arizona gallery-goers will recognize the names of several additional local artists in this show, including Ed Mell, Frank Ybarra, Joe Ray, Corinne Geertsen and others. The exhibition remains on view through March 25.



2013 work by Phoenix artist Rachel Bess exhibited at Mesa Community College Art Gallery.

Lynn Trimble

Future exhibitions will include art, ceramics, photography, and electronic media, Campbell says. Up next is the “Student Art Show,” which runs April 18 to May 5.

Shindell recalls taking art classes in a row of temporary art buildings she likens to huts, but the college has clearly come a long way since it opened in 1966. “I think the gallery is an amazing addition to the campus,” Shindell says.

Contact: [Lynn Trimble](#) **Follow:** [Phoenix New Times Arts & Culture](#) [Phoenix New Times Arts & Culture](#)

©2016 Phoenix New Times, LLC. All rights reserved.