

ANIMAL CRACKERS



Tempe Center for the Arts



Barbara Burton, Anne Coe, Jasen Evoy, Jeff Falk, Dick George, *Christopher Jagmin, Luis Jimenez, Carolyn Lavender, Christy Puetz, Joe Ray, Jane Rosen and Lauren Strohacker*

This exhibition features artwork all about animals from ceramic sculptures to photography. Featured artists are primarily local residents such as Jasen Evoy, of Gilbert, who is a ceramics artist and art teacher at Marcos de Niza High School in Tempe, and Anne Coe, of Apache Junction, who is a well-known environmentalist and painter.

Interactive art activities also will be incorporated into the exhibition display. A number of free Saturday walk-in art workshops for families featuring exhibiting artists are scheduled and the TCA offers free online curriculum resources to elementary and secondary teachers with each exhibition.

The Gallery at TCA also is partnering with the Phoenix Zoo to create displays featuring some of the public's favorite zoo animals as well as paintings made by animals such as "Ruby the Elephant."

Scroll down for information on each artist.

June 7 - Sept. 7

Barbara Burton

Barbara Burton grew up in Pennsylvania and Connecticut and spent the majority of her youth running around fields and forests, picking wild blackberries, chasing pheasants and building tree forts. She liked anything that involved the outdoors. Burton earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering from Arizona State University, but for her, creating art is a passion and has been a lifelong pursuit. Burton makes her home in an old 1945 brick house in Mesa and happily splits her time between making art and spending time with her dogs and working in the corporate world.



“One time, to cheer me up, someone bought me a pet rabbit. My only exposure to rabbits as a child was chasing them around fields in Pennsylvania. I was pretty sure it was a bad move for me to have one, but I graciously accepted the gift, explained the situation to my dogs and set to learning about my rabbit.

“My rabbit hated me. People ‘in the know’ about rabbits have explained to me that he probably just wasn’t socialized correctly. Still, I tried for over a year to bond with ‘Bunny.’ I spent hours trying to feed him goodies from my hand, chat with him and brush him...even more hours trying to get him to go back in the cage. He chewed through...well, pretty much everything. I still have lamps that need new wiring.

“That was more than 20 years ago. Bunny eventually went to live with a friend who ‘understood rabbits.’ He must have made a subtle impression on me. I didn’t remember that episode until about five years ago when someone asked me why rabbits figured so prominently in my work.... There’s no connection between the characters in my pieces and real live rabbits. In fact, sometimes I’m not sure I view them as rabbits.

“My pieces are about inner lives lived on the outside. The characters are vehicles for overheard conversations, events in the lives of family members, friends, me, items from the news, absurdities in the workplace and just everyday life. While I take almost all of it very seriously, I process it and view it with humor...most of the time.”

Anne Coe



Anne Coe is a fourth generation Arizonan and was raised on a ranch. She studied in both Europe and Latin America and earned Bachelor of Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees from Arizona State University. Her works have been included in institutions such as the Whitney Museum of Western Art in Cody, Wy., and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. She also teaches painting and drawing at Central Arizona College.

Coe has combined her artistic endeavors with involvement with environmental activism. Much of her work is rooted in her greatest inspiration: the land that surrounds her home and studio outside of Apache Junction. She has been a major force in regional and national preservation groups. She has focused her efforts on everything from the re-introduction of the Mexican wolf to the protection of thousands of acres of state land. Coe currently serves on the Boards of The Superstition Area Land Trust, The Trust for Public Lands and the State land Conservation Advisory Board. Coe is represented by Larsen Gallery in Scottsdale.

“These works belong to a series I have been painting on memories and the way our mind accesses and manipulates them. I combine fragments from my roof brain chatter with visual memories of my life. All of this forms into a stream of consciousness visual narrative. ‘Henny Penny’ is basically a stream of consciousness narrative both ancient and contemporary. It is about the pleasures and comforts of life, shadowed by the basic fear of the end of all things. ‘Liar, Liar Pants on Fire,’ is a repetitive chant of childhood. An obsessive mantra that stands alone as an image. The title of another piece, perhaps the theme that exists in all these paintings, ‘Random Access Memory (RAM)’ is an example of my love of witty and punning titles. Most importantly, these works reflect my love and affection of all creatures.”

Jason Evoy



Jason Evoy is an Arizona native. From a very young age, he was very interested in art, spending much of his time drawing cartoons and the world around him. He attended Corona del Sol High School, where his art teacher, Carolyn Lavender (also in the exhibition), inspired him to challenge himself and develop his skills. He received an Associate of Arts degree in general studies from Mesa Community College and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in art education with an emphasis in painting and a Master's degree in education from Arizona State University. Ceramics eventually became his medium of choice, but painting still helps him in the completion of his sculptural works. Evoy has taught ceramics and art history at Marcos de Niza High School for more than 15 years and is currently the chair of the

Fine Arts Department. He has received numerous awards and grants as an artist and teacher, such as the Picturing America grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Tempe Diablo's award for excellence in teaching.

“I have always been very passionate about art. I love museums and galleries, I even love reading about the masters and the events that shaped artistic genres. Most artists seem to really establish themselves into a pattern. Van Gogh had his landscapes and self-portraits, Picasso had his women and Warhol his popular cultural icons. I certainly don't place myself on that level, but it is a part of development as an artist to find your 'gig.' I used to paint quite a bit, and my paintings were always very serious; there was no humor, no puns, no play on words. For some reason, when I work in clay, I don't feel the same need to be serious. As a result, my personal choice of subject matter has migrated to creating outrageous sculptures of animals in very unlikely scenarios. I think that the old painting of dogs playing cards may have been the impetus for my current body of work; everyone knows that it is camp, and silly, but we still smile and laugh when we see it. In these works, I think that I am trying not to take myself too seriously and trying to connect with viewers through humor and surprise.”

Jeff Falk



Long-time Valley resident and artist Jeff Falk has seen first-hand the growth of the city and the art scene. He has studied art at Glendale Community College, Arizona State University and Phoenix College and has shown his work in more than 200 exhibitions in the United States, Canada and Mexico. He has been active in the local art scene since 1984 and met his wife and fellow artist Annie Lopez through M.A.R.S., Movimiento Artistico Del Rio Salado, an artist-run cooperative in Phoenix.

Falk works in mixed media and finds inspiration for his work from his own experiences, especially those from childhood.

Other influences include the post modernists of the late 1950s and early 1960s. His art can be found in the collections such as the Tucson Museum of Art, Mesa Contemporary Arts, the Shemer Art Center and Museum, the McDonald's Corporation and the Phoenix Airport Museum at Sky Harbor.

“My work in this show reflects the influence that animals have had on my life. Two of the images are from my childhood. One, titled LAIKA, is a remembrance of the Russian space dog who blasted off inside the satellite Sputnik II on Nov. 3, 1957. I have a memory of standing in my front yard, on a cold November night in Kansas, with my father. We looked up into the dark sky and saw millions of twinkling stars. Dad told me there was a dog flying around up there somewhere. I'm not sure if we actually saw the satellite. Maybe. The second work is called WINKY. In magazines in the late 1950s there was an ad for the Famous Artists Correspondence School or some such name. The ad featured an image of an elf or clown or animal. The instructions said to try and draw, freehand, the image that was in the ad and then mail your drawing into the school. If they deemed your talent suitable based upon your drawing then you could become a student of their school and eventually you'd be a famous artist, too. I was too young to try the test. But WINKY was one of their test images.”

Dick George

Dick George is a local Renaissance man of sorts. Today he is an active art photographer and a volunteer at Tempe History Museum, but over his lifetime he also worked in a variety of roles including farm laborer, short order cook, jazz drummer, writer, teacher and historian. He earned graduate degrees in both English literature and photography.

For more than 24 years, George worked at the Phoenix Zoo as a writer, photographer and public relations manager. Some of the black and white animal portraits featured in the exhibition depict his long-time animal friends at the Phoenix Zoo.



“As a wildlife photographer, I tried to show viewers the grace and diversity I saw in animals.”

Luis Jimenez

Luis Jiménez was born to Mexican immigrant parents. His father was a neon sign designer in El Paso, Texas, with whom Jimenez worked as a youth. His experiences with neon and fascination with the United States' car culture became major influences in his life. In 1964 he received a Bachelor of Science degree in art from University of Texas, Arlington. He continued his studies at Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico in Mexico City. In 1972, he moved to Mexico to concentrate on work in public art, drawing and prints.

In the 1960s, Jimenez was one of the first artists to make fiberglass an acceptable art medium. In his work, he tends to show the tension and attraction between and the irony of the two forces of Mexico and the U.S. His imagery is informed by both Mexican and American traditions, North American popular culture, Chicano cultural icons and the Southwest.



Christopher Jagmin up in South Bend, Ind., very close to the Potawatomi Park Zoo. The buffalo, elephant, tigers and, of course, the monkeys were always his favorites. They all inspired him to bring animals into his artwork. When the weather was nice, he would take his sketchbook and draw these beautiful beasts instead of going home. He admitted that he often skipped a class or two to hang out with these guys. He thanks his high school art teacher, Mr. Sealy, who would look at his sketches and write a note to excuse his absence from English Class.

Jagmin received a Bachelor of Science degree in fine arts from Indiana University. In his fine art, he focuses a lot of attention on creating encaustic paintings which are a combination of pigments and melted beeswax applied to wood panels. His works have been featured in exhibitions in spaces such as eye lounge gallery in Phoenix, INFLUX installation for the city of Glendale and Modified Gallery in Phoenix. He also runs a successful commercial art business under his own name which creates original decorative wares such as plates and glassware for the home.

“I am fascinated by the way that we all communicate. For as long as people talked, told stories and gossiped, there has been misunderstanding and misinformation. My work explores how we present our ‘true selves’ to others, and how we want to be perceived. Are we interesting enough to stand out from the crowd? If so, and we have branded ourselves well, then maybe we can, too, be famous and perhaps more valuable to the world. If we are understated and quiet, do we not exist any longer?”

“I love to tell stories, and am influenced by Chinese scrolls, graffiti, Indian miniatures, comic books, along with fables and tall tales. Working with encaustics allows me to add and scrape away layers of wax and oil as I paint. These layers then merge together or form new images. Remnants and suggestions of the ‘discovered’ underlying imagery give an ‘historical’ richness to the work and start to tell a new story.”

Carolyn Lavender



Carolyn Lavender grew up in Kent, Wash., but her family moved to Arizona in 1977, and she has been a resident ever since. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in drawing and painting at Northern Arizona University and a Master of Fine Arts degree in drawing from Arizona State University. Lavender has taught art over throughout the Valley and at Corona del Sol High School in Tempe and at ASU. Most recently, her work was featured in a three-woman show at the Mesa Contemporary Arts Center with Mary Shindell and Monica Aissa Martinez and a two-woman show at Willo North Gallery in Phoenix with Christy Puetz.

Much of Lavender's work includes animal imagery such as bears, dogs, cats and wildlife. As a girl she rode horses and drew them often. Her current work features wildlife from the forest and was created through a collaging process with graphite, acrylics and gouache ink.

"It is my intention that animals get the same respect as people. In 'Portrait,' I rendered them accurately so that they are portraits of each individual animal. Each animal is making eye contact with the viewer the way people do in yearbook photos. When you stand in front of the piece there are 200 pairs of eyes looking at you. I am trying to advocate for their right to exist in natural spaces, but not with a blatant message.

"I am attracted to taxidermy, because animal forms are beautiful to me, but I also find them deeply disturbing.... I do a lot photo appropriation as sources for my works, but this piece is original photography. I carry a camera with me and shoot taxidermy when I happen upon it. So the painting carries with it the memory of the places where I photographed the animals. In my ongoing 'Woods Series,' the pieces are never completely naturalistic. The combination of imagery is really collaging, which is something I do a lot. So, there is an artificial element that I do not try to hide."

Learn more about Lavender and her work in an April 2013 interview posted by exhibiting artist Christopher Jagmin at www.cultureseen.com.

Christy Puetz



Puetz received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Fiber Arts from the University of North Dakota. As well as producing and exhibiting her artwork around the country, she is involved in the local arts and education community. She is a freelance teaching artist in schools and organizations and currently serves as Program Director and Artist-in-Residence for Beads of Courage, Inc., a non profit organization that creates arts-in-medicine programming for children coping with cancer and other serious illnesses.

“The inspired concepts behind my installation entitled ‘Mind Forest’ are based on creatures from around the world and their living environments. The majority of the animals are either lesser known or have unique ways of moving through space, camouflaging themselves or defending themselves when faced with danger. The work is very tactile, colorful and engaging. My current direction focuses on three dimensional, animal-based forms covered in materials like silk pods, leather, paint, felted wool and glass beads. The artificial forest is covered in Astroturf with many twisting tree branches, which help to pose the animals as if they are climbing or hiding in plain sight. The animals appear to be frozen and holding their breath, waiting for the viewer to pass by, only to exhale when alone again.”

www.xtyart.com

Joe Ray

Ray is a local painter, printmaker, writer and marketing specialist and has been an active member of the local Hispanic arts community since the early 1980s. He was born in Sonora, Mexico, and has lived in Arizona since the age of three. He grew up on the Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation near Parker, and resided there prior to moving to the Phoenix area to attend Arizona State University where he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in graphic design. Since that time, he has remained in the Valley where he is a principal and creative director with Estudio Ray, a strategic design and branding firm. Ray is long-time active artist member of Xico Inc., a Chicano/Native American arts organization in Chandler, and a participating member of the Tortuga Press & Studio, a small print studio in Mesa and ALAC (Advocates for Latin@ Arts & Culture).



Ray's ongoing work is about identity, spirituality and communication. He often uses recognizable imagery such as roosters, angels, mermaids, Mexican wrestlers and hearts mixed with spontaneous splashes of bright colors to tell stories about love, life and art.

When asked about the animals in his life, Ray described his relationship with his dogs.

"I have two dogs as pets. I sketched a recent conversation I had with my lab. It was a one way conversation..."

What kind of viewing do you think is necessary?

Why do you feel the need to be so selfish?

Give me your food.

Give me your food.

Ok. Please.

Give me your food.

Give me your food.

Please...

"My other dog is a standard poodle with an attitude. There is little difference between her entering the room and a gladiator entering the arena in ancient Rome. She has swagger."

Jane Rosen

Artist Jane Rosen was born in New York City and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from New York University. She continued her studies at the prestigious Art Students League in New York. Since the mid-1970s, Rosen has been featured in more than 25 solo exhibitions and nearly 35 group exhibitions across the country. Her works are included in collections at the Brooklyn Museum of Art and Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego. Rosen also has led an active teaching career at institutions in colleges including the University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University.

Rosen is well known for her nature drawings, especially birds, and is an active sculptor of wood, glass and stone. Her bird series started in 2003 and the subjects range in age, size, gestures and types. For Rosen, they represent nature's witness to the world around.
www.janerosen.com

Lauren Strohacker



Strohacker was born in 1983 in Ohio and says that even as a child, animals and the “wild” played an important part in her life – so much so that her parents painted an animal mural in her room. She received a Master of Fine Arts degree in drawing from Arizona State University. Strohacker has been a strong advocate for animals and the environment and the ideas have merged into her artwork. In earlier work, imagery included animals from across the world, but in recent years her focus has been on local wildlife such as Mexican Gray Wolves as seen in this exhibition. No(where), Now(her) is an ongoing project she has taken to Flagstaff, Tucson and Tempe. The installations are designed to incite awareness about the Mexican Gray Wolf, which remains an endangered species. The project also created a unique partnership between herself and organizations such as the Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project, Defenders of Wildlife, Mexican Wolves and the Western Watersheds Project.

The concept of urban and wildlife “cohabitation” became center point for the works, which the artist describes as “a form of advertising for animals.”

“The concept of cohabitation remains significant for me. I layer animal imagery with urban space, creating visual cohabitations. By emphasizing local species with a graphic design aesthetic, my installations serve as a form of advertising for animals, a creative re-introduction to their shape, their size and their disappearance from our everyday. I trust in the words of environmentalist and activist David Brower when he wrote, ‘Truth and beauty can still win battles. We need more art, more passion, more wit in defense of the Earth.’

“It is with the highest of hopes that my works are only a temporary encounter of animal image, igniting the wonder and activism needed to sculpt the social state back to one that tolerates and welcomes wildlife.” www.animalrevival.org