

# VALLEY ART (COLLEGE) THEATRE

505-509 SOUTH MILL AVENUE

The College Theatre was the first cinema built by Dwight "Red" Harkins and included attached commercial spaces to the north and south, as well as an upstairs apartment for his family. An inventor, technician and businessman, Red developed the concept for FM Multiplex radio while living in the apartment. With son Dan, Harkins eventually expanded his operations across the Phoenix area and the southwest. Harkins sold the property in 1960 and the name was changed. Specializing in art and foreign films, the Valley Art closed in the 1990's and was later repurchased by Dan Harkins.

Termed by Dan a "labor of love," the rehabilitation converted the interior "house" to a state-of-the-art, 240-seat cinema, while retaining the unique light fixtures and trim; the exterior was restored to its depression-era, panel-brick commercial appearance. The 0.7 acre property, including the remaining 1600 square-foot restaurant space to the north, was added to the Tempe Historic Property Register in 2000. The 6000 square-foot theatre reopened 20 November 2000, 60 years to the day from its original grand opening. It received a Tempe Beautification Award of Distinction in 2001.



**public role:** Provision of parking through agreement with City; tax deferrals in exchange for historic designation; City assistance with building code and preservation standards compliance

**developer:** Harkins Theatres

**architect:** rehab: D&L Architects

**builder:** rehab: Double AA Builders

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