

Stories of Tucson Communities Told Through Augmented Reality

For Immediate Release

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Tucson, AZ – Go on a quest to discover community stories at seven locations throughout Tucson. Whip out your phone and scan the QR codes to experience these stories through Augmented Reality (AR)!

A team of University of Arizona and community partners have created a digital museum by placing virtual exhibits in outdoor locations around Tucson. The exhibits, collectively entitled, *Discovering Community in the Borderlands*, introduce you to cultural specialists and tradition bearers, history, art, and community stories. The AR experiences include virtual photo galleries, 360 videos of dance and music, holograms, 3D virtual objects, poetry, and more.

Using your phone to scan QR codes, spend a few hours driving around Tucson to experience diverse stories of our shared home. Seek out the signs. You can only see these exhibits by scanning a QR code that triggers the AR experience. See historic photographs and hear stories of the Old Barrio on the westside of Tucson with Borderlands Theater. Enjoy a guzheng performance or join a Chinese yo-yo class at the Tucson Chinese Cultural Center. Look at historic photographs and join a slide step dance at the Dunbar Pavilion. Watch Tohono O’odham dancers and learn about the art of basketmaking at Arizona State Museum. Hear stories of the four directions from elders of the Pascua Yaqui tribe at Pascua Yaqui Tribe Administration Building. Experience the multilingual poetry of plants at Mission Gardens. Discover the life of Chinese residents in the 1900s, now paved over, near the Tucson Music Hall. And much, much more! What will you discover on this virtual quest?

A website (dcb.arizona.edu) consolidates all of the experiences and is available to anyone anywhere. It also includes a location map with additional information on the cultural centers participating, poetry, and writing activities.



Discovering Community in the Borderlands presents seven culture stories of the Tucson area!

Using Augmented Reality (AR) to tell the stories, these virtual experiences are offered at outdoor locations across Tucson, and at dcb.arizona.edu.

Discovering Community in the Borderlands partners and exhibit locations are:

- Arizona State Museum, 1013 E. University Blvd
- Borderlands Theater (at Bonita Park), 20 N. Bonita Ave
- Dunbar Pavilion, 325 W Second St
- Mission Garden, 946 W. Mission Lane
- Pascua Yaqui Administration Building, 7474 S. Camino De Oeste
- Tucson Chinese Cultural Center, 1288 W River Rd
- Tucson Music Hall (north walkway)

The tech end of creating these experiences was done in partnership with the UA Center for Digital Humanities by students. Together community partners worked with the talented students to harness the power of augmented reality to bring stories to life in unexpected places. The students 3D-scanned objects, scanned people to create holograms, used 360 video cameras to record dances, and created the platform used for the AP, as well as designing the project website. Students, curators, and community specialists formed a learning cohort and are excited to share their AR exhibits with you!



Project director, Lisa Falk, Arizona State Museum head of community engagement and curator of education, loves that this project brought together diverse community partners to create a new way of engaging Tucson with Tucson. “Working together, we learned how to harness the fun of digital technology to share our community stories in a new exciting way. When you look over the landscape of Tucson there is so much history and culture that many don’t know. With this virtual exhibit, you find a sign, scan a QR code, and the stories pop up, accessible once again. We hope you will enjoy experiencing these stories through Augmented Reality and discovering connections between your neighbors in Tucson.”

The partners on this project chose themes to illuminate stories. These are:

- Resilience/Adaptation/Belonging
- Reconciliation/Reparations/Race and Identity
- Plants and Use in the Environment/Foodways/Healing
- Journey/Migrations/Immigration
- Cultural Expression/Celebrations/Community Gathering
- Entrepreneurship/Heritage Businesses

Partner Marc David Pinate, producing artistic director at Borderlands Theater, expresses his appreciation for the project in this way, “Discovering Community in the Borderlands has been a great way to share the history and heritage of Tucson's Mexican-American barrios with our patrons and the general public. It's especially appealing to younger audiences which we, as a theatre company, are continually looking for new ways to engage.”

Dr. Bryan Carter, director of the Center for Digital Humanities and professor of Africana Studies, is expert in creating and deploying virtual realities for educational purposes and is excited about offering mini museum experiences through augmented reality. “Digital technologies allow for richer experiences that can significantly enhance learning outcomes,” Carter said. “This project allows the team to bring museum exhibitions to life and share the stories of the borderlands in new and exciting ways.”

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Call or email for images:

Darlene Lizarraga, Director of Marketing
Arizona State Museum
dfl@arizona.edu
520-626-8381

Interview contacts:

Lisa Falk, Head of Community Engagement
Arizona State Museum
falk@arizona.edu
520-626-2973

Bryan Carter, Ph.D., Director
Center for Digital Humanities
bryancarter@arizona.edu
520-621-0110

Marc Pinate, Producing Director
Borderlands Theater
marc@borderlandstheater.org
520-882-8607

Robin Blackwood, History Committee
Tucson Chinese Culture Center
Larobinb@aol.com

Great thanks to:

