

# SHAFER GALLERY

Just outside of Great Bend, the Gus and Eva Shafer Memorial Art Gallery, commonly referred to as the Shafer Gallery, has 8,000 square feet of exhibition space where, as its motto promises, “The Old West Meets the Future.”

**“The Shafer Gallery offers monthly exhibitions by trending, regional and nationally known artists, and interactive family activities,” Director David Barnes said. “They can also get a look at an extensive collection of the bronze sculptures of prominent western artist L.E. Gus Shafer.”**

The Shafer Gallery was conceived in 1981 as a way to house and exhibit works from the Faerie Denham art collection that she and her husband, Cedric, had acquired over the years. It became the foundation of the current Shafer Gallery permanent collection, which boasts over 900 works of fine art. It includes work from Shafer, Charles Rogers, Birger Sandzen, and a smattering of works by luminaries such as Dali, Bellows, Picasso, Audubon and many others.

Eva Shafer provided the Barton Community College Foundation a generous lead gift, which along with significant matching grants, enabled the Gallery to be built as an addition to the BCC Fine Arts Building. It was subsequently named after L.E. Gus Shafer who grew up near Hoisington and gained international notoriety for

his carefully crafted bronze sculptures.

Shafer’s memorialized work and other pieces from the permanent collection were made accessible to the public with the grand opening of the Shafer Gallery on Nov. 1, 1992.

“Its 30-year history has shown the Shafer Gallery to be a significant cultural institution in central Kansas,” Barnes noted. “Since the hiring of the first Gallery Director, Norma Ward, the Shafer Gallery has hosted thousands of visitors and organized hundreds of exhibitions.

It has partnered with numerous state and private institutions and agencies such as the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission, Mid-America Arts Alliance, the Chick-A Dee Check Off Foundation and the Golden Belt Community Foundation to bring quality aesthetic experiences to Barton County.

The Shafer Gallery also provides children with educational programming such as studio workshops, early-childhood activities, and short art history seminars that expand cultural understanding and vocabulary. The Gallery has become a multi-generational experience with adult patrons who experienced the Gallery as children and return with their own children.

In 2016 the Gallery instituted The Glen and Elaine Mull Classroom Art Cart Program. This initiative takes the Shafer Gallery into classrooms at schools and other venues.

“The main goal of the Art Cart program is to inspire art making and creativity through a mini-gallery experience,” Barnes explained.



“The Art Cart program allows the Shafer Gallery to show students what professional artwork looks like, how it is made and how it functions as art.”

In 2019 the Gallery won the prestigious Outstanding Special Event Award from the National Association of Interpretation for a collaborative event cosponsored by the Kansas Wetlands Education Center.

“Constructing events and exhibitions that directly engage the increasing diversity and complexity of the Barton County community has become the focus of the Shafer Gallery and its programming,” Barnes said.