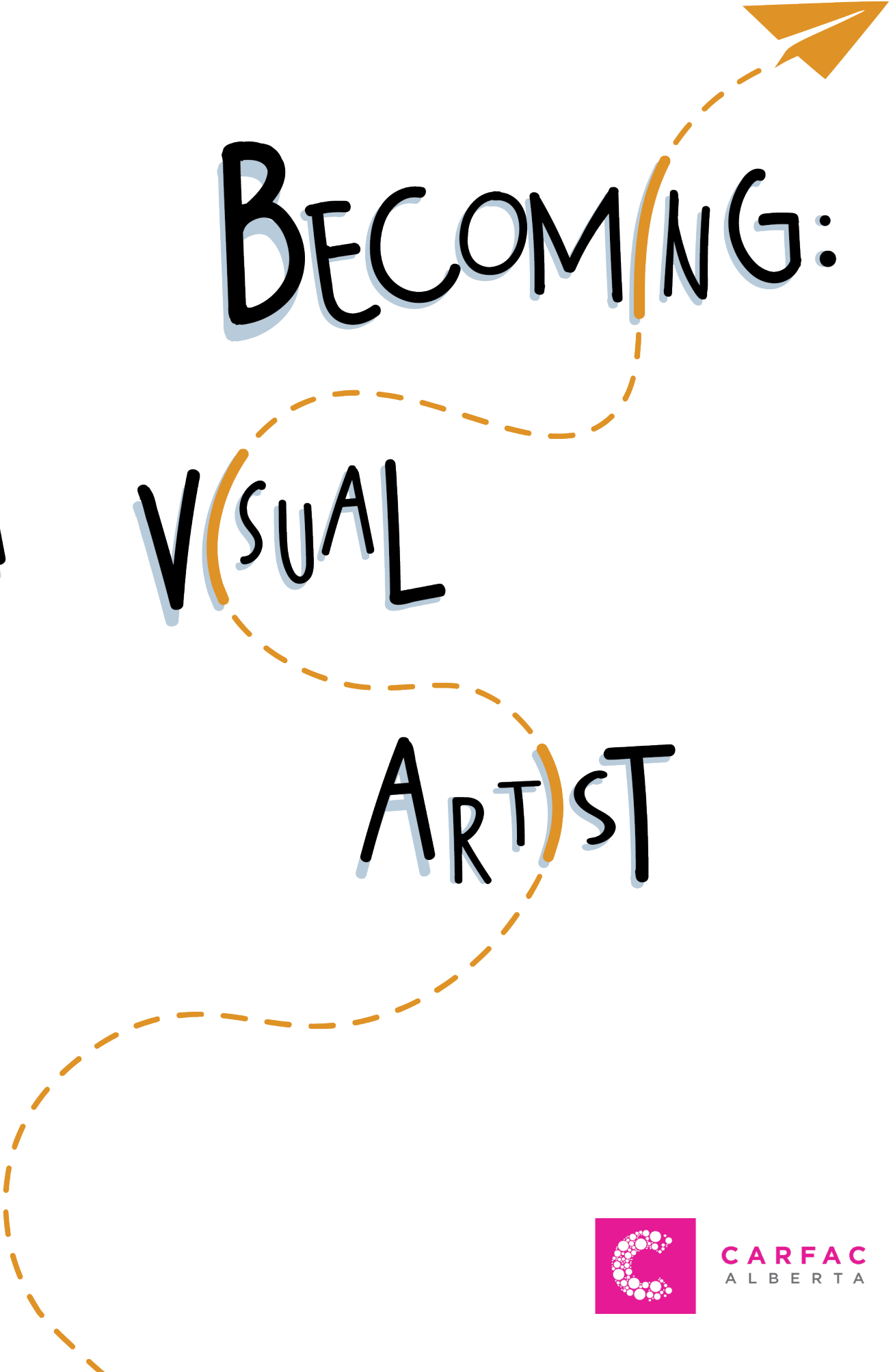


BECOMING: A VISUAL ARTIST



CARFAC
ALBERTA

CONTENTS

Land Acknowledgement	111
Who We Are	
Preface	
Becoming a Visual Artist	119
A Letter to Emerging Artists	
10	128
23	136
36	
45	Glossary
54	More Resources
64	Bibliography
76	Contributors
86	
94	
102	
	FEATURED ARTISTS
	19
	24
	30
	40
	48
	59
	70
	81
	89
	97
	106
	115
	123
	131



Land Acknowledgement

CARFAC Alberta exists to support artists across the province. We work, live and make art on the traditional lands of many Indigenous Nations: the Dane Zaa (Beaver), Siksikaitsítapi (Blackfoot), Denésoliné (Chipewyan), Paskwāwiyiniwak (Plains Cree), Tsuut'ina (Sarcee), Nakawē (Saulteaux), Dene Tha' (Slavey), Iyarhe Nakoda (Stoney), Sakāwithiniwak (Woodland Cree), Nehiyaw (Northern Woodland Cree) and Métis peoples. These lands are now also shared with many Inuit and other Indigenous peoples from across the world.

These lands are deeply interwoven with the cultures, stories, songs, languages, ceremonies and lifeways of the Indigenous peoples of this place, and for too long, this rich and complex knowledge has been silenced, erased and ignored.

CARFAC Alberta recognizes that we all live within the ongoing structures of Settler Colonialism, and that most of us are uninvited guests in these lands. We take seriously the need to learn about the historical and ongoing harms caused by colonization here, and to find ways to be in better relationships with the Indigenous, Métis, Inuit and Innu artists living and working in Alberta, and to create space for First Nations voices, and the many voices of artists from all over the world who now call Alberta home.

These creative relationships have been unfolding for millennia, and so we acknowledge that our support for making and sharing art here must aspire towards living better together within this enlarged reality.



CARFAC ALBERTA: WHO WE ARE

CARFAC Alberta serves visual artists. As a non-profit provincial cultural organization, we actively inform artists, promote artists, and provide professional development opportunities for Albertans, including members, marginalized artists and the public.

VISION

CARFAC Alberta envisions a province where all visual artists thrive: artwork is valued, rights are respected, and creativity is integral to our communities.

MISSION

CARFAC Alberta advances best practices for all visual artists in Alberta through education, advocacy and engagement.

For general inquiries, please contact CARFAC Alberta by email to general@carfacalberta.com by telephone to 780.421.1731, toll-free 1.866.421.1731

Our address is:
CARFAC Alberta
3rd Floor, 10215 – 112 Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 1M7



Preface

Hello!

We're glad you have found this resource, and we hope it is useful for you.

BECOMING: A Visual Artist is designed to help you become familiar with the many practical aspects of establishing a visual arts practice in Alberta, particularly in Edmonton. This document – available only online – gathers many voices and perspectives about how to develop and maintain an art career.

The stories and information we provide are a starting point. We hope the real-life experiences of other artists will inspire you and offer ideas and approaches that may work for you. We also provide practical advice about common challenges that artists face and suggest places to go for more information.

Each artist's journey is unique, and we know it's impossible to address every challenge or concern you may have. We have tried to cover basic questions that newcomers to this career may have, while recognizing we all have different understandings of what it means to be an artist, and what we want to achieve.

This document will change and grow over time, and we welcome your input to help us improve it. If you need additional information at any time, please get in touch and we will help you find what you need.

CARFAC Alberta supports ALL visual artists by providing information, resources and education about becoming – and being – an artist. We are always here to help.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The artist stories in *BECOMING: A Visual Artist* provide informative examples of how some artists developed their careers. The stories are meant to inspire you to find your own path to becoming a visual artist. Not everything in these stories will work for your situation. What's important is your desire to find your own path.

You may read this document from beginning to end, or just focus on the sections you need now. We hope you find these stories and resources helpful.



SCOPE OF THIS RESOURCE

While CARFAC Alberta serves the entire Alberta visual arts sector, *BECOMING: A Visual Artist* uses primarily Edmonton visual artists and art organizations as examples of how the visual arts sector functions in Alberta. The voices included represent some of the diverse visual artists here and now. They are at different stages of career development and speak from a range of racial and cultural perspectives. All the artists in this book self-identify regarding their race, heritage and gender.

We realize this small sampling of artists could not possibly reflect the full range of personal experience, but we do hope that *BECOMING: A Visual Artist* evokes how dynamic and diverse our arts community really is.

Please Note:

Information contained in *BECOMING: A Visual Artist* is for general use only. This document is not meant to replace legal, accounting, or other professional advice. If you need legal, accounting, or other professional advice, we urge you to seek the services of a registered professional.

While care was taken in checking all hyperlinks, we cannot guarantee these links will continue to direct you to the correct destination in the future. Please use your web browser, as needed, to help you locate the correct web page.

BECOMING: A Visual Artist was funded by a project grant from the [Edmonton Arts Council](#).

© 2022 CARFAC Alberta.





Becoming a Visual Artist

ADVICE TO START YOUR JOURNEY

Building a life in a new place is never easy, whether the move is to Edmonton from a small town, or to Alberta from another territory, province, or country. Likewise, starting a career after school or changing your career in mid-life can also be challenging. But having more information about how things are done here can make the transition a little easier.

We want to support your desire to pursue an artistic practice – however you define it – and provide answers to at least some of your questions about how to achieve your goals here in Alberta. We think this information, along with links to other resources and the personal stories of artists with a range of backgrounds and experiences will help you take the next steps on your creative journey.

Do we have all the answers? No, not at all. As artists, like you, we continue to find our way, as individuals and as a community. We know from experience that the journeys of visual artists are not easy, even for people in positions of relative privilege. It takes hard work to make a living as an artist, and it can be challenging to establish a support network and find ways to advance your career. While we sincerely hope your experiences are positive, we recognize that real barriers exist to accessing opportunities and building connections. That's especially true when the road map is unfamiliar.

That said, we want to remain positive and offer help where we can. We hope *BECOMING: A Visual Artist* will make things easier for you. The tools and stories offered here are part of an ongoing gathering of resources that acknowledge the inequalities that exist in the art world. While we cannot change the system single handedly, we want to help correct imbalances by empowering you with information. We see this project as part of an ongoing commitment to act on our responsibility to serve and support all visual artists across Alberta.

We look forward to meeting you in person and seeing your artwork!





A Letter To Emerging Artists



As you set out on the journey to become a professional artist, the first question you may be asking yourself is: “Am I talented enough?” If you are not happy unless your hands are covered in paint or immersed in clay, or if you feel empty without other people who express joy, enthusiasm, or despair through art, then the answer is a resounding “yes.” You already have all that it takes.

Your first step is to find a community of artists. Join an art group or show up at art openings where you can bump up against other creative people. It’s OK to go and just look, but better yet, try to connect with others. Think of something to say ahead of time so you are not stuck for words. When standing alongside somebody say something like: “Hi. My name is ... I am new to this community. Do you know of a place where I can draw, sculpt, or do life-drawing sessions?”

Getting up the courage to network can be hard, but you may be surprised by the welcome you receive – along with invitations to join local art clubs like Edmonton’s Urban Sketchers or sign up for drop-in life drawing sessions at Harcourt House Artist Run Centre. And your new friends might even tell you about a group show that’s looking for artists.

Don’t be afraid to submit your work to shows. Do what you can to get your work out into the world. It is scary, and even now, after many years of being an artist, a rejection can feel personal. When that happens, I pull the covers over my head and give myself time to mourn. Then, I get up and do something comforting like drawing, baking, or gardening. Once I feel restored, I am ready to try again.

It gets easier. After you apply to enough shows, you recognize that rejections are not necessarily about the quality of your work: Maybe the curator had 60 submissions and could only accept five. Or perhaps, the jury was looking for more digital artwork and you submitted paintings. Treat each rejection as a one-time event, get jury feedback wherever possible, talk it through with other artists and soon you will recover from disappointments.

Trust that this process will lead to some hard-earned successes. Doubts dissolve as you realize the need to make art is a part of your life, whether you earn money or not. You need to do it because it’s your voice, it defines you and it sustains you. And then, surrounded by a community of people who thrive on the creative impulse, you can start to relax and say, **“I am an artist. I do belong here.”**

FROM SHARON MOORE-FOSTER

(Sharon Moore-Foster is an artist and educator based in Edmonton)





Tips To Become An Artist:

1. Even if you are working at another job or are busy raising a family, **try to do one thing each day for your art practice**. Maybe it's sketching on your lunch break at work. Maybe it's reading a web article about how to market your art online. Maybe it's buying some new paint brushes. It doesn't need to take long – but it reminds you of your goal and you generate positive energy knowing you are working toward it.
2. **Invest in building a creative community**. A network of fellow artists provides companionship and support. Perhaps you can plan a studio sale together. Perhaps you can pool your resources to buy cheaper supplies in bulk. Perhaps you can go visit galleries together to learn more about art in your community. There is strength in numbers. Too much isolation can sap your energy.
3. **Push yourself**. Move beyond your comfort zone. Many artists are introverts, and as a newcomer, it may seem easier to hole up at home. But it's good to summon your inner strength. Submit work to a community show. Look for a mentor. Reach out and say hello to curators. Join a group or take a course. Say yes to opportunities that come your way – you never know where they may lead.





Always Keep Learning

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ALBERTA

Continual learning is essential for artists – whether it’s picking up new skills and techniques or being exposed to new ideas and ways of thinking. Workshops, classes and even degree programs also introduce you to like-minded artists and help you to build community.

WHAT APPROACH TO LEARNING IS BEST FOR YOU?

It depends on your interests and goals, as well as the time and money you can invest in your education. Take time to talk to people about their experiences and do research online. Look for places and instructors that are a good fit for you.

Ideally, you are looking for people that will not only help you learn, but also help you understand how to open doors to professional opportunities that will help you move toward your goals, whatever they are.

That may mean a formal education in the arts, or it may be a more community-based approach, like working with a mentor, serving as an apprentice, or joining an art group with artists interested in similar things as you.

Regardless of the path you choose, it’s a good idea to gain experience and develop a strong portfolio that represents you and your work.

FINDING A MENTOR OR WORKING AS AN APPRENTICE

Working with an established artist is a time-honoured way to learn. Sharing knowledge and skills across generations can take different forms.

Sometimes it is a *mentorship* – where a senior artist provides advice and feedback to an emerging artist, perhaps with the financial support of a formal program.

It can also take the form of an *apprenticeship*, as in some Indigenous communities, where a younger artist works as an assistant to a more established artist, learning new skills as they work together on a major project.

SOME THINGS TO KNOW:

- Resources to assist immigrant and Indigenous students adjust to campus life are often available, as universities work to support students from diverse backgrounds.
- Canadian universities typically welcome mature students who may have been out of school for many years. Sometimes it's necessary to upgrade your secondary schooling or to take courses that prepare you for university.
- Students can study **full time** – which usually means five courses per term. Or they can attend on a part-time basis, taking just one or two courses each semester. Course enrollment options depend on the rules at each institution. **Part-time** study can provide flexibility for those who have jobs or family responsibilities.
- Post-secondary studies are a common approach to becoming an artist. These programs can cost thousands of dollars a year and require a serious commitment.
- To assist with tuition, most universities award scholarships to certain students. You may be able to find part-time jobs on campus. Student loans are also available. It's important to consider how you will pay off large debts after graduating. Many art students struggle with heavy debt loads after graduating because they do not find well-paying jobs.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Colleges and universities typically offer a two-year diploma and a four-year degree. In some cases, the college diploma may be transferable to a longer program.

The four-year degree is known as a *Bachelor of Fine Arts*. After that, you can study for a more advanced two-year degree, a *Master of Fine Arts*. These last two are often shortened to **BFA** and **MFA**.

BFA

The **BFA**, an *undergraduate program*, allows students to explore a variety of media and techniques with a diverse group of instructors before they focus their studies.

Most programs blend ample studio time with courses in art history and cultural theory, along with courses that can be chosen from other disciplines, like creative writing, women's studies, or Indigenous studies. Formal degrees are helpful and, increasingly, essential for residencies, exhibitions, and jobs.

MFA

The **MFA** is called a *graduate program* because students taking an MFA have graduated from an undergraduate program. A wide range of MFA programs are offered across Canada. Sometimes people go to the United States or Europe, although these programs can be expensive.

There are also distance education or low-residency MFA programs, where students can do much of their work in their home community and travel occasionally to the institution for in-person classes, seminars, or workshops.

The **MFA** is sometimes called a "*terminal*" *degree* because it's usually the final degree that artists take. It is required to teach at post-secondary institutions in Canada.

Occasionally, artists enroll in doctoral studies in programs like interdisciplinary studies, cultural studies or Indigenous studies, which often allow arts-based research. Such programs can take another five years but may provide an edge in acquiring teaching positions.



ALBERTA POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS WITH FINE ARTS PROGRAMS:

- [Alberta University of the Arts \(Calgary\)](#)
- [University of Alberta \(Edmonton\)](#)
- [University of Calgary](#)
- [University of Lethbridge](#)
- [MacEwan University \(Edmonton\)](#)
- [Red Deer College](#)
- [Medicine Hat College](#)
- [Northwestern Polytechnic \(Grand Prairie\)](#)
- [Portage College \(Lac La Biche\)](#)
- [University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak
Blue Quills \(St. Paul\)](#)

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Many post-secondary schools also offer continuing education options that allow you take one course, or a series of courses to earn a certificate.

While these courses cannot be used for credit towards degrees, the instructors are usually professional artists and will offer useful information.

OTHER COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

Another option is to take short courses or workshops that are offered by various groups and businesses, including community centres, art galleries and art supply stores.

These courses are often geared toward inexperienced artists and can be a way to try something new without committing much time or money. Instructors are usually hired based on the quality of their art and teaching experience.

PROGRAMS TO CHECK OUT:

- [University of Alberta Faculty of Extension \(Edmonton\)](#)
- [Alberta University of the Arts Continuing Education \(Calgary\)](#)
- [University of Calgary Continuing Education](#)
- [MacEwan University School of Continuing Education \(Edmonton\)](#)

PRIVATE TEACHERS

Many artists supplement their income with teaching, and some offer private classes. These artists are not vetted by their peers, so it's wise to do some research before you pay costly fees to be sure the instructor will help you reach your goals.

Look at the instructor's previous experience – both teaching and exhibiting – as well as their art. And, if you can, talk to former students about what they learned from the instructor.

ART CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

Arts clubs and societies offer opportunities for members to improve their skills and get feedback on their work. Some, like painting or photography groups, are open to anyone who wants to learn and be part of the community, while others accept only professional artists.

Make sure the group will help you meet your professional goals before joining. Some groups offer member exhibitions or professional development courses. These groups may invite well-known regional artists to teach workshops.

FEDERATION OF CANADIAN ARTISTS

One of Canada's largest art clubs is the [Federation of Canadian Artists](#). It was started in 1941 by a group of artists that included **Lawren Harris**, **Arthur Lismer** and **A.Y. Jackson**, members of the [Group of Seven](#), which is famous for its landscape paintings.

The federation works to improve its members' artistic abilities and knowledge about the visual arts. It has a gallery on Granville Island in Vancouver that features juried exhibitions of work by its members. It also offers workshops, classes, critique and lectures.

The federation has 14 chapters across Canada, including one in Edmonton and another in Calgary. For more information on the Edmonton chapter, go to <https://fcaedmonton.ca> or email edmonton@artists.ca



ART GROUPS

Greater Edmonton Area

- [Latitude 53](#)
- [Harcourt House](#)
- [SNAP \(Society of Northern-Alberta Print Artists\)](#)
- [Society of Western Canadian Artists](#)
- [FAVA \(Film and Video\)](#)
- [Studio 72](#)
- [Quarters Arts/ Co*LAB](#)
- [City Arts Centre](#)
- [Edmonton Shutterbugs](#)
- [Monochrome Guild](#)
- [Images Alberta Camera Club](#)
- [Edmonton Art Club](#)
- [Life Drawing Classes & Drop In](#)
- [Paint Spot Classes](#)
- [St. Albert Arts & Culture](#)
- [ACACA \(St. Albert\)](#)
- [Multicultural Centre of Stony Plain](#)
- [Strathcona County/Sherwood Park Arts & Culture](#)
- [Alberta Craft Council](#) (offices located in both Calgary & Edmonton)

Calgary Area

- [Calgary Non-Profits](#)
- [Alberta Society of Artists](#)
- [The Bows](#)
- [C Space](#)
- [TRUCK Contemporary Art](#)
- [The New Gallery](#)
- [Stride Gallery](#)

Grand Prairie Area

- [Beaverlodge Cultural Centre](#)
- [Centre for Creative Arts](#)

Lethbridge

- [CASA](#)

Red Deer

- [Red Deer Arts Council](#)



Yong Fei Guan 关泳霏

Yong Fei Guan, an Edmonton multi-media artist, established her art career by relying more on grants than art sales. There are many ways to be a professional artist. It's important to find a strategy that meets your personal goals and needs.

Born and raised in China, Yong Fei Guan has lived in Canada since 2007. She uses her art as social commentary by exploring identity and its relationship to political and environmental issues. She bases her work on research rather than personal opinions and maintains a sense of humour.

Website: <http://yongfeiguan.com>

 [@yongfei.guan](https://www.instagram.com/yongfei.guan)
 [Yong Fei Guan](https://www.facebook.com/YongFeiGuan)



Yong Fei Guan working on 塑胶狮 *Su Jiao Shi* in 2018.
Photograph courtesy of the artist.



I left China in 2007 to immigrate to Canada. I began art classes at [MacEwan University](#) in Edmonton right away, then went to [Emily Carr University of Art and Design](#) in Vancouver, where I received my Bachelor of Fine Arts. My time at university did not really help me build useful career connections. I was shy about my English, which made it harder.

As a relative newcomer to Canada, I feel marginalized both as a woman and as a newcomer. That makes it harder to fit in, especially because adults don't always communicate on an emotional level, the way children do. And with all the pressures of daily life, it's difficult to find time to build the trust that leads to strong relationships. But socializing is like a job – artists must do it because it helps our careers.

Building community and genuine relationships isn't only about our needs — we also need to provide opportunities for others and support them. It's through communication that we can collaborate to make something together, exchange ideas and unite in our art. Good communication is the key to well-being and happiness.

My art is almost all about communicating with others. That's hard because I'm an introvert sometimes, and deeper communication can be challenging. I think most artists prefer to internalize their art so they can observe and reflect within themselves and find meaning that way instead of looking outward.

As I built my art career, I received multiple grants from the [Edmonton Arts Council](#) and was a featured artist for [The Works](#) festival in Edmonton several times. I've also received sponsorships from private organizations for my public art. This support helps me communicate my message to audiences.

Most of my work is temporary public art. In 2018, I released 塑胶狮 *Su Jiao Shi*, contemporary lion sculptures made from everyday plastic waste. *Su Jiao Shi* is a response to the City of Edmonton's decision to remove Harbin Gate, and the lions that had flanked it, from Chinatown to make way for a city infrastructure project. It's interesting because 2018 is also the year China stopped accepting recyclable materials from Canada.


It's ironic that a culture that wastes little was saying Canada's waste is no longer valuable enough to recycle. At the same time, Harbin Gate, which was built in 1987 to symbolize the relationship between Edmonton and Harbin, its sister city in China, was not valuable enough to remain as a cultural symbol.

Another large temporary art installation, which I made in 2019, is 金猪 *Golden Pig*, a seven-foot-tall pig made from over 2,000 plastic rings from six-pack sodas. I also like facilitating community arts projects like the milk jug lantern workshop at the 2017 Edmonton Mid-Autumn Lantern Festival.

Joy is a good reason to
make art.

— Yong Fei Guan

Community art helps me start conversations. I want to engage my neighbours and fellow citizens in environmental conversations about our future as a consumer culture that does not curb waste. While I like those conversations, the large pieces are getting more challenging.



I have a young family and health concerns, and I've been reflecting on how my social commentary can adapt. Sometimes public expectations are hard because I can become lost if my community demands I continue making the kind of art they have become familiar with. I often wonder how I can truthfully reflect myself with the respect of my community.

I've learned a lot about being an artist. Passion is important because it helps build resilience, which artists need. Failure is the first step to success, so you must be able to work through the lows. At the same time, artists need to be careful not to rely on success to motivate them. Success can be a superficial distraction.

Once you achieve success, which is a vague goal, you might not feel what you expect to feel. Instead, you may feel a sense of emptiness because you don't know what comes next.

When you rely on success to motivate yourself, you compare yourself to others and try to mimic their success. It's important to enjoy the moment when you feel successful, but also to remember that it shouldn't be your end goal.

Rather than reaching for the temporary rewards of success, value the process of creating art and living in the moment, instead of dreaming of a future that may not happen.

If you define success as learning and artistic growth, then you think about what you want when you make art. Rather than worrying about what others think, you see yourself as successful because you are constantly growing. Joy is a good reason to make art.

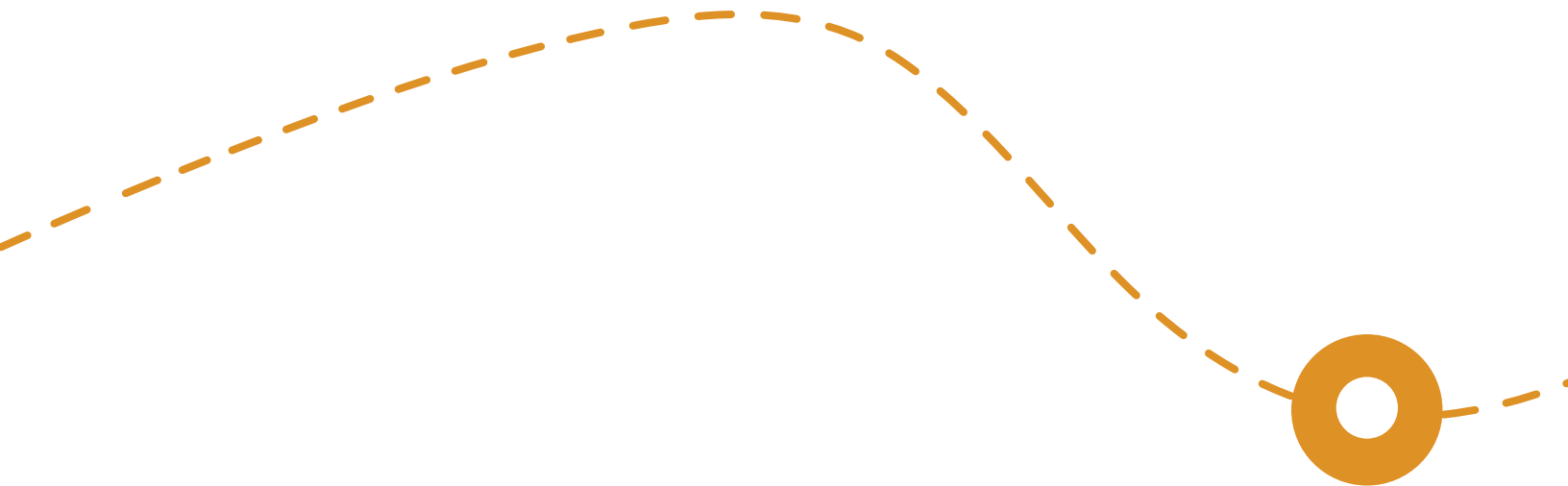
Most importantly, be yourself and follow your own path. It can be isolating, but that is where you make the most genuine and rewarding art because it is unique to you. It is art that comes from your own experiences and perceptions.





Building a Community

LIFTING EACH OTHER UP



Two Alberta women who have built organizations to support artists **Christy Morin**, a former art teacher who founded [Arts on the Avenue](#) in Edmonton, and **Toyin Oladele**, who set up the [Immigrant Council for Arts Innovation](#) in Calgary – tell their stories and offer advice.



Christy Morin: Arts on the Avenue

The arts can revitalize communities, bringing neighbours together for a common goal.

Christy Morin, a former art teacher, is a community builder. Passionate about community art and how it can help transform and revitalize neighbourhoods, she created [Arts on the Ave](#) in 2005 with neighbours who live around 118 Avenue in Edmonton.

Christy, who has lived in the Alberta Avenue district for more than 25 years, started this journey when a group of local artists met in her living room to discuss what would become [Arts on the Ave](#).

Website: <https://www.artsontheave.org>



Christy Morin (middle) at a recent Kaleido Family Arts Festival.
Photograph courtesy of the artist.

“We wanted to build and amplify the beauty of our community, which was seen as a high crime-and-grime neighbourhood,” she says. “The conversations we had weren’t about how horrible the neighbourhood was, but about how much we loved our little homes, our yards and our neighbours.”

The first festival, Arts Alive, now renamed the [Kaleido Family Arts Festival](#), held each September, was a success, despite a shoestring budget and a big learning curve. The organizers were all volunteers, but participating artists were paid for their labour. “We knew it was important to pay artists,” says Christy. “That’s still an important part of the festival.”

Christy, now executive director of the group, says arts administration has been a new challenge, but she had experience in arts production when [Art on the Ave](#) began.

"I understood how to put together events and festivals. Arts Alive needed to be ours and have the soul and personality of this neighbourhood. We continue to explore and find new ways to do that."

Arts on the Ave grew year by year, and now involves as many as 200 artists from the area from NAIT to Northlands. It incorporated as a society in 2007 and became a registered non-profit charity. Along with Kaleido, it organizes a winter festival, [Deep Freeze](#), each February.

Community arts is not for the faint of heart. It's for those who want to see change happen. It's not always immediate. It's years in the making and it's small, incremental steps. But it's transformative.

— Christy Morin

Its headquarters are at the [Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse](#), a bohemian volunteer-powered, non-profit coffeehouse at 9351 – 118 Ave., that shows work by local artisans, hosts live music and open-mic events.

The pandemic threw down a new challenge – how could a grassroots group organize community events when everyone was socially distancing and wearing masks?

“The lockdown was hard and isolating because many residents have less virtual connectivity and rely on libraries and public spaces,” she says. “Our arts community became even more important, and we looked for ways to engage residents. We made it work with unique, smaller projects.”

One popular event featured paintings of neighbourhood houses by Robin Light. Her work was hung in the window of the [Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse](#) and residents were given printed sheets showing the paintings so they could walk around looking for the homes.

“It became a kind of treasure hunt,” says Christy.

“We also received a grant to hire an artist who makes papier-mâché lamp shades with wire and paper. She installed lamps shaped like mice, owls, and cats in the neighbourhood. These are really neat ways to help people find beauty in the community.”

Kaleido couldn’t be a large event in 2020 because of the pandemic. But then inspiration struck.

“One day, I was sitting in my living room, and a little ice cream truck came by,” Christy recalls. “All the neighbourhood kids came out when it stopped. I thought, maybe this is how to do the festival.”

"So, we toured through alleys and streets with stages on the back of pick-up trucks and had live performances for people who couldn't connect virtually. Our tech team was in another truck. They set up the generators, got the set going, and then shut it down."


"Each performance was eight to 10 minutes, and it brought people out to the street. When it was over, we'd drive a few more blocks and do it all again. The trucks were decorated like parade floats and were beautiful."

"We've really had to become more creative. People are learning to do things in different ways."

While the engagement that art offers can support efforts to bring new life to inner city neighbourhoods like Alberta Avenue, it requires patience.

"Community arts is not for the faint of heart," says Christy. "It's for those who want to see change happen. It's not always immediate. It's years in the making and it's small, incremental steps. But it's transformative. The most important thing is making authentic connections."

"It's about building family and trust and reaching out beyond the community to do the best work possible."



"We use the magic of arts to build a true sense of community. Artists are visionaries who see beauty in things that others don't notice. We had a lot of questions when we began this: How does art connect people? What questions does it ask and why? What makes us uncomfortable? What makes us comfortable? And why? Art asks these great questions all the time and helps us engage."

Morin says community art is also important for children.

"I think kids in our neighbourhoods don't recognize the richness of what they are receiving. That's why we did things like the house hunt and lantern festival – it draws kids into their neighbourhood."



Toyin Oladele: Immigrant Council for Arts Innovation

Calgary multidisciplinary artist Toyin Oladele, who founded the [Immigrant Council for Arts Innovation](https://www.icaionline.org) in 2019 to help newcomers establish creative businesses, knows firsthand the challenges immigrants face.

When she came to Calgary from Nigeria in 2017, she didn't know if she would be able to continue her performing arts career and knew little about how the arts sector functions in Canada.

Website: www.icaionline.org

 [@toyinlomas](https://www.instagram.com/toyinlomas)



Photograph courtesy of the artist.

"It was hard to connect," she says. "But it was important because I wanted to do everything I could to create something that was true to my cultural tradition and identity."

"Once I began meeting other artists, I made lasting friendships within the arts community. I have been able to work in creative partnerships and mentorship programs that made it possible to expand my network. I keep meeting wonderful people and have found a supportive and welcoming arts community."

"In Canada, immigrants and other newcomers generally face barriers – the newcomer artist is no exception," she says. "These challenges may include a lack of resources, opportunities and spaces. Other challenges, such as mental barriers, cultural barriers, language barriers, employment barriers and inequitable processes and criteria – create glass ceilings that suffocate growth and self-expression."

"The challenges can deter artists from creating."

The council works with galleries and cultural organizations to find resources – like grants, professional development programs and performance or exhibition opportunities – for newcomers.

"Before connecting to the arts in Canada, I first had to discover where to go and who to speak to, and this came with fear and hesitation. Making cold calls and sending emails to random people required that I ignore the voices in my head telling me it was not possible, that no one would reply. Actually, a lot of people did not reply. But more importantly, a lot of people did. Some reached out and connected me with other people, while some just wanted to know more about me."

"What's most important is that the fear won't be forever. As you continue to engage, reach out and try things, it will gradually reduce. You will grow more confidence and will understand how things work."



Photograph taken by Motif Photography ©.

TOYIN'S ADVICE FOR ARTISTS WHO ARE NEW TO CANADA:

Know Yourself: It's important to know yourself, your craft, your skills, your community, your market, and the place your work holds in the community. I applied a **SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)** analysis. I know it is a business tool, but when applied to my career, I learned about my strengths, weaknesses, and challenges. A difficult but necessary part of that self-assessment was to compartmentalize, understand and accept criticism and the role it plays in the professional life of any immigrant, especially an artist.

Consistency: On my journey, I learned how to be consistent. Consistent with my effort, my energy, my time, and my commitment. I devised a strategy, and you can too. Whatever your strategy, it needs to be an organic fit for you, and you need to commit to it.

Network: I developed new contacts, networked as if my life literally depended on it. I listened to others: neighbours, friends, colleagues, and members of my community. I learned that I need to be more than an observer and advocate for things I believe in and things that will support those that come after me. This process allowed me to see the impact of my time and commitment, allowing me to solidify my place in the community.

The more people you know through networking, mentoring, volunteering or advocacy work, the more opportunities you will find. I connected with people who share my goals, my vision, or my methods – but I learned more from people who have different goals, visions, or methods. It's important not to limit yourself to only your community to grow and succeed as a newcomer artist.

Identify stakeholders: Imagine a newcomer coming to live in your home country and what advice you would give them. Then do exactly that. Identify organizations that support your practice, either through advocacy, funding, promotions, or other support. Introduce your work and yourself to them and ensure they remember you. Remember, people will remember what you stand for more easily than they remember your work.

Advocate and volunteer: This can help immigrant artists create an identity in their new home based on their skillset or the services they provide. They can then share that identity with their target audience, their community or even across the wider arts community. That is why commitment and consistency are so relevant – they will help your image stick in people’s minds.

Let your effort and energy speak for you before you let your work speak for itself. Some people may never even see your work or what you can do, but they will believe in you based on people who recommend or vouch for you.

Professional development: There’s lots of free online training for artists and arts administrators. Use the Internet to educate yourself about these opportunities and, if possible, engage with social media in talking about your craft, advocacy, and community. While developing yourself, endeavour to get a mentor. It will make your journey faster and easier.

My best advice is to stay true to yourself and maintain your passion no matter what. Be adaptable to new situations and challenges, and do not turn down opportunities even if you are not sure how to do something. Use them as learning tools and grow through those experiences.

Immigrating does not mean you have to give up your art. But opportunities won’t come to artists – they must look for them every day. The more people newcomers meet, the more support they will have as they adapt to a new life. Most importantly, they need to be authentic, do their thing and be themselves.

Newcomers need to
network, find mentors, and develop
professionally if they want to establish
art careers in Canada.

— Toyin Oladele



WHAT THE RESEARCH INDICATES...

A 2021 study, [Navigating a Career in the Arts for Newcomers](#), outlines the barriers facing newcomers in Ontario who want to pursue careers in culture.

The study, by a Toronto non-profit group [WorkInCulture](#), which supports the creative sector through research, resources and skill development, interviewed people working in the arts sector. "What we heard during these conversations was both illuminating and emotional: stories of hope and disappointment, modest successes and innumerable challenges yet to be resolved," the report says.

It noted the challenges of seasonal jobs, short-term and part-time contracts, low wages, and insular professional networks, saying they contribute to the difficulties newcomers have in locating information, opportunities and resources to initiate or advance their careers. "Racialized new Canadian arts professionals reported experiences of exclusion and discrimination that intensified these difficulties," the report says.

"Ultimately, all felt that being a new Canadian or immigrant was a factor in delaying their entry or re-entry to the sector. Some spoke of colleagues who were forced to move laterally out of the sector in order to find survival employment; some indicated they themselves were facing this same ultimatum."

The voices of newcomers were reflected in comments in the report.

"No one really tells you the level of perseverance you need to work in the arts and culture sector," said one. "It is full of contract and part-time opportunities that are sometimes required to make up a full-time career."

To read the report, go [here](#).



Expand your horizons
EXPLORE ARTIST RESIDENCIES



Residencies offer time and space for artists to live and work on their art without the distractions of everyday life. These residencies can last a few weeks or several months. Doing a residency lets you meet other artists and learn about a new place and the people who live there.



INTRODUCTION TO RESIDENCIES

Some residencies are in cities, but many are in the country. Some are offered by museums, historic sites, national parks, or educational institutions. Residencies can be a good place to network and build contacts. They can expose you to new ideas and experiences. They may offer specialized equipment you need for a project. And they allow you undisturbed time to focus on your work.

Because there are so many types of residencies, it's important to think about what is best for you. And yes, residencies are not for everyone – they can cost money, require travel, and take you away from your family.

Some residency programs support a particular type of art, like ceramics, sculpture, or environmental art. Others host all kinds of artists. Some are basic, simply providing empty studios with worktables. Others offer equipment like kilns, darkrooms, woodworking tools, printing presses and digital media labs. Workspaces may be private or shared.

Some residencies host many artists at the same time, while others invite only one. Some residencies may ask you to work on a specific theme, but others offer freedom to do what you want. The residency's website will provide a list of equipment and describe the facilities. If you need more information, email your questions to the residency before you apply.

Tip

In your application, state clearly why you are applying for a particular residency.

Explain why the place, the program or the facilities will help you. You want the organizers to see that you are a good fit for their program. Submit a clear, specific and appropriate project plan.

WHAT DO RESIDENCY PROGRAMS COST?

Some residency programs provide a studio, housing, and meals at no cost to the artist, but most require artists to pay at least part of the cost. Fees vary enormously. Some residencies are affordable while others are expensive. Fully funded residencies can be competitive.

Some programs offer scholarships or help with costs in other ways, and you may be able to apply for grants from regional or provincial arts organizations to help with expenses. Sometimes artists are asked to lead a workshop or give a talk to the community as part of the residency.

Most residencies provide simple housing, but arrangements vary. Often artists have their own bedroom but share a kitchen, where they can make meals.

Seek out residencies that help you meet your goals. Ask yourself how much time you need, and how long you can afford to be away from work or your family. You might need a few weeks to generate ideas for a new project or to use a particular piece of equipment. Or you might need a few months to complete a complex phase of a major project.

If you are just starting out as an artist, you may want to apply to less competitive programs that welcome emerging artists. There are some amazing residency programs run by incredible people in fabulous places that might be a good fit for you.

RESOURCES:

- [Alliance of Artists Communities \(mostly in North America\)](#)
- [Res Artis \(international listings\)](#)

ALBERTA RESIDENCIES

You don't need to go far for a residency program. Here are several Alberta residencies:

PROVINCE OF ALBERTA'S ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Each year the provincial government selects one Alberta artist for its [artist-in-residence program](#). During their term, artists create a major project that promotes the value of the arts in the province, while also engaging with different communities and attending important cultural events as Alberta's arts ambassador. The first ambassador, in 2019, was **Lauren Crazybull**, a Blackfoot and Dene visual artist gaining recognition for her portraits. Crazybull travelled the province to research and document original Indigenous place names as a way to reclaim a childhood lost in the province's child welfare system. The residency comes with a \$45,000 stipend.

For more information, go [here](#).

GUSHUL RESIDENCY

The [Gushul Studio and Cottage](#) in Blairmore, a small town in the scenic Crowsnest Pass in southwestern Alberta, began offering creative residencies for artists and writers in 1988. Now owned by the University of Lethbridge, the property, once the home of Thomas Gushul, a pioneering photographer, is a registered historical resource. Over the years, it has hosted more than 200 artists, writers, and scholars. Applications are assessed by a committee based on the applicant's professional experience and the quality of past work, among other factors. For more information, go [here](#).



Photograph of Gushul Studio by Ann Mansolino.

CASA ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Emerging artists find the [Casa AiR Program](#) to be a welcoming place for those wanting to experience the residency process. Mid-career and established artists are also encouraged to apply as Casa provides space free of charge and will help to coordinate a number of public engagement opportunities. Please seek fessful candidates may request letters of support for their grant applications. **Application deadlines** occur January 15 and June 15 of each year. Submissions for the January 15 deadline will be programmed for a residency between June 15 and December 31. Submission for the June 15 deadline will be programmed for a residency between January 15 and June 14 of the following year. *For more information and to apply, go [here](#).*

ARTS HABITAT STUDIO RESIDENCY

[Arts Habitat](#), which is based in **McLuhan House** in Edmonton, has offered an annual studio residency since 2016. An artist or group of artists can work in the house's 540-square-foot garage studio on self-directed projects. McLuhan House was once the home of Marshall McLuhan, an English professor renowned for his work on communication and the media. *For more information, go [here](#).*



Photograph of McLuhan House courtesy of Arts Habitat.




Lana Whiskeyjack

While a person may be born with creative gifts, it takes time and energy to develop talents and a visual arts career. Lana Whiskeyjack's story illustrates her journey to becoming a visual artist.

A *nêhiyaw* (Cree) artist from Saddle Lake First Nation, Lana says her first memories are of making art. She now calls herself an "art actionist" because she works in service to future generations and uses her art and education to help others live peacefully together.

Website: <https://lanawhiskeyjack.ca>

 [@lanawhiskeyjack](https://www.instagram.com/lanawhiskeyjack)



Photograph courtesy of the artist.

I always wanted to be an artist. I think it comes from my *nêhiyaw* ways of knowing and being, and the connections of *nitisiy* – my belly button – which help me honour the land and women, like my mother, who uses beads and moose hair in her art, and my grandmother, a traditional singer, blanket maker and medicine gatherer. These links began before I was born and are passed down through generations. They ground my art in teachings from my Ancestors.

At first, my art happened in fits and starts. But when I began working with clay, I fell in love with it. When I attended a Native Studies program at the [University of Alberta](#), I took as many ceramic sculpture courses as I could. Midway during the program, I fell deeply in love with a most beautiful man and moved with him to Ottawa.

That summer before the big move, I went to France for a summer art program, where I was introduced to land art.

When I returned to Ottawa, I began my “left-brain studies” and became an accidental scholar. I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in Art and Culture and a Master of Arts in Canadian Studies. My work focused on Indigenous art, particularly Indigenous women’s art. My Master’s thesis was about navigating Indigenous art from our grandmothers.

In 2006, I came back to Alberta to work at what was called [Blue Quills First Nations College](#), a former Indian residential school that many of my relatives attended. In 2012, I began my PhD at [Blue Quills University](#), *nuhelot’ine thaiyots’i nistameyimâkanak*, where I studied how to transform intergenerational trauma through art.

When my family would visit the school, some would show me where traumatic things had happened. I carried those narratives with me, and I began using what I was learning to process my own unresolved trauma. I finished my doctorate in 2017.

Once I learned to reclaim my own narrative, I was able to carry the stories of others through my own visual and oral literary voice. I began using art as a tool for courage, so I could tell the stories. Confronting the historical trauma I carried in my mind, body and spirit caused a deep depression. But I used art to reclaim my heart and soul.

I have formal training in ceramics, but I'm a multidisciplinary artist. I'm self-taught in photography and painting. Like many Indigenous artists, I work on many levels. When I want to get ideas down quickly, I work in acrylic paint. When I need to spend time untangling thoughts and exploring ideas within myself, I use oil paint. Clay is the medium I use to go within myself and connect with others because clay connects to spirit – it is a living relative through the earth.

I began teaching at the [University of Alberta](#) and now call myself a “scholartist” because my art practices are foundational to my other work, and I still use art as a teaching and rebalancing tool.

I've built connections within the Edmonton arts scene – many through my family and educational networks – and have shown my work. I always appreciate invitations to work as an Indigenous artist because I am coming from a worldview that is connected to this land, and to language, culture and ceremony. I am an *ayisiniw* – a being of the land.

When people come to me, they're looking for a specific worldview and ways of doing things that are grounded in this land. I always use protocol to help me ground my work within ceremony, which is also foundational in working with my Elders and my community. We are responsible for our knowledge, which is contributed from our connections to one another. Our knowledge is relational and reciprocal.

My *nêhiyaw* worldview and my life as an *iskwêw* (woman), as well as transforming family trauma and obtaining professional training and teaching experiences, have created an artistic lens that combines modern scholarship and millennia of oral knowledge. I keep returning to the Knowledge of this land.

There is no word for art in *nêhiyawêwin* (the Cree language) because art is a way of living *miyo-pimâtisiwin* – the good life. It is how *nêhiyawak* (Cree people) were meant to walk, speak and live in beauty at all times. As an Indigenous artist, I always try to present my best self because I never know when the Creator will call me home. Artists reawaken spirit and bring spirit back to places. I present my best self by sharing my art and knowledge: that is how I am an artist.

Confronting the historical trauma
I carried in my mind, body and spirit
caused a deep depression. But I used art
to climb out of the hole – it helped me
reclaim my heart and soul.

— Lana Whiskeyjack



Find Your Place

SETTING UP A STUDIO



To make art, we need equipment, supplies and a space to work. Some visual artists can work on their kitchen table, or in their basement or garage. But others, for various reasons, need to find a space outside their home.



Setting up a studio outside your home can be as simple as renting a garage, perhaps with a few other artists, or finding a space in a commercial building, perhaps a vacant space in an industrial area, where rents will be lower.

How do you find such spaces? Ask around. Talk to artists you know. Call art groups to check for leads. Someone may be giving up a space or be willing to share to lower the cost of renting. Artists often congregate in certain warehouses or rundown buildings that easily become great studios and workshops.

If you share a studio, be sure to work out clearly in advance how the space will function. Perhaps you each get one end of a room. Or perhaps you work certain days, or at certain times of the day, while others work at different times. Sharing a studio demands respect and good boundaries. If you don't know someone well, perhaps check with mutual friends about how reliable they are. A planning meeting, where you discuss things like upkeep and cleaning may help things function more smoothly.

You may need to sign a lease. In Canada, that means you may be obligated to pay rent for up to a year, even if you want to leave the space. Think carefully about any legal obligations. A lease gives you security, but if your income is precarious, it may make more sense to rent month-to-month.

Some artists on tight budgets shape their practice to their finances. For instance, they may focus on small works they can make in their apartment. If you work on large pieces, remember to factor in the cost of a storage unit if your workspace is small. It's surprising how quickly inventory can pile up.

Another important thing to think about is personal safety. Can you park nearby if you're working in an industrial neighbourhood in the evening? Or will you face a long walk through a desolate area to a nearby bus stop?

Also consider security of your work and your art supplies. Insurance will protect your inventory against theft, vandalism, or water damage from a broken pipe. Stuff happens. It's easiest to get insurance – and make a successful claim – if you have a proven track record of sales and have documented your inventory. Photographing your work, and listing pertinent details, like size, medium and subject matter, along with any details of exhibitions, will make your case stronger.

You also need to furnish your studio. Friends and family may have items they no longer need. You can pick up old chairs cheaply at garage sales, or sometimes even free on the curb. It's easy to build a worktable with a sheet of plywood or a damaged door from a hardware store by setting it atop two low bookshelves. You can sometimes find free tarps at lumber yards that you can tape down to protect the floor from spills. You may want to nail a sheet of plywood to one wall so it's easier to hang the paintings you are working on. A comfortable chair is nice for reading, musing and entertaining visitors. You can never have too many shelves and storage bins, especially if the building has mice.

If you are selling work – or hope to sell work or receive artist fees for exhibitions – keep receipts for rent payments, supplies and all your studio purchases. These are business expenses and can be deducted from your income come tax time. That means you will keep more of your earnings in your own pocket. Many people find their studio, no matter how humble, becomes a much-loved place where they spend quality time with their creativity.

“Something artists often don't think about in terms of health and safety are the chemicals they're exposed to, especially in a studio with other artists. You don't always know what they are using. If you use oil paints or solvents, then you need to think about ventilation and how to store and dispose of them. Some artists work with pigments that are highly poisonous and carcinogenic, such as cadmium. If you are unsure about the products you use, contact your supplier. A good art store can usually tell you the hazards of different materials. It's important to think about these things.”

— Jennifer Annesley

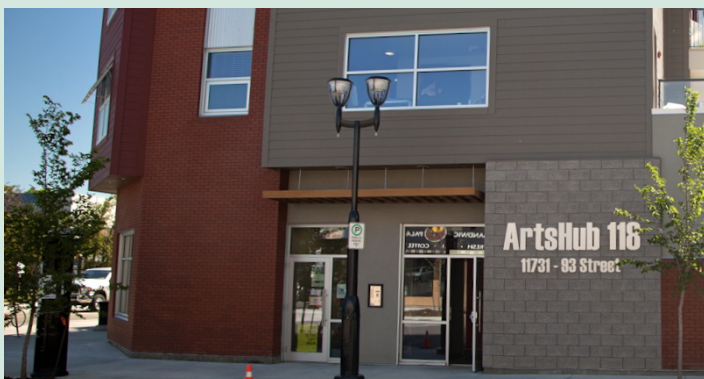
ARTS HABITAT

It can be hard for artists – who earn, on average, lower incomes than many other workers in Canada – to find affordable places to live and work. That’s where [Arts Habitat](#) Edmonton comes in. A non-profit group, it advocates for artists and works to identify, manage and build appropriate and accessible spaces to help create a thriving arts community.

“The team at ArtsHab understands that art is important to our city and that artists need spaces to work and perform,” says Debbie Serafinchon, the group’s communication manager. We help the community recognize how hard it can be to be an artist, who often makes 40 per cent less money than the average Canadian. This makes it challenging to find housing and studio space.” Arts Habitat runs ArtsHub 118, a housing co-operative with 16 affordable live-work studios above the [Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts](#) on 118 Avenue.

“Artists build community, so we want to keep them in the city by finding ways to help them financially,” says Serafinchon. “The artists have group dinners, display their art on the walls, and give their time to the building.” Arts Habitat’s office is at **McLuhan House**, a heritage home in the historic Highlands neighbourhood where a renowned Canadian thinker, Marshall McLuhan, once lived. Arts Habitat restored the house, sharing it with literary groups like **YouthWrite** and **Poetry Festival**. [Arts Habitat](#), which formed in 1996, has also created a free online mapping tool to help artists find the spaces they need. *For more information go [here](#).*

Efforts to create more housing for artists are ongoing, says Serafinchon. “Edmonton does not have enough spaces for the artists working here, so we are working on a new plan to help create space for artists to work and come together. This is the first time it’s being done in Edmonton, but there are a few others in Canada. There is a strong community among arts organizations across Canada. When COVID-19 hit, 18 of us formed a network to lobby the government for support for the arts and artists. This spreads into the wider arts community and they know we have their best interests at heart.”



Photograph of ArtsHub 118 courtesy of Julian Mayne.



Mariam Qureshi

Edmonton artist Mariam Qureshi believes it's important for artists to make connections – so she set up a community art space, Lotus Art Gallery, for just that purpose.

“Creative people need to have a network for their art to grow,” says Mariam, a self-taught artist who has exhibited in Canada, as well as France, Austria, and Switzerland. “And we need to be in touch with each other for inspiration.”

Websites: www.art-expressionism.com,

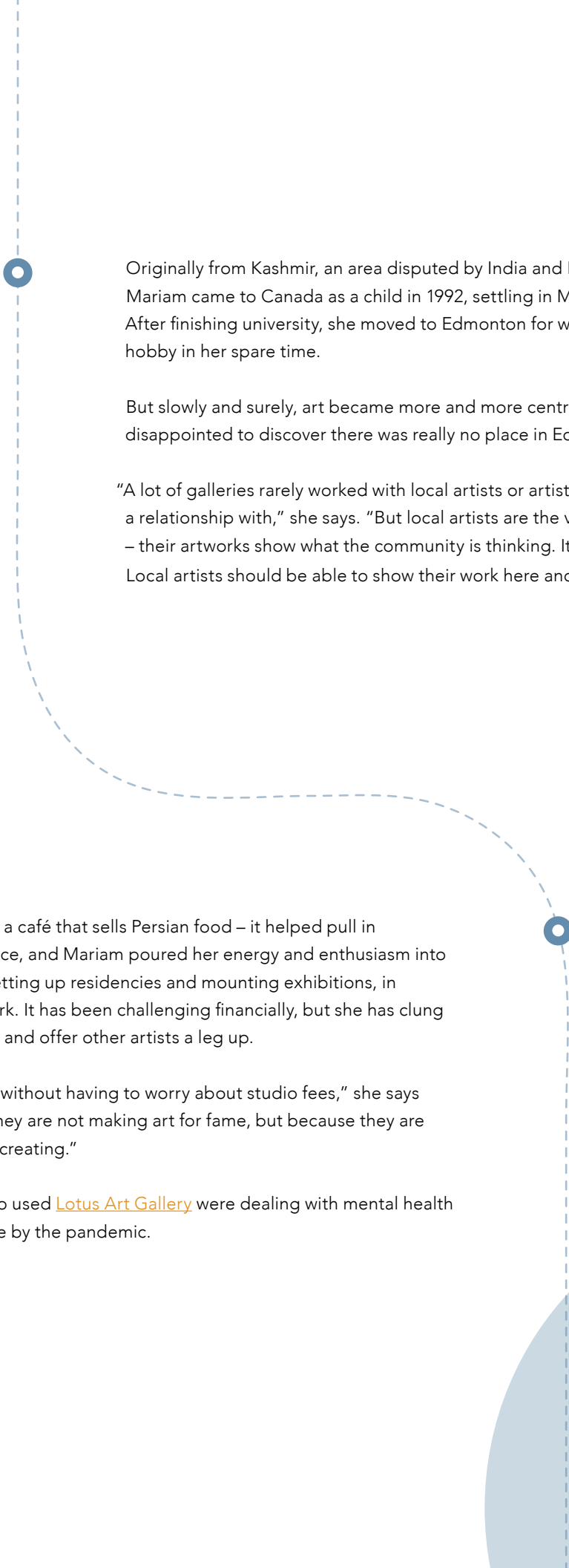
<https://www.lotusartgallery.com/>



[@artist.mariamqureshi](#), [@lotus_artgallery](#)



Photograph courtesy of the artist.



Originally from Kashmir, an area disputed by India and Pakistan since 1947, Mariam came to Canada as a child in 1992, settling in Montreal with her family. After finishing university, she moved to Edmonton for work, and made art as a hobby in her spare time.

But slowly and surely, art became more and more central to her life. She was disappointed to discover there was really no place in Edmonton to show her work.

“A lot of galleries rarely worked with local artists or artists they didn’t already have a relationship with,” she says. “But local artists are the voice of the community – their artworks show what the community is thinking. It was disappointing. Local artists should be able to show their work here and build their businesses.”

[Lotus Gallery](#) is sponsored by a café that sells Persian food – it helped pull in customers and create ambience, and Mariam poured her energy and enthusiasm into the space, offering classes, setting up residencies and mounting exhibitions, in addition to doing her own work. It has been challenging financially, but she has clung on, trying to build community and offer other artists a leg up.

“Artists need a place to create without having to worry about studio fees,” she says of the residency program. “They are not making art for fame, but because they are authentic about learning and creating.”

In 2020, a lot of the artists who used [Lotus Art Gallery](#) were dealing with mental health issues, a situation made worse by the pandemic.

"Having this space, where they could talk about what was on their minds, was important. Artists often work in extreme isolation and speak through their art rather than with words. Having a place to share stories and work on their art helped them combat stress – on an individual level and on a community level."

"If someone is struggling, being in a group can create calmness. At Lotus Art Gallery, negative energy is turned into positive energy through art. The art spreads positivity and challenges are more bearable – the gallery becomes a healing space."

"A lot of artists have training but no place to talk to others about things like getting into galleries, shipping work, or selling art. Others have gone through trauma. Working in the studio gives them time to heal – it is almost meditation for them. I see changes in their art and community participation, leading to aspiration and growth. This is why I continue to put my energy into it."

Mariam believes Edmonton needs to support its artists and keep them in Edmonton, which will help sustain the economy as we emerge from the pandemic. She's an idealist, loves art and wants the community to grow.

"Working together keeps your energy and motivation up. It's easier to make changes. And galleries are important for artists' careers. Artists need to exhibit their work, and galleries help market their work and introduce their art to the community."

Her model is innovative – she has supported the space with her own money, and what she could earn by offering workshops and other activities – almost operating like an artist-run centre, but without a board of directors or charitable status.

In some ways, she wants to change the ways galleries operate.


At Lotus Gallery, negative energy
is turned into positive energy.
The positivity spreads and challenges
are more bearable – it becomes
a healing space.

— Mariam Qureshi

“It’s not enough for artists to have artwork on walls – galleries need to show art being made. And sometimes artists are at the mercy of gallery owners and managers. For instance, not enough money goes to marketing the artists. While you work on a major piece of art, bills pile up.

So, you must sell your art. You’re likely to undersell it so you can have some income. We need to think about how galleries can help artists create more art without having to undersell their craft.”

Mariam had to be creative to keep [Lotus Art Gallery](#) open safely during the pandemic. She works more online now, offering online classes and Zoom learning.



Exhibitions also moved online. “Since we had to limit the number of visitors, we pre-booked gallery tours with fewer artists. It was just starting to work when we were forced to close our doors again. But artists were still making artwork, so I started planning virtual exhibits.” There are no longer studio spaces at the gallery due to the pandemic, something that breaks her heart.

But she has partnered with artfare.com, a New York-based gallery, to sell work by Edmonton artists to give them new opportunities... She hopes the American art market won’t disappoint.

Despite the challenges, Mariam’s community-minded philosophy remains unfaltering.

“When we come together, we connect and support each other,” she says. “When I opened Lotus, I didn’t know I would be creating a supportive, healing space where artists can work, talk and exhibit their art.”

“The ocean is held by grains of sand,” she says. “On their own, artists are tiny. Together, they can support an ocean – one that creates beautiful and awesome things.”

Please visit www.lotusartgallery.com for art calls, beautiful art and lessons.





Your Calling Card

ARTIST STATEMENT, CV, BIO & PROJECT PROPOSAL

When you apply for professional opportunities like exhibitions, graduate school and residencies, you are often asked for an *artist statement*, a *CV*, a *project proposal* and a *bio*. It's important to produce professional documents that build confidence in those evaluating your art practice.



ARTIST STATEMENTS

An artist statement is a brief written statement about a specific work, or a body of work written by the artist. It describes the motives behind the art - how and why you make what you do.

Many artists find artist statements difficult to write. It's easy to get excited about making something, but hard to condense complex visual ideas into concise written formats. Nonetheless, it's important to know how to write a statement. For instance, viewers may sometimes need help understanding your work. And you'll limit professional opportunities if you don't have a statement.

A well-written statement is genuinely helpful to viewers: it allows them a way into your work, providing enough context to help them understand what you have done, yet remains open to their responses. As well, the process of writing an artist statement can help you understand your own creative process and provide helpful insights as you continue to develop your ideas in new projects.



THINGS YOUR ARTIST STATEMENT SHOULD DO:

1. Provide the what, the why, and the how of your artwork, whether style, approach, philosophy, process, unusual techniques, subject, theme, ideas or motivations.
2. Remain concise – usually a couple of paragraphs is fine – so focus on what is most important and resist the urge to provide a history of what you've done in the past.
3. Address your intended meaning and what you want viewers to ponder.
4. Use plain language so it's easy for your audience to understand.

● THINGS TO AVOID:

- **Too much personal information.** Your artist statement is not a biography. If your work is autobiographical, address only aspects of your experience relevant to the work.
- **Overly general statements.** Here are some examples: I have made art since I was a child. I like many types of paintings. I have always enjoyed photographing nature. Any way you want to interpret my work is fine.
- **Pretentious jargon and 'artspeak':** If you read art theory and need to reference it because a particular term or concept is central to your work, go for it. But beware of creating a "word salad" of theoretical language.
- **Comparisons with other artists:** If other artists are referenced in your work in ways that makes them part of your subject or content, do mention them. But this isn't the place for name dropping.

Tip

Your statement should give readers the option to disagree. For example, don't say:

"When you look at my work you will experience joy." Instead say, "I express joy through my art."

WRITING A GOOD ARTIST STATEMENT IS A MUTLI-STEP PROCESS

Most artists can't just sit down and write something polished in one session. One way to start is by writing key terms and ideas. Circle the ones that seem most important.

Then try to sum up your work or key ideas in the first sentence. Continue from there to write a draft. Focus on your key points and get something down. You can edit it later.

When you have a draft, set it aside and come back later to revise it. You may need to repeat this several times. Time away lets you look with fresh eyes. Eventually, feedback from others who know your work is a good idea, especially if English is your second language. And, of course, remember to proofread it carefully for typos and spelling mistakes!

Writing an artist statement isn't something you do just once. Both your art and your statement will evolve as you develop as an artist. You will need to write new statements to accompany new bodies of work.

STATEMENTS BY ALBERTA ARTISTS:

Here are links to statements by local artists. See which ones capture your interest and why.

Just because someone is well-known doesn't automatically mean their artist statement is the best.

Artist statements are like art - different people will like different statements.

- [Lyndal Osborne](#)
- [Liz Ingram](#)
- [Tamires Para](#)
- [Kyle Beal](#)
- [Emalysse Bowd](#)
- [Riisa Gundersen](#)
- [Paul Freeman](#)

Tip

To see examples of professional CVs, check out the websites of professors at a local college or university. Many post their CVs publicly on the university's site or their personal websites. Academics must track their careers carefully, so their CVs are a good guide if you are wondering how to list something. Here's a link to a guide developed by the [Hamilton Arts Council](#). To view the guide click [here](#).



CV

You'll hear the term CV tossed about casually as you get immersed in the art world. The CV – which stands for *curriculum vitae*, Latin for “course of life” – is a bit like a job resume in that it lists your experience. But unlike resumes, which often list transferable job skills, the CV is based on credentials and experience. Most importantly, it provides a comprehensive list of your education and exhibitions.

CVs need to be updated regularly. The key is to set up a system so you can quickly refresh them with your latest accomplishments. List items in reverse chronological order, which means putting the most recent shows at the top. Most CVs have multiple categories. *Education* includes any academic degrees you hold, including where and when they were completed. You can also include workshops and other courses.

Exhibitions will include shows you have participated in. Include the title of the show, the venue, and specify, perhaps in brackets, whether it was a solo, two-person or group show. You can also provide links. Some people break this category into solo, two-person and group shows.

Some artists include a *Publications* section – either what they have written about other artists, or articles about them. Here you can list the title of the text, the author, where it was published and when. Include links, where available.

You may include a *Teaching* section, listing courses you have taught, or a *Curation* section, if you have curated shows. You can also include *Presentations* if you have given artist talks.

Other *Professional Experience* can include work experience in the arts, say as a gallery technician or an administrator. CVs are often several pages long and continue to grow throughout your career.



BIO

Sometimes artists are asked to provide a bio – short for *biography*. Usually this is just a short paragraph used for publicity purposes. The bio should touch on who you are and some of your experience. For instance, you might want to indicate where you are from and where you are now based, your most recent education, the type of art you do and perhaps your thematic interests.

If there's room, you can add one or two of your most significant exhibitions. You can find examples on exhibition pages on the websites of major public galleries, such as the [Art Gallery of Alberta](#). Usually these are written in the third person (i.e. "John Doe is an artist based in ..." instead of "I am an artist based in ...").



PROJECT PROPOSAL

Artists write many project proposals over the course of their careers. Variations are found in exhibition submissions and applications for grants, residencies and graduate school.

Here, you need to clearly outline what you hope to do in a clear and honest way. What will you create? What will you research? Which community groups will you engage? What materials will you use?

While this is a nuts-and-bolts document, take advantage of your project's ability to inspire curiosity and wonder. Your proposal is often judged by other artists, so if you convey your vision with enthusiasm, you may capture their interest and imagination, and have a better chance of success.

But you also need to provide a sense of comfort that your idea is feasible, your budget is reasonable, and you have the experience and ability to carry it out.




Kirsty Templeton-Davidge

Visual artists often start their careers as young adults but decide to press the pause button when life takes another turn. Edmonton painter Kirsty Templeton-Davidge headed back to school and restarted her art career in her forties.

Kirsty uses realism to capture the beauty and mystery of people. She has exhibited her work in Canada and the United States and is represented by the [Peter Robertson Gallery](#) in Edmonton.

Website: <https://www.kirstytempletondavidge.com>

 [@kirstytd_studio](#)



Photograph courtesy of the artist.

After high school, I completed a three-year program at the [Toronto School of Art](#). But then I produced nothing for several years. After I got married and had a family, I returned to being a creator, sewing and knitting. When I was in my mid-40s, I decided to return to university and get a Fine Arts degree. It wasn't easy; I had to spend a year upgrading with distance education courses through [Athabasca University](#).

But, after that, I was accepted into the Fine Arts program at the [University of Alberta](#). I didn't know what I would be able to do – I wanted to see where my creativity could be pushed. I wanted to take the energy that I put into lots of different things and really focus. I had read somewhere that if I wanted to be shown by a gallery – if I wanted to have representation – I needed a degree, because it lends a certain credibility.

My work has changed a lot since I finished school. School is about learning, so you do all sorts of different things that you normally wouldn't do. I've always liked painting people, but professors asked what else I could do. So, I produced paintings that had no figures in them. It's important to be pushed out of your comfort zone.

In hindsight, I would say that Fine Arts graduates would benefit from enhanced career preparation during their studies at university. For my part, I didn't know how galleries worked, how to run a business, or even how to write grants. Every so often, a professor would take a few minutes to let us know different places where we might be able to show our art. But our program provided limited insight regarding this aspect of a career in the arts.

I had invited several Edmonton gallery owners to our year-end graduating show on the off chance that something would work out for us and was fortunate to be signed by the [Peter Robertson Gallery](#) after graduation. I've been with Peter Robertson since then. If I hadn't gone to university, I would not have been picked up by the gallery.

Working with a gallery is an important part of the process of building a career in the arts. You must keep working. I continually push the technical aspects of my work forward. Once I learn something new, I look for the next thing to figure out. I also look for ways to economize. I'm a very slow painter because my work is so intricate and detailed. So, I try to find ways to take less time to complete it – without compromising my standards.

I have rounded-out my experience by participating in juried exhibitions in Canada and the United States, as it adds to one's credibility. Each award means you can increase what you charge for your paintings. I've since stopped participating in juried exhibitions because of the time and cost required to ship paintings. Now, you can enter competitions by submitting digital files of your art, which is easier and less expensive.

Painting is my passion. But I don't believe in raw talent. I have the drive to improve and the willingness to keep at it. It's not romantic. It's hard work that you must do, every day. You must keep pushing yourself. Sometimes it brings you joy and sometimes it doesn't.

— Kirsty Templeton-Davidge

Any exposure helps an artist establish their career. To find places to enter, Google “art competitions.” There’s usually a fee, but it’s much less expensive than travelling to shows with your art. It’s fine to start with competitions that cost less to enter as you build your reputation – some are as little as \$20. Keep a record of everything you do. The business side of your practice can be tiring, but it needs to be done.

I work all day. When I relax, I like to spend time with my family, especially outdoors. This year, I decided to try cross-country skiing. And I walk my dog every day. Getting away from the studio helps clear my mind so I can interpret colour and tone effectively.

Painting is my passion. But I don’t believe in raw talent. I have the drive to improve and the willingness to keep at it. It’s not romantic. It’s hard work that you must do, every day. You must keep pushing yourself. Sometimes it brings you joy and sometimes it doesn’t.

It is a huge privilege to be a painter. I get to make things that will be here long after I’m gone. I get to produce something my children can see. Other people have made sacrifices so I can paint. It’s my obligation to do my best to honour those sacrifices.



The Gallery World

DIFFERENT KINDS OF SPACES



There are many places to exhibit art – from large public galleries and commercial galleries to smaller artist-run centres and even informal spaces like libraries, community halls and coffee shops. The key is to find the right place for your work at each stage of your career.

ALTERNATIVE SPACES

Public spaces like shops, restaurants, libraries and hospitals are often where artists first show their work. Keep your eyes open – if you notice an artist's work displayed somewhere, you may be able to show your work there too.

Businesses that regularly show work by local artists often provide information on their websites, so check there first. Or you can email them or drop by to find out what's possible. One big advantage is that all the money from any sales in this type of venue typically goes to the artist.

PUBLIC ART GALLERIES

Public art galleries are non-profit organizations that generally receive government support and operate on behalf of the public. It can be quite competitive to exhibit at large public galleries and artists are expected to have a cohesive body of good work, as well as a track record of previous exhibitions.

Sometimes they have smaller community spaces or windows for shows by emerging artists. Public galleries in towns and small cities are often more willing to exhibit emerging artists. Watch for members' shows, too, as they offer another chance to gain some experience.

Gallery websites often provide information about how and when to submit your work. If you decide to apply, be sure to follow the instructions and submit by the deadline.

Public galleries do not sell work (except in their gift shops) but pay fees to exhibiting artists.

The [Art Gallery of Alberta](#) is Edmonton's largest public art gallery.

ARTIST-RUN CENTRES

Artist-run centres are non-profit organizations but focus specifically on supporting artists and nurturing contemporary art practices, including the creation and exhibition of work by emerging artists. The work these galleries champion often deals with current social and political issues, and they sometimes show experimental or controversial work that sparks critical dialogues.

Artist-run centres often have open calls for submissions for shows. They pay artist fees as artwork usually is not for sale, and often host an annual members' show. Edmonton's artist-run centres include: [Harcourt House](#), [Latitude 53](#) and [SNAP](#), the Society of Northern Alberta Print-Artists. Calgary artist-run-centres include: [Truck Contemporary Art](#), [Stride Gallery](#), [The Bows](#) and [The New Gallery](#).

COMMERCIAL ART GALLERIES

As private businesses, commercial galleries facilitate sales. They mainly represent established artists whose work is popular with collectors. The gallery generally takes a 50% commission on sales. But they also have a large clientele and promote the work they exhibit, leaving you free to focus on your art.

Commercial artists are expected to produce work people want to buy and may end up creating similar pieces over and over because they are popular. Commercial galleries in Edmonton include the [Peter Robertson Gallery](#), the [Bugera Matheson Gallery](#) and the [Bearclaw Gallery](#), which specializes in Indigenous art. Many of Edmonton's commercial galleries can be found along 124th Street.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE REPRESENTED BY A COMMERCIAL GALLERY? IS IT A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR CAREER?

Visual artists wear many hats. They operate small businesses where they make products and must find ways to market them. While artists like to make art, they may find it challenging to sell their work. This is where commercial galleries fit into the visual arts ecology. Commercial galleries sell work to art collectors but often charge artists 50% for this service.

Commercial galleries can be a good fit for some artists and a not-so-good fit for others. CARFAC Alberta has a Best Practice guide called *Working with a Commercial Gallery*, which may help you decide if you wish to work with a commercial gallery. To see the Best Practice guide go [here](#).

CARFAC Alberta recommends that commercial galleries provide contracts for artists that spell out all conditions. If the gallery does not have a contract, ask them to sign one that you write. If they will not agree to a contract, it's best to forget this gallery and try another.

DIY POP UPS

Exhibition opportunities can be hard to find, so many artists make it happen on their own. These DIY – *Do It Yourself* – events are held in affordable spaces, like empty offices or warehouses, often with other artists. You are free to plan the event, but you also need to handle publicity and pay expenses, like rent and insurance. These shows are a lot of work but can be successful.

"We did pop-up shows so we didn't have to rely on a gallery – we made our own gallery. We'd rent a space, make it look nice, and hang our paintings. Sometimes we sold everything at our shows."

— Rust Magic

The next following section is based on advice from **Agnes Bugera** of the [Bugera Matheson Gallery](#) in Edmonton about what it means to be represented by a commercial gallery and how to approach a commercial gallery:

“Commercial galleries are not a good fit for all artists, so consider if you want or need a gallery to market your work. Begin by thinking about what you want and what the gallery wants. You may want to list the pros and cons.

If you decide to proceed, create a list of galleries you would like to represent you, whether local, regional, national, or even international. Look at each gallery’s roster of artists. Do you admire their artists?

Then consider what those artists have in common, whether it is education or training, their level of experience, their styles, the medium they use or their price point. Does the gallery’s approach align with yours? If it does, keep them on your list. If they don’t, take them off your list or decide if you want to adapt your practice to get representation there.

If you decide to approach a commercial gallery, make sure your portfolio – which should include images, a short biography and your curriculum vitae – is up to date.”

This section continues to the following page.

COMMISSION AGREEMENTS:

- Usually, 50/50
- The price is the price whether the gallery sells a work, or you sell a work.
- Whether a piece sells in the gallery or from your studio – if the customer is from the gallery's territory – the commission is shared.

GALLERY OBLIGATIONS:

1. MAINTAIN THE GALLERY'S REPUTATION:

- Define gallery's place in the market.
- Plan strategically to succeed in that market.
- Curate the gallery.

2. PROVIDE A GALLERY SPACE AND DISPLAY WORK IN:

- Exhibitions
- Group shows
- Informal displays

3. PROMOTE THE ARTIST AND THE WORK:

- On the website
- In other advertising

4. SELL THE ARTWORK:

- Provide consultation
- Deliver and install work

ARTIST OBLIGATIONS:

- Ensure the work has structural integrity and is ready to be displayed.
- Work with the gallery to sell works.
- Have a website and promote your work and the gallery on social media.
- Prepare work for the gallery and possibly deliver exhibitions.
- Have new or previously unseen work.
- Write an artist statement and provide your resume and biography.
- Attend exhibitions and engage with the gallery's clients (consider giving an artist talk, an interview or an informal tour of the exhibition).

OTHER EXHIBITION SPACES IN EDMONTON

Some small exhibition spaces in Edmonton are available to artists. The advantage is that you usually don't have to wait for months or years to get a show. But you'll want to sell works to cover your expenses as these spaces do not pay artist fees. Start by checking what kind of art these venues exhibit.

For example, the [Friends of University Hospitals](#) shows art that's suitable for patients in crisis, while the [Stollery Gallery at the Nina Haggerty Centre](#) offers exhibitions to artists from historically under-represented artists. Check for information online, but you may have to email or phone each venue for more information.

PLACES TO TRY:

- [The Friends of University Hospitals](#) has a window space for emerging artists.
- [The Misericordia Hospital](#), the [Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital](#) and the [Grey Nuns Hospital](#) exhibit art in hallways and sitting rooms.
- [The Stanley Milner Library](#) welcomes submissions from emerging artists for its Imagine gallery.
- [The Paint Spot](#), a local art store, operates the [Naess Gallery](#), which features art by emerging artists.
- [The Nina Haggerty Centre](#), home to a collective of artists with developmental disabilities, shows work by under-represented artists in its Stollery Gallery.
- [The Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse](#) is a volunteer-powered non-profit space that offers exhibitions to support community development.



Tiffany Shaw

It took time living in other places for Tiffany Shaw to fully appreciate the cultural life of Edmonton. She's now helping to build a community here for Indigenous artists as a core member of the [Ociciwan Contemporary Art Collective](#).

Tiffany is an interdisciplinary artist, a curator and an architect. She has a Diploma in Art from [MacEwan University](#), a BFA from [NSCAD University](#) in Halifax and a Master's degree in Architecture from the [Southern California Institute of Architecture](#) in Los Angeles. She has exhibited at the Venice Biennale of Architecture, the [Winnipeg Art Gallery](#), [Pier 21](#) in Halifax and the Chicago Architecture Biennial. Born in Calgary and raised in Edmonton, her Métis lineage derives from Fort McMurray via Fort McKay and the Red River.

Website: <http://www.tiffanyshawcollinge.com>



Photograph courtesy of the artist.



Enthusiasm is infectious in Edmonton. We are a community that loves to see and experience new things. I didn't always feel this way, but after I travelled for school and spent time away from Alberta, I began to see the benefits of life here.

I lived in Halifax from 2004 to 2006 to complete my Bachelor of Fine Arts. While I was there, I learned about the power of community. For instance, I saw how events were grouped together, even on the same night, so there were many things to bump into and absorb. At the time, Edmonton's art scene was engaged and personable – but also spread out. You needed a car to travel to art openings throughout the city and artists didn't want to open on the same night. So, there wasn't a way to create a buzz with multiple events. But after seeing the excitement in Halifax, I began to understand how the spaced-out Edmonton events created an intense spotlight.

Once I was back in Edmonton, I sought to create an atmosphere of multiple voices and overlapping ideas with friends Robert Harpin and Aspen Zettel through the *Apartment* show in 2007. They had worked on a concept like the Apartment show the year prior, exhibiting multiple artists in an unconventional location. When I heard about it, I approached Rob about expanding the idea. Luckily, they were open to collaboration. Rob soon located an abandoned apartment building slated for demolition.

By word of mouth, we invited artists from all disciplines. Bands, visual artists, performance artists, installation artists, printmakers, video artists and experimental and modern dancers came together over three days.

The environment felt magical. People were excited to work in an experimental environment outside a gallery. We filled the closets, hallways, bathrooms, bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens and stairwells on each floor with diverse programming and installations. It felt different, but also authentic to the voices of the arts community.

The idea was not new, of course. Edmonton artistic director Gerry Morita was doing the same thing with Mile Zero Dance by incorporating experimental sound and inviting artists from other disciplines to participate. We had hoped to continue the ideas she presented in other formats and expand on the intimacy, adventure, awkwardness, and weirdness of what we had seen her do. While it was a lot of work and a big learning curve, we're still proud of it.

After relocating to Los Angeles to pursue my Masters' degree in Architecture, I learned how well funded the arts are in Canada compared to the United States. While the drive to create may have been more competitive in Los Angeles, the willingness to work for little or no pay was common. This provided me with an understanding of how artists and designers are valued in the two countries. There are pros and cons with each system, but this was one big difference that allowed me to appreciate being an artist in Canada.

A year after I returned to Edmonton from Los Angeles, I was invited to a series of dinners to discuss the question: "Is Edmonton ready for an Indigenous artist-run centre?" Those who participated wanted to say yes. But we didn't know how to go about it. In that spirit, we formed a collective. We named ourselves Ociciwan, Cree for "the current that comes from there" and used a model of consensus to make decisions – which is different from most artist-run groups. We resisted the term "board" and called ourselves core members.

We wanted to create something we all experience in our own Indigenous communities – something we all knew was largely lacking in the Canadian arts community. Non-Indigenous people resisted our idea of consensus-based governance, but we had faith in it because it represents our core values. It takes us longer to make decisions because, in theory, we all must agree, unlike the voting system of most boards.

But it's a familiar pace that we are comfortable with. We required thoughtfulness, exploration and sensitivity as we navigated something entirely new for the city.

We had support from many people and organizations, but we had to craft the vision because only we could see it. Soon after we formed in 2015, we created partnerships with organizations and institutions across the city that fit our programming the best. We didn't have a space and weren't sure we were ready for that giant leap, so we built our audience and content one project at a time.

In 2018, we secured a lease on a building donated by the City of Edmonton, which was renovated with our ideas for a contemporary art centre in mind. We opened the [Qciciwan Contemporary Art Centre](#) in September 2020. Originally, we had planned to open in March, but the pandemic announcement came a week prior to our unveiling so we took some time to strategize.

I have learned that if you believe strongly in your idea and have enough passion to continually push forward, people will follow and support it.

— Tiffany Shaw

Over our first year, we learned that creating physical space solely dedicated to Indigenous contemporary art opens possibilities for the community that we didn't foresee. The demand and appreciation for Ociciwan has been heartfelt, and we are excited to continue moving forward. Our model and methods are unorthodox in contrast to other institutions, but we have made significant strides because we believe in our ability to create a respectful place for dialogue and innovation.

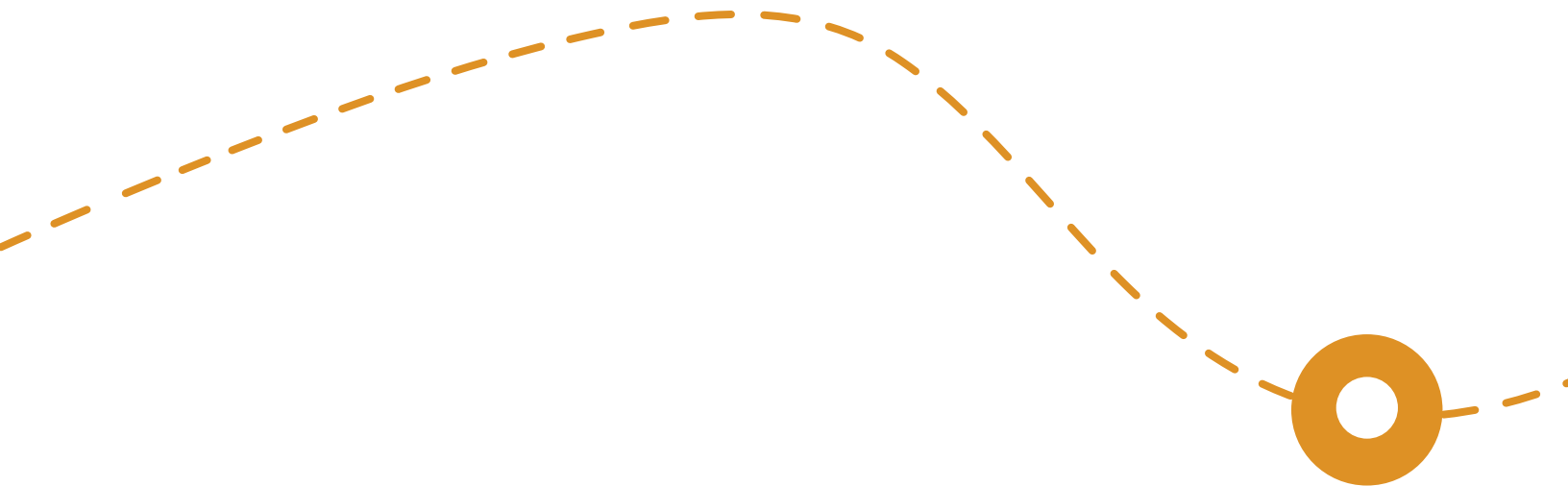
From these experiences, I have learned that if you believe strongly in your idea and have enough passion to continually push forward, people will follow and support it. Then, when they can see it themselves, they will help you move it forward collectively farther than you could have by yourself.





Shine Your Light

WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR ART



Cards, t-shirts, mugs, tote bags. The list of ways to market your art goes on and on. Really, the only limit is your creativity. If you can come up with an appealing product that features your artwork – and you can sell at a reasonable price – you may be able to earn some money to support your larger creative practice.

Large pieces of original art can be hard to sell. Getting gallery representation takes time. Have you thought about selling cards or T-shirts that feature your art at markets or craft fairs? Or perhaps you are thinking about trying online sales. Artists often need to get creative to keep money coming in as they establish their brand.

- Local stores, bookshops, hair salons or coffee shops may be willing to sell such items for you. Or you can market them directly through your website and social media, or on platforms like [Etsy](#).

Many galleries have gift shops that sell small items – perhaps crafts like jewellery or pottery, or small works of original art. Visit in person or check their websites to see what they carry and how they choose artists to sell through their shops. Galleries also sometimes operate art rental outlets, where people pay a small fee to hang original artworks in their homes or businesses for several months, or longer. Artists receive a portion of the rental fee.

Sometimes people end up buying works that they have tried out in their homes. Imagine, a 1939 painting by Emily Carr, *Tossed by the Wind*, originally bought from the Vancouver Art Gallery's art rental outlet in the 1950s, recently sold for more than \$3 million at auction!

Tip


Use your contacts – and your imagination – to think outside the box.

One artist offers her art to an interior designer who decorates show suites in new residential developments. In exchange for a few hours of work delivering the work and hanging it, she has sold dozens of pieces to people who will soon be decorating their own homes.

- Another possibility is weekly farmers' markets or fairs like [Art Walk](#), held each July along Whyte Avenue in Edmonton. Art Walk is popular with artists, who set up temporary stalls on the sidewalk to sell their work.


SOME POPULAR EVENTS:

- [Strathearn Art walk](#)
- [Artwalk St. Albert](#)
- [Edmonton Downtown Farmers Market](#)
- [Al Fresco on 4th](#)
- [124 Grand Market](#)
- [Bountiful Farmer's Market](#)
- [Old Strathcona Farmer's Market](#)

-  **Craft sales** are also popular, particularly before the winter holiday season. You generally pay a fee – sometimes a substantial one – for your table, so you need to be confident you will sell enough to cover your initial costs. Craft fairs are bustling places full of the flavours of the holiday season and people shopping for gifts.

It's helpful to have sales experience if you're working fairs and markets. Ask a friend who has worked in retail for advice. It's good to be friendly and approachable as these events attract a broad cross-section of people. Think of some stories to tell potential customers about your work – how you make it and what it's about, for instance. If they want to chat, you can ask them what they think about it or which one they like the best and why.

Hundreds – sometimes even thousands – of people can walk past during a day, so it can be exhausting, especially for introverts. Plan accordingly, and think of ways to keep your energy up. You may want to split a booth with a friend, so you can take breaks to walk outside, or pack nourishing snacks to boost your energy.

-  **Annual studio sales** are another idea. Not only do they help you earn some money, but they can also open up space to make new work. Some artists participate in neighbourhood open studio events or community art walks, which can also lead to sales. While these take some work to organize, the advantages of pooling your contact lists and splitting the costs of advertising, can make it worthwhile.

Some artists make extra income by teaching art classes for children. This can be fun if you like kids and have the space. Parents are often looking for activities for their children, whether after school or on Saturday mornings. It may also be possible to teach classes at a local gallery or community centre, which are always looking for new and interesting courses to offer to their communities. Culturally diverse activities have become increasingly popular.

"If you want to make a living at art, you must think about it as a business.

Marketing is easier if you work with a theme. For my annual show, I come up with a theme, usually based on my travels and often focusing on historic architecture."

— Jennifer Annesley

SOME CRAFT FAIRS IN GREATER EDMONTON:

- [Signatures Butterdome Craft Sale](#)
- [Leefield Christmas Gift and Craft Sale](#)
- [Silver Bells Winter Markets](#)
- [St. Albert Indoor Christmas Market](#)
- [Royal Bison](#)

Buyer Beware: The Online World

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO SELL YOUR WORK ONLINE?

No one online strategy works for every artist. As with everything else, you need to do your research and think about what will work for you. But there's no denying that an effective online presence, even social media accounts like [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#), can help artists reach new clients.

It's a good idea to create your own website. You don't need to hire a website designer – there are free, easy-to-use platforms that are easy to set up. But be sure to look at other websites to get some ideas of what you might want to include.

Marketing sites like [Etsy](#) and [Shopify](#), can work well for certain types of art. But always research their fees carefully before signing up.

Remember that you need to develop a strategy for your online presence. For instance, do you want to sell directly to clients from your website or use it simply to display your work? Selling online is hard work. How do you make yourself stand out from the crowd? Some people share their story with people they will never meet in person, so they attract followers, while others take a more targeted approach.

It's also important to factor in the extra expenses associated with online sales. There may be hosting costs and fees associated with your online shop, and additional fees for processing credit cards. You'll need packing materials, insurance and postage for shipping, and you must decide if you want a "flat rate" shipping charge or prefer to calculate it on a per-item basis. Taking parcels to the post office takes time, as does the paperwork associated with sales and record keeping. And any promotional material – like flyers or thank-you postcards – will require upfront spending. Be sure to factor those costs into your prices.

There is much to learn about the online world. So, before you jump in, do some research. Ask your friends or peers for advice; take a class or webinar; use resources at the library; or simply go online to look for articles and videos about the skills you need to navigate digital marketing.

With a little patience and forethought, you will figure out what works for you.



Samantha Williams-Chapelsky



A measured approach to career development after graduation let Samantha Williams-Chapelsky, an Edmonton painter and sculptor, to slowly expand the time she spends making art.

Samantha received her first art award when she was five. She went on to complete a Fine Arts degree at the [University of Alberta](#) in 2009 and then worked in municipal arts programming as an art gallery installer, amongst other jobs, while gradually increasing her studio time. She has exhibited widely, trained overseas, and teaches painting.

Website: www.samanthawilliamschapelsky.com

 [@Samantha Williams-Chapelsky](#)

Photograph courtesy of the artist.

When I graduated, I didn't know how to use my degree or approach life as an artist, so I began working, mostly in municipal art programming. At the same time, I built a better studio practice, took courses, and developed my artistic skills. I've shown in galleries and at local events, trained overseas and sold work online by building a personal brand.

It used to be that if you were represented by a gallery, you were set. But I feel that that world doesn't exist anymore. I've had to adapt because that system doesn't work for everyone – especially new artists. The system is so closed to them. Galleries can't always afford to invest in new artists, so they often don't take risks on them.

I was with five commercial galleries up until two years ago. I felt honoured to be with them. But I realized their advertising dollars are spent on work they can sell immediately because it isn't as risky. It's partly because their traditional audience is baby boomers, who may not be interested in emerging artists or no longer have space for new purchases. My generation tends to buy when we can see something on our phones. Lots of galleries are creating online platforms, but I found I wasn't getting any more recognition because I might be one of 70 artists.

So, I had to learn how to get known by a population that might not go to galleries and who live in other parts of Canada. I realized the only way to build a career was to promote and market myself. I tried the full gamut of showing in farmers' markets, outdoor exhibitions, art fairs and local events like art walks. I tried a lot of different venues because you don't know what will happen until you try.


Showing in the community is an investment of your time and energy, but it's a great starting point, especially if you aren't ready to jump into building a full-time business. Showing in small venues won't make you money right off the bat, but it helps you produce work that you love.

When I did farmers' markets, I noticed that if I sold a painting for \$35, I sometimes regretted it. Sometimes, you should wait until you have a beautiful set and then sell it for a little bit more. I see a lot of artists who are on the market circuit and are constantly producing small items. If you enjoy that, it's fine. But I think if you have a bigger goal, you should limit your work to a few small pieces. The rest can be larger.

If I sell even one larger work, I make up for hundreds of hours doing many small pieces. Early in my career, some prominent female artists told me the little things are not meant to be masterpieces. The little stuff can be cool. But you should focus on your masterpieces.

I think there's more of a draw to a piece
when I have a story to go alongside it.
Posting your work online is not enough
anymore. Even if it is beautiful, people want
the story – those pieces have more meaning
because they know where and
how they were created.

— Samantha Williams-Chapelsky



When I started marketing and promoting my work, everything I knew about social media was self-taught. So, I took courses through the University of Alberta so I could learn how to use online platforms effectively. In the past few years, I've built a personal brand that focuses on how I present my business.

When I first started, I took pictures of my art and posted them on social media. But I had a business coaching session with a woman in Edmonton, and she said people want to know about the artist. She suggested asking: Why did you create the piece? How did you create it? What's your inspiration? Why do you do it? What is your way of working? It switched my mindset and I started showing more of myself, my working practice, my studio space and my palettes on social media. I didn't think it would necessarily be super interesting, but it is part of building a brand around who am I and what I do."

Now, I think there's more of a draw to a piece when I have a story to go alongside it. Posting your work online is not enough anymore.

Even if it is beautiful, people want the story – those pieces have more meaning because they know where and how they were created. I think we're all looking for a story to resonate with us somehow. Sharing yourself as an artist is as important as sharing your art.

Being an artist isn't just creating – it's also building a business. We all need to earn a living, but sometimes I worry that we focus on sales before we focus on our production. Money isn't the be-all and end-all of art.





Get Ready To Show
HOW TO EXHIBIT AND PRICE YOUR WORK



When you start to organize your first shows, there are two big jobs. One is figuring out your pricing. The other is installing the work. Still, there are ways to make it easier.

- Exhibiting artwork in informal spaces, like cafes or restaurants, can sometimes lead to sales. And it will give you practical experience in organizing and hanging your work.

First, you must decide if your work is a good fit for the space. Will customers enjoy your work? Is there enough wall space? What is the lighting like? What kind of hanging system is used? If you spot a venue that features rotating shows, a quick conversation with a server is a good way to find out how to get more information.

It's important to create a written agreement that notes the dates of the show, when work will be installed and picked up, how sales and commissions will be handled, and what happens if an artwork is damaged.

Then it's time to think about what work you want to exhibit and what you will charge. Consider where you are in your career and compare your work to other artists working in similar ways with work the same size. This will give you a sense of the local market, and what you can reasonably charge. Remember that commercial galleries charge a 50 per cent commission when selling your work. You should do this too. Your prices should reflect a retail price and be the same whether the works are sold in a gallery, a coffee shop, on your website or out of your studio.

Another approach is to choose a formula and stick to it. Some people charge a standard price per square inch or square foot. Others add the cost of materials to an hourly rate for their work. Consistency is important as it gives you a foundation for calculating future price increases as you gain experience, and your practice develops. A consistent model also means you are being fair to all your clients – those who buy now and those who buy later. It's also easy to explain pricing to buyers. Remember to be fair to yourself too – consider your education and cumulative experience and consider giving yourself an annual raise to reflect increases in the cost of living.

Be ethical in your business practices. Don't change your prices once they are set. It's normal for galleries to take 50 per cent of the sales price, so if you have a gallery, don't undercut them when selling from your studio. If your gallery hears what you are doing, it may stop representing you.

It's good to set up a system to keep a record of any sales right from the start of your career. Provide invoices, showing details of the work, the price and method of payment. Once payment is received, issue a receipt. This will give you a record of your pricing over time, and serve as an income record, so you can claim expenses against those sales when you file your taxes.

Once you decide which works to include in your show, *devise a price list* that can be displayed near your work or create individual tags for each work that include your name, the name of the work and the price. It's also good to specify the medium and the size of each piece. Use a label template so you don't need to reinvent the wheel each time you exhibit your work. Labels make you look professional.

After you've figured out pricing, you can *plan how to install your work*. You may want to visit the venue again to study the space and figure out what supplies you may need. Find out how work is displayed – they may have a hanging system or have pre-set nails and not want extra holes.

When it's time to set up the show, be sure to attach hardware to the back of your work before you get to the venue. It's good to use D-rings and strong picture wire so there are no embarrassing accidents. These supplies are available at art and framing shops or hardware stores. Avoid string or fishing line, which may stretch or break. If possible, use two picture hooks for each work to help keep it level.

Displaying several works on one wall? There are several ways to do this. Salon-style groupings with works stacked at different heights allow you to use more of the available space. But hanging works in a row can be easier and looks tidier. If works are the same size, the row can be aligned at top or bottom. It's most common to place the centre of each work at a predetermined height – often 54 inches in a gallery, although this may need to be varied in informal spaces due to the presence of tables or other fixtures. This can be challenging to measure correctly, but it looks professional.

Depending on your venue, food and drink may be spilled on your work, so it's a good idea to display works that can be cleaned easily, like varnished paintings. Avoid placing delicate works close to high traffic areas, like the cream and sugar station.

Tip

Write a short statement about the work and include a little information about yourself.

Print it on a sheet of paper you can pin to the wall. This helps people understand how to approach the work or gives them some insight into why you painted it. Leave some business cards with staff or display them in a small holder near the work. People may follow up with you later.

SO, YOU HAVE A SHOW IN A RESTAURANT OR COFFEE SHOP. CONGRATULATIONS! AN EXHIBITION IS A BIG ACHIEVEMENT.

To make this event work for you, it's good to have a contract covering the basic information – who, what, where, when and how. Remember that contracts protect both the artist and the engager exhibiting the artwork – and that as you work out details, you are talking as one business to another business. A contract can specify when and how you will get paid and state who is responsible for a work that is stolen or damaged. It can also specify if the work is covered by insurance.

Contracts are not meant to scare you. For a show in a restaurant, you do not need a 40-page contract. Consider recording your conversation with the engager – the one where you agree what will happen, when it will happen and how you will be paid – as a verbal contract. Or consider communicating by email so you have a written record. It's a good idea to have some sort of contract every time artwork leaves your studio.

For more information about contracts, go to [Sign On The Dotted Line](#).



Jay Bigam

Edmonton's Jay Bigam has been making art for years, but it was creating an online presence that helped him boost sales.

A self-taught artist, Jay paints abstract landscapes and skylscapes that reflect his love of nature and science.

"The challenge is to get those first sales, to be persistent and not to let the wait get you down." I've been painting since the early '90s, but took a 17-year break, starting again in 2014.

Website: <https://earthskyart.ca>

  [@JaylsPainting](#) , [@JaylsPainting](#)

Live painting at Astral Harvest Festival 2017.
Photo by Jeff Cruz ©

After the gallery that represented me closed, I didn't sell a piece of art for a full year. Then I sold one and things snowballed from there. Edmonton artist Slavo Cech calls it "the momentum of success" because success breeds more success. The challenge is to get those first sales, to be persistent, and not let the wait get you down. Do your best work and build the business end of your art.

If you want to grow your art as a business, there is nothing better than social media. When the gallery closed, I applied to online sales platforms, but none were useful because people couldn't find my work unless I paid premiums. I decided to upgrade my website and work on my social media profile. I'm almost exclusively on Twitter, but I'm being drawn to Instagram by other artists. I've met a lot of people on social media and have collaborated with other artists.

Social media, especially Twitter, is always about the story. You can't just say you're selling a piece because Twitter needs to be a conversation – not posting and walking away. You must post interesting things, like your work in progress, as well as links to your website and your shop. Take every opportunity to show your finished pieces to get people to your website.

When you post a work in progress, you build its story and get people interested in what you are doing. I'm honest about how the day went. Some days, I'll post something like: "This was a terrible day, a real struggle." It's all part of the story. And it reminds other artists that we all have similar issues. I'm self-taught and I find it's important to support others as much as possible.

I began an art #ArtAdventCalendar on Twitter in 2015 and it's become a good way to grow community. It started with 22 Edmonton acquaintances. Now, about 500 people from around the world post their art between Dec. 1 and Dec. 24. I've done media interviews about the calendar and the artists are passionate about it. The calendar is about bringing joy to the timeline. One person was nervous about her first post, which was a watercolour, but it was very popular. People can be nervous about posting, but I rarely see critics – I block the idiots and move on.

I also use social media to raise money for others, like the [Indian Residential Schools Survivors Society](#), and those affected by the Fort McMurray wildfire in 2016. When you post on social media, it's important to sell your work subtly. Show the finished art and put a link to your website – once you get people to your site, give them opportunities to buy. But sales aren't the focus.

Sometimes, people say your political and personal life shouldn't be on your social media. I've found that posting about my personal politics or sports sometimes loses me followers. But I am open about my social positions. I believe art is part of who I am and is part of being a whole person. My views and my politics go into my art.

I love Art Walk because it's about community building. But it's challenging because you must set up and take down your work every day. [Night of Artists](#) at the [Enjoy Centre](#) is good because you leave your display up. When you do events like this and Art Walk, a lot of people want work that is priced under \$200 because it is an impulse buy. Anything more expensive – and large pieces – don't do as well. I sell prints, but they only cover the costs of setting up, not my labour.

— Jay Bigam

Online print sales through my website are huge for me. Not enough artists understand the value of prints for larger, more developed pieces. They are my bread and butter. Selling the original is a bonus. I paint in thin layers, and the prints look almost as good as the originals. Heavy textures don't translate as well. It's important to find a printer who has a good eye for colour. Don't be afraid to use social media for recommendations – ask others for advice and become part of a community of artists.

There are a lot of other places to display and sell art. Arts from the Unknown, the Convention Centre, the Milner Library, the University of Alberta Hospital, and the Jubilee Auditorium all exhibit work. When I had art at the Milner Library, I did live painting on Saturdays for five or six hours. It's a way to get inspired because you talk to people as you produce art.

You can also apply to magazines and enter contests and online exhibitions, but you often must pay a submission fee. Really think about whether it's a good idea when there are free options.

You never know when it will be your time to become known as an artist. So, you must make your art for yourself. Are you doing art because you have time, or do you want to become famous and make lots of money? For me, art is a meditation. That's why I make art. And I really enjoy growing my technique.

I like to push myself and try harder things. It's not about making something for sales – it's more about personal growth. You need to do your thing, finish it, and then let it out into the world. Try not to be critical of it because you never know who's going to see it, love it and want it.

Art is progress. If you're not learning, you're not growing.





Get Exposure & Get Paid

DONATING TO FUNDRAISERS



Art Auctions are a popular way for charities, art galleries and other non-profit groups to raise money. As an artist, you may be asked to donate art to fundraisers in your community. While you may want to support certain causes and attract new clients, why not get the best economic and social returns for your gift?

This information was adapted and condensed from the **BEST PRACTICES FOR CRAFT, MEDIA & VISUAL ARTISTS IN ALBERTA**, produced by **CARFAC Alberta**. To view this document go [here](#).

Artists should consider auctions as business opportunities and any donations as charitable contributions rather than merely feel grateful for “exposure.” Remember that these auctions could not happen without artists and that the group organizing the auction keeps at least part of the revenues generated by the sale of donated art. Thus, the artist’s relationship to the fundraiser’s representatives should be that of professional to professional.

An artist may wish to donate work to a cause they care about – that can be a situation where everyone feels good about the donation. Or the artist may know the event will bring attention that is worth the cost of donating work. But no artist should ever feel pressured to donate. Nor should artists be expected to donate works of art outright to any organization for fundraising purposes. Organizations should compensate participating artists in some way and formalize arrangements with written agreements or contracts.

Artists who support a cause or community organization should be aware of Canada Revenue Agency rules regarding charitable donations. Donating artwork may not be in the artist’s best financial interests. It may make more sense to consider a monetary donation instead.

CARFAC Alberta recommends that artists retain the same portion of the selling price as they would if a gallery sold the work – usually 50 per cent. Whatever the percentage, it should always be negotiated in advance and agreed to in writing.

Artwork should never be sold for fundraising purposes below market value – this serves to drive down the value of artists’ work. CARFAC recommends that artists establish a minimum price – known as a reserve – below which the artist reserves the right to not to sell the work. The reserve should be agreed to in advance in writing.

If you decide to donate, you are responsible for providing all information required by the event program or contract, and should complete, sign and date donation forms. You should guarantee the work is as described and that the organization has the right to sell the work. You may wish to provide a certificate of authenticity.

Tip

It's a good idea to prepare a written condition report with photographs before work leaves your studio. Similarly, the fundraiser should inspect the work for damage when it arrives, and complete a written condition report, ideally with photos, to be shared with you. The group should let you know immediately if the work was damaged during shipping. The organizer may return the work so you can file an insurance claim or you can give permission to unpack the damaged container with the understanding you will make no claim against the organizer.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM ORGANIZERS OF A FUNDRAISER?

- Clear and complete information about the event, before the deadline for submissions, that sets out criteria for selection, timelines, responsibility for framing and dates by which work will be returned and payment made, as well as details related to any required appraisals and tax-deductible receipts.
- Insurance for the work at its full value while it is in the organizers' possession.
- Respect for the artist's moral rights under the Copyright Act, including ensuring reproductions of the work are clearly attributed to the artist and are not distorted or altered.
- Return of any unsold work within the time frame stipulated in the written agreement.
- A statement of the amount received for the work and a copy of any published material about the event.
- Maintenance of the work in its original condition and the return of unsold work in comparable packaging.
- Respectful treatment of work and secure display to prevent its theft or damage.

ART DONATIONS AND CANADA REVENUE AGENCY RULES

Certain regulations apply when artists donate work to a registered charity, a federal, provincial, or municipal government, a public gallery or other institution, or to another person as a gift.

A written appraisal may be required to provide evidence of fair market value (what an artwork would sell for on the open market). Any responsibility and cost associated with an appraisal should be negotiated between the artist and recipient and documented in writing.

The government may audit an artist's tax return to substantiate facts surrounding a charitable donation receipt. If an artwork is donated to a registered charity or a government in Canada it must be given a value. The value must be an amount no more than the work's fair market value, and no less than its cost. This amount becomes the proceeds of disposition and is used to determine capital gain or income.

Remember, only registered charities (and, in some instances, government agencies) may provide a charitable donation receipt when artwork is donated. Charitable receipts must reflect fair market value. This type of donation is dealt with in the same way as any other charitable donation, based on information provided in the Federal Income Tax and Benefit Guide.

Under current regulations, when an artist creates a work of art with the intention of selling it but instead donates it, the donation is considered a disposition of property from the artist's inventory. The value of the work as described in a charitable donation receipt must be treated as income by the artist. This can have an impact on your total taxable income, so it's important to carefully consider the value of any work you donate.

This information is not tax advice. Consult a tax specialist if you have questions about specific circumstances.



Dawn Marie Marchand

Dawn Marie Marchand didn't plan to be an artist – but life took her in that direction. She uses her art to make a difference.

Dawn Marie is a Cree and Métis artist from Cold Lake First Nation northeast of Edmonton. An author and a lecturer, she believes in the power of art to encourage social change for under-represented groups.

Website: <https://www.dawnmariemarchand.net>



Photograph courtesy of the artist.

I didn't start out to be an artist. My mother wanted me to be a politician or a lawyer. I had a learning disability and I compensated by listening. I could remember what I heard, but not what I read. I attended a university transfer program in Fort McMurray. I had to take a fine arts course, but the textbook was 600 pages of nitpicky stuff. I knew I wouldn't do well with it. So, I transferred into a drawing class, and learned I had a strength with drawing.

My professors asked me to be part of a pilot project that brought international contemporary artists to teach classes. I stayed for a year. My first painting teacher was **Alex Janvier**. He and **Joane Cardinal-Schubert** taught me to paint. I studied painting, collage, installation, stone carving, performance art and installation with **Jane Nash**, **Brian Petro**, **Brian Clark** and **Rebecca Belmore**. So, I ended up in this hands-on, quick-and-dirty bootcamp for Indigenous arts and art just sucked me in. That set me up for how I do art and what I do today.

When I had children, I took a break from art and came back to it when they were a little older. Then, I started working in schools as an education consultant. I have strong knowledge about Indigenous arts, and about using art as a learning tool. I created programs and projects within schools with a high ratio of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. I taught my students to show me what they knew and then taught them how to write essays. I was the only person in Edmonton doing that. Then money for art classes dried up, and I had a hard time finding work.

I don't do art for 'exposure'. I tell people that artists die of exposure all the time. When someone tries to tell me how great an opportunity is and then asks me to drop my fees, I say no.

— Dawn Marie Marchand

I started working on my own art – it was the only thing left that I had a skill set in. But after I became a full-time artist, I didn't have financial security. We ended up homeless for a few years and lived in my uncle's basement in one small room. It was a difficult time because I was often too qualified for jobs that were available. I was blessed that my uncle helped me. I found odd jobs and did get a few projects. We didn't have a lot of money. But we had a roof over our heads, food, and the things the kids needed for school.

One big barrier when I started approaching galleries was that I didn't have the "right" education. And I didn't have a circle of friends in the art world. I've found that unless you have the right network, nobody will look at you. My art was constantly rejected. I ended up generating interest and sales through social media. And then things just took off. One odd job connected me to the *Idle No More* movement. I had strong opinions about the issues coming forward. That's how I became the artist activist.

I began working with the [Edmonton Arts Council](#) and critiqued them harshly. There has been progress. For example, with [Aᓄᓐ \(INIW\)](#): River Lot 11, an art park in Edmonton, we demanded that artists engage with Indigenous people in the community. We also made sure advanced artists would teach public art processes to emerging artists. We were building up artists so they could fulfill the requirements of the city's public arts program. I'm proud to have been part of that project. That's the kind of advocacy work I've been doing – bringing communities together, especially for public art installations.

I don't do art for "exposure." I tell people that artists die of exposure all the time. When someone tries to tell me how great an opportunity is and then asks me to drop my fees, I say no. Artists don't need exposure, they need to pay their bills. When I speak at universities or large organizations, I say no to token fees. But I still do some art therapy for little money for Indigenous service providers because that's important to me and I set my own rules. I work with at-risk youth, people with addictions and prisoners, for example. That work is based on Indigenous teachings, and I teach people how to monitor their emotions with art.

It can be challenging to be a woman who creates art. When men take unique approaches, their potential is supported. But that same potential is often ignored in women. There can be repercussions for speaking up, but if more people do, we can get rid of some of the judgments.

I've been an artist for 30 years and can choose who I work with. I don't have to jump at every opportunity. But sometimes we must take opportunities where we can teach people. It's not for everybody, and it can be stressful.

But if you go in there and you do what you do with excellence, you can treat it like a token of love and use your authentic voice. If you are real, you might be able to make a difference in policies.





Going For Grants

WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR ART



Grants are one way to support the creation of new artwork. Funding can come from governments – whether national, provincial, or municipal – as well as community foundations and businesses. There will be different rules and requirements, so it's important to research each grant carefully before you apply.

Generally, grants are available to professional artists – based on training, previous exhibitions, and the consensus of your peers, although exact rules vary. It's far easier to ask if you qualify than to prepare a grant application only to find out you are not eligible.

Applying for grants takes time and the process is competitive, especially for large grants from provincial and federal governments. So don't be discouraged if you are not successful. Try to learn from the experience and apply again with a better proposal. Writing grants is a skill – the more you do it, the better you become.

WHICH PROGRAMS TO APPLY TO?

- The [Edmonton Arts Council](#) invites applicants who have an “existing and committed practice” or “a history of other professional activity in the arts sector.” Applicants must be at least 18, live in Edmonton and have legal status as a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, or have a valid work permit.
- The [Alberta Foundation for the Arts](#) asks that an applicant's curriculum vitae – a record of professional work as an artist – shows a history of creative work as part of the arts community. Applications are assessed by a panel of experts, both on their own merits and how they compare to other applications. The panel considers things like the impact of the project, its artistic or educational merit, the suitability of the budget and the applicant's ability to carry out the project, as well as the applicant's expertise, level of training and prior accomplishments. For individual project funding, an artist must have lived in Alberta for at least a year and be legally entitled to live and work in Canada.
- The [Canada Council for the Arts](#) funds professional artists with specialized training in the field, although not necessarily in academic institutions. It considers artists who have produced an independent body of work and maintained an independent professional practice for at least three years. It expects an artist to be recognized by peers for a history of professional public presentations and to be making work that has been recognized by a curator, an art dealer or a collective of professional artists.

ALTERNATIVE GRANTS

Don't despair if you don't qualify for major grants. There are alternatives that are often easier to get.

Of course, your project must meet certain criteria. In some cases, you will need to find a non-profit organization or registered charity to apply on your behalf. But that doesn't need to stop you. You may already volunteer with a charity or belong to a non-profit multicultural group or business association. As well, the area where you live is likely represented by a community league.

The key is to propose a project you are passionate about and work with an organization that's a good fit for what you want to do. The grant money will be paid to the organization, which will then pay your artist fee and reimburse you for supplies and other expenses.

Working with a community group can be rewarding. Your project will contribute to your community and may be seen by hundreds of people.

If you look around the city, you'll see numerous examples of such projects, including permanent art, such as murals, as well as temporary displays or events at community celebrations.

Many organizations are happy to work with an artist who has an interesting idea, so don't be shy about approaching them.

Once you have the backing of a community league, registered charity or another non-profit group, research available grants. If you are working with a community league or a business association this step will be easy; they are connected to city representatives who can offer advice.

Tip

Tell funders what they want to hear. Follow the directions precisely, write concisely and stay within suggested word counts. Provide your best images in the requested format and any other supporting documentation that's required. Give yourself lots of time to complete an application and get feedback from people who know more than you about grants. And always remember to get your application in on time!

ADVICE FROM THE ALBERTA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

The primary reason to apply for a grant is to advance your artistic practice. Money is a tool and grants, like money, are not an end-product in themselves – a grant is a valuable tool that supports your ability to reach goals in your artistic career.

Be clear and be concise.

Highlight how your proposed project will:

- Challenge your artistic practice
- Allow you to develop your skills
- Raise your profile
- Further your career objectives

Your project description needs to explain:

- What you want to do
- Why it is important to your practice
- Where and when things will happen
- What your anticipated outcomes will be

Your proposed project should be creative and compelling – and your application should be concise and clear. Applications succeed due to the quality of your ideas, not the number of words.

For more tips, go [here](#).

PLACES TO APPLY:

Remember, grants have different criteria. Some are available to individual artists, while others are for registered charities. Some require matching funding and others expect volunteer participation. Before applying, make sure that your project fits the requirements of the grant.

Here are some possibilities to get you started:

Government:

- [City of Edmonton: Residential Neighbourhood Funding](#)
- [Alberta Business Grants](#)
- [Government of Alberta Community Initiatives Program](#)
- [Government of Canada - Building Communities Through Art & Heritage](#)

Business:

- [ATB Financial](#)
- [Bank of Montreal](#)
- [Royal Bank of Canada](#)
- [TD Canada Trust](#)
- [Telus Communications](#)
- [EPCOR Community Investment Grant](#)

Foundations:

- [Edmonton Community Foundation](#)
- [Rozsa Foundation](#)
- [McLean Foundation](#)
- [Birks Family Foundation](#)

Other:

- [Canada Post](#)
- [Edmonton Heritage Council](#)



Rust Magic

(Annaliza Toledo & Trevor Peters)

Rather than focus on their own art practices, **Annaliza Toledo** and **Trevor Peters** teamed up to start a street art festival.

It took a lot of hard work but their efforts to build community have seen national and international artists gather in Edmonton each summer to create lively murals on donated wall spaces.

Website: <http://rustmagic.ca>

Mural Map: [Rust Magic Mural Map](#)

 [@rustmagic](#)

 [Rust Magic International](#)



Photograph courtesy of the artists.

Annaliza: As a child, I was interested in art, and later I got into graphic design and graphic arts. In 2007, I met Trevor, who was already painting murals inside people's houses, and I became immersed in that world. I took it on and learned everything I could and started painting. Just learning how to use the spray can was amazing. Since then, art has been our full-time gig. We started doing murals full-time, so I consider myself more of a muralist. I do a little bit of art here and there, but I dabble in a lot of things. The murals kind of took over our lives.

Trevor: My story began when I was about eight and started skateboarding. I started going to skateboard shops and seeing all the cool skateboard graphics. In the '90s, I came across a book about graffiti art and my friends and I got fascinated with street art in New York. We instantly got addicted to using spray cans to create unsanctioned work. After some people got arrested and charged for their graffiti in Edmonton, we started to think about how we could do sanctioned street art. Graffiti was becoming popular around the world, so we knew that there was a way to make the public see that what we do is a viable art form. And that's pretty much how **Rust Magic** started.

Rust Magic: When we travelled, we would see the public art scene and realize that Edmonton's was almost non-existent, especially street art, and that inspired us. The festival began as a conversation about how we could change the narrative around graffiti and street art in Edmonton.

It was crazy hard work in the first year – it was just us and one of our best friends. Money was really hard. We invested our own money, our families helped, and we got a little bit of funding. We scrambled to provide food, lodging, supplies and walls for the artists. But we believed in what we were doing.

The rewards came later when we could sit back and look at the murals. We knocked on a lot of doors, sent emails and made phone calls. But we had some community support for that. It was hard, but we learned so much.

It got easier each year after that because we got more support as people realized that we were doing meaningful community-based work. Now, we have sponsors for some of the supplies we need, which makes a big difference. We're putting ourselves on the map because we're creating a space for street artists, and we've created a culture around the festival – we've kind of made the streets our galleries.

We want to support artists and support what they're doing because we really believe in the style of work they're creating. But we're also creating something – Edmontonians can come together and learn about the roots of graffiti art.


When people watch the murals being made and meet the artists, there's a sense of pride – people feel like they belong to the art that is part of their community. I think, moving forward, we need to nurture that culture because that's where the magic happens. And internationally, it has got us a lot of exposure because we're one of, if not the only, festival that focuses strictly on graffiti art.

One of the reasons we bring in aspiring artists is so we can show them it's not just about being an artist. It's talking to building owners, having etiquette, understanding that the work is labour intensive. You might be in the hot sun all day or need to know how to operate a lift.

A big part of our responsibility as public artists is to interact with the public. When you're in public, you're going to have to explain what you're doing and talk about your work. So, you must build some confidence so you can talk about it.

If you have an idea, go for it.
You can find all the resources in the world
now with the Internet. It's also important to
find a mentor, or someone you look up to,
and reach out to them.

— Rust Magic



We also need to be compassionate with the street people and homeless people. Don't be intimidated by them – treat them like people. Everybody deserves a little bit of attention from you, especially if you're creating public art.

It's important for us to encourage kids who are creating graffiti art to get their work into galleries. For a lot of the murals, we bring on volunteers or aspiring artists who are curious about the process. Sometimes they keep the artists company and are there for whatever they need. They do paint on the walls, and they'll do some fills. But, at the same time, they're learning about the process. Every time we have our festival, we take on aspiring artists to work with the professionals. There are some programs and groups that we have worked with, like the [iHuman Youth Society](#), so that's a big part of what we do too.

If you have an idea, go for it. You can find all the resources in the world now with the Internet. It's also important to find a mentor, or someone you look up to, and reach out to them.

I think it's a bad habit for artists to wait for things to happen. It's key to produce work and be creative about how you are going to get it to the public. We didn't wait for anybody. It's important to know that no one's coming to save you, so stay consistent. It's not about being a famous artist, it's about being an artist.

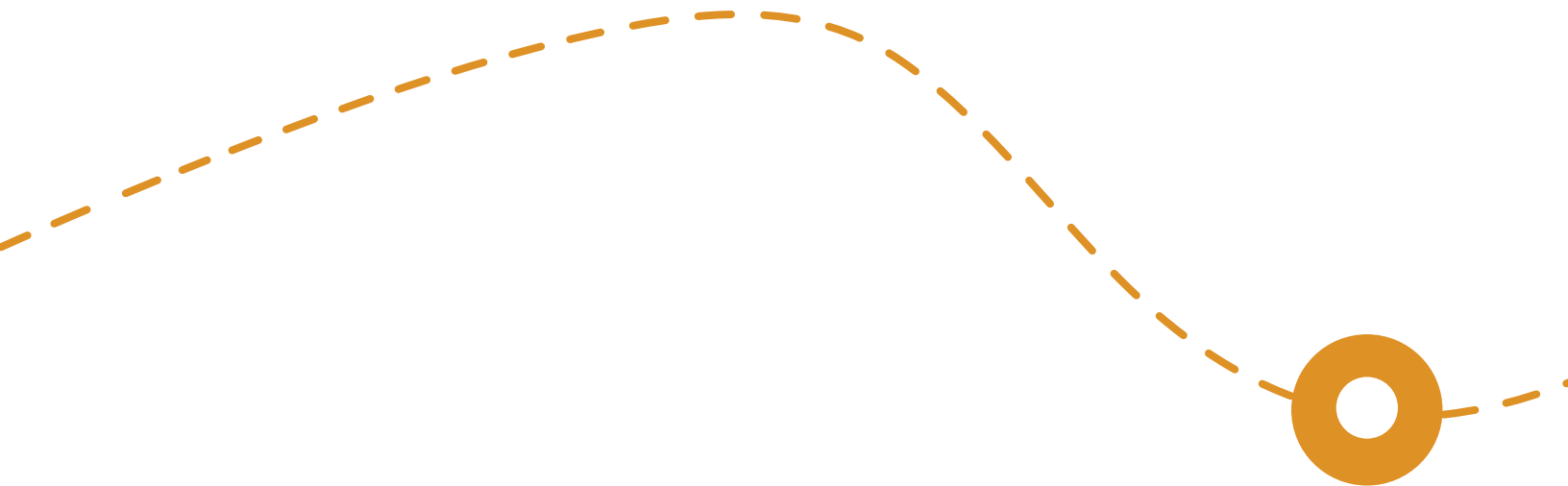
Art is about what feeds your soul and makes you happy.





Spread The Word

GET MEDIA ATTENTION IN A BUSY WORLD



You are having a show. Great! But how do you let people know about it?

Word of mouth is good, and you can reach out through social media and pin up notices on bulletin boards. But don't forget media outlets – newspapers, magazines and online news outlets, as well as radio and television stations.

You don't need to be famous to send out a media release.

If you have a show in a gallery, the gallerist usually handles this task. But if you have a show in a community space or are organizing a group event, you can do it yourself. Few artists reach out to media outlets, so you have a good chance of getting coverage.

A first step is to develop a simple template for a media release. Editors are busy, so all you need is one or two paragraphs that concisely convey important information about the show. You will email this to editors.

Editors may add your show to listings of local events. Or they may publish an image of your work, perhaps as a short news item. If you are lucky, a reporter may interview you by phone or in person in your studio or at your show.

Best of all, this is done at no charge to you – media outlets consider it a public service to let people know what is happening in their communities.

What information should I include in my email?

- A subject line that clearly identifies the topic, so your email doesn't get lost in the flood of other correspondence.
- One or two short paragraphs about your work. What are you showing? Why are you making this work? Is there an interesting link to your own life story? Try to make your writing clear, informative and engaging. One key to coverage is to find what journalists call an angle – something that will make you or your work interesting to the public.
- A few lines about yourself – perhaps where you are from, your education and a few achievements. Don't overstate. Stick to the facts.
- Exhibition information, including your name, the title of the show, the name and address of the venue, opening and closing dates and the hours the venue is open.
- Your phone number, email address and a link to your website.

Attach one or two good-quality images of your work or a link to photographs in [Dropbox](#) or a similar file-share program that's easy to access. Include caption information (your name, the work's title, the year it was made, the medium and size, as well as any photo credits.) Many publications can no longer afford to send out photographers to small events and will happily use these images. Photos improve the odds of getting publicity.

Try to streamline things for busy editors. Making things difficult to understand, hard to access or needlessly time-consuming, makes it more likely that an editor will move on to something else.

Where do I send the press release?

Start by researching websites, newspapers and magazines in your community and then compile an email list of useful contacts and their email addresses – arts reporters and entertainment editors will be happy to get your information.

Remember they need to find interesting stories and you are helping them do their jobs! It's a win-win situation.

Try to build relationships. Follow the work of local arts writers. You can then truthfully say: "I liked your article about _____ because _____. I am sending you information about my upcoming show. I think it may interest you."

Send your release to media outlets that cover the visual arts, but also to general interest publications. Don't be afraid to think outside the box. You like painting the people in community gardens? Try a regional gardening magazine.

When should I submit my press release?

Large print magazines usually need information two months in advance. Weekly publications may need a month and aim for two weeks for daily newspapers. Remember that publications often have small staffs and editors may want to hire a freelance journalist. It takes time to see the work and write the story. Then it must be edited, before it is published or broadcast. It all takes time!

What if I don't hear back?

Send a polite follow-up email. Remind editors that you reached out and hope they have received your email. Include your original pitch in the body of the email so the editor doesn't need to search for it. If it doesn't work out this time for some reason, take the long view. You are building a relationship that may flower later.

Where can I see a media release?

You can find lots of examples if you look online, but here's one to get you started. To view the example click [here](#).

Media Outlets:

- [Edmonton Journal](#)
- [CBC](#)
- [Edmonton Examiner](#)
- [Galleries West](#)

University Publications:

- [The Gateway](#)
- [The Griff](#)
- [King's University Chronicle](#)
- [NAIT Nugget](#)

Newsletters from Art Groups:

- Edmonton Arts Council
- Alberta Foundation for the Arts
- CARFAC Alberta

Other Ideas:

- *Neighborhood Papers:*
[Boyle McCauley News](#)
- *Culturally specific radio stations that relate to your to your background*
- *Popular blogs about art or community*

Online event listings sites:

- [Taproot Edmonton](#)
- [Calgary Arts Development Classified](#)



You get a call from a reporter who wants to talk to you about your show! Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Respond quickly – deadlines can be tight. The more time a reporter has to write their story, the happier you'll be with it.
- You may be nervous but try to sound confident. Talk about your art in a straightforward way without using a lot of jargon.
- It's good to provide a business card to help ensure your name is spelled correctly. Help with pronunciation and mention any spelling idiosyncrasies. It's also a good idea to provide your bio and artist statement.
- Watch your email for any last-minute follow-up questions.

Remember that anything you say might end up in the story, so decide beforehand what you are comfortable revealing, particularly if your work deals with personal issues. Good reporters listen intently and know how to build connections quickly, so you may find yourself saying more than you planned. But try not to freeze up either. Look for your middle path.

Avoid saying things "off the record" – journalistic conventions dictate that a conversation is not off the record unless both parties agree, and you need to negotiate this carefully.

If you are happy with the story, send a quick thank you note by email. Remember, you're building a relationship. If there's an error – particularly the date or location of the show, follow up politely. It may be possible to correct it, particularly with online publications. Journalists are trained to care about accuracy and are generally happy to make factual corrections.

Tip

Use clear language and describe the work honestly. Avoid "artspeak." Most editors do not have specialized arts training and find this kind of writing difficult to understand. They constantly hear and tune out buzzwords like ontological or evocative.

The main thing is simply to try. Don't worry about making mistakes. It's good to send out information about your show no matter how you do it. Writers and editors know that artists are not expert writers so mistakes will be forgiven. Some artists submit terrible media releases, but something in the work sparks interest and they get covered.



Jennifer Annesley

Leveraging in-person shows helped Edmonton painter Jennifer Annesley find her path to a full-time career.

Jennifer has been in more than 100 exhibitions. She has received the A.J. Casson Medal from the [Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour](#), the group's highest award, and her work is in the collections of the University of Alberta and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the [University of Alberta](#) and recently became a senior member of the [Federation of Canadian Artists](#).

Website: <https://annesleystudio.com>



[@annesleystudio](#)



[Annesley Studio](#)

Photograph courtesy of the artist.

I was already doing commissioned work before I graduated from the University of Alberta in 1989 and then worked as an illustrator for Alberta Education for a year. Even while I was working, I continued to do commissions and showed my work in local galleries.

For several years, I focused on building my art practice and creating a body of work. As a young artist, it was hard to work with galleries because I felt I was largely relinquishing control of marketing my work. Galleries also take an average 50 per cent commission from any sales, although a good gallery is worth it. By 1994, I was selling just enough to eke out a living. I didn't apply for grants or have a part-time job. It was a struggle, but I loved what I was doing.

That year, a friend decided to hold a customer appreciation night for his clients and asked if I would like to show my art. When we combined our client lists, there were 400 to 500 names. We decided to hold it at the Fairmont Hotel Macdonald. That first year was enough of a success that I did it again the following year, on my own, and I've continued every year since. The show can be hard because it's one night of intense public scrutiny. It takes a lot of work and time to organize, and it's a lot of pressure. However, I have a loyal following of collectors and fans and years of momentum that I worked hard to build.

I realized early on that I also needed to work with a professional gallery. Virginia Christopher in Calgary asked to represent me. I was with her gallery for 18 years and sold paintings there each year, but not enough to make a living. Sales from my annual show made up about 90 per cent of my income.

After Virginia passed away, I started working with [Canada House Gallery](#) in Banff. That's been a game changer because they do quite well with my work. One challenge working with a gallery is to balance the amount of work I produce for my annual show and for the gallery. I can only produce so many paintings a year – some take 200 to 300 hours to complete, and I won't compromise on quality.

It can be challenging to work with galleries. Understandably, they don't favour artists who sell their own work, although that is changing with the explosion in social media and online marketing. So, establish trust with your gallery, be open about what you're doing, and never undercut your gallery on pricing.

You need discipline to be a successful artist.
You must spend the time and do the work.

— Jennifer Annesley

When I worked with Virginia, all my corporate sales went through her because businesses generally want to work with an established gallery rather than directly with the artist. Collectors often want the expertise and professionalism of a gallery too.

It's important to show your artistic voice – choose your strongest style and create a cohesive body of work. You also need to keep your CV and artist statement up to date. A professional website is also a big help – even if you don't sell your art through it. A blog and social media accounts also help build a following.

If you want to make a living at art, you must think about it as a business. Marketing is easier if you work with a theme. For my annual show, I come up with a theme, usually based on my travels and often focusing on historic architecture. The theme gives me a framework for the paintings I work on that year and for the way I market the event. It doesn't matter if I'm making work for a gallery, my annual show, or a juried exhibition. The theme keeps my work consistent.

Of course, creating consistent work doesn't mean you can't experiment and expand your practice and build new skills. You can create a recognizable style even if you're working across genres.

Generally, I wouldn't advise young artists to take the route I did as it is a financially risky business model. Fortunately, it worked out for me, but I already had a client list and a body of work I'd been building for years. Artists must follow their own paths, but they need to know how much risk they are willing to take. You need discipline to be a successful artist. You must spend the time and do the work. When you work for yourself, you have no day-to-day schedule, so you need structure to help manage your time.

Self-care is also important for running a successful business. No matter how challenging making a living as an artist can be, I am always aware of nutrition and exercise. I love backpacking, skiing, canoeing, and climbing, which are good for the body and the brain – as well as creativity. Taking a 30-minute mental break can save you hours of frustration in the studio.



Running a Business

TAXES & BOOKKEEPING



When you start an art business, it's smart to follow sound business practices from the start.

At its simplest, this means setting up a bookkeeping system to track expenses and sales.

This will save you time – and money – when you file your tax return.

The [Canadian Revenue Agency](#) – the government agency that oversees taxation – considers professional artists to be self-employed and operating as businesses. This means you must record any income earned from your art practice on your annual tax return. Since you are self-employed, you will not receive T4 slips from an employer, the way you do when you have a job. So, you need to keep your own record of any earnings so you can report them when you file your taxes.

It's wise, as well, to record any expenses incurred in making your art, as they can be deducted from your income when you do your taxes. This will lower your earned income, so you pay less in taxes. Save your receipts from everything you buy for your work. If you do not have a receipt, you cannot claim it as an expense.

If you receive a grant, that income is taxable. However, you can deduct qualified expenses from the total grant amount, meaning only the part of the grant that wasn't used for expenses is taxable. A good guide to declaring grant income on your taxes is provided by the [Canada Council for the Arts](#). For more information click [here](#).

You may be able to deduct a portion of the cost of a piece of large equipment bought specifically for your art business over the course of several years, as some equipment depreciates, or loses value, over time. This is called a capital loss allowance. Additional information about this, including what is eligible and how to declare it on your taxes, can be found [here](#).

GST for Artists

Whenever you buy anything in Alberta, you pay five per cent in GST – the Goods and Services Tax. If you earn more than \$30,000 a year from your business, you are expected to charge GST on any goods you sell. To do this you must register with the [Canada Revenue Agency](#). You will have to file an annual return. Find out more [here](#).

HERE ARE SOME GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DECLARING SELF-EMPLOYMENT INCOME:

- If you are filing your own taxes on paper, you will need to file form T2125 in addition to the standard form T1 to report your self-employment income and deductions.
- If you are filing your taxes online using a tax preparation program, there should be a section for business and self-employment income that will allow you to list your income and expenses. This is generally straightforward and easy. Enter the appropriate income and expense amounts into the appropriate boxes in the self-employment section.
- If you ask a tax accountant to file your taxes, give them your proof of income and receipts, so they can declare your income and expenses appropriately.

Tax laws do change, so it's not possible to provide a definitive list of rules here. Check online for the latest details about income and deductions for artists [here](#).

Remember, you must save all invoices, receipts and other proof of income and expenses for seven years in case of an audit or review by tax officials.

Tip

Many expenses related to producing and exhibiting your art can be deducted from your income when you file your taxes. These include materials and equipment, the costs of maintaining a studio, whether separate from your home or in your home, and costs related to exhibiting your work, including shipping work to exhibitions. As a self-employed business, you can also deduct the cost of transportation – usually a portion of the cost of running your vehicle, if you use it for business purposes.



Need more help?

CARFAC's national office has posted some great tax resources for artists [here](#), including an informational video and links to other relevant sources of information. To view the video click [here](#).

If you need assistance, webinars and in-person sessions about taxes are often offered by organizations like the [Edmonton Arts Council](#) and [Elephant Artist Relief](#) in Calgary.

Free tax preparation assistance is often available for low-income Canadians at public libraries and community organizations. If you need help, check for resources in your area well before the April 30 tax deadline.

If you are new to Canada and need general information about filing taxes in Canada, you can find a useful online tax guide for newcomers and immigrants [here](#).

BOOKKEEPING FOR ARTISTS

Artists enjoy making things and being creative but may regard office tasks as unwelcome chores. While you could hire a bookkeeper, you may be able to manage on your own if you set up a simple system and commit to using it. There is software to make such tasks easier. And keeping good business records will help you track how your business is performing financially.

It's important to keep a paper trail, even if you just drop receipts and invoices into a shoebox to sort through at the end of the month. Updating the books will help you remember to invoice clients, follow up on unpaid accounts and order supplies.

The basic information to record is who you paid or received money from, the date, the amount, and the reason.

You can find plenty of helpful information online to help small businesses manage bookkeeping tasks.

Your income might look like this:

Date	Client	Amount	Details
1-Nov-21	Jane Doe	\$500.00	Painting (Landscape 1)
5-Nov-21	John Smith	\$200.00	Print (Landscape 3)
17-Nov-21	ABC Business	\$600.00	3 Prints (Landscape 2, 5 and 7)

Your expenses might look like this:

Date	Payee	Amount	Details
12-Nov-21	Acme Art Supplies	\$200.00	Paints and canvas
24-Nov-21	123 Stationary	\$50.00	Business Cards
1-Dec-21	XYZ Offices	\$400.00	Studio rent



Keith Walker

Edmonton hot glass artist Keith Walker learned his craft while still working in an earlier career, and carefully planned a slow transition to becoming a full-time artist.

Website: <http://www.keithwalkerglass.com>

 [@keithwalkerglass](https://www.instagram.com/keithwalkerglass)

 [Keith Walker Glass](https://www.facebook.com/KeithWalkerGlass)

Photograph courtesy of the artist.

It took time to learn everything I needed to know.

— Keith Walker

You can find Keith Walker, Edmonton hot glass artist, working in his backyard studio, [Blow in the Dark Glassworks](#), which he opened in 2011.

But Keith didn't start out planning to be an artist – he was a full-time journeyman carpenter with what he calls “a proper, responsible job.” His main creative outlet was photography, but then a friend took him to his mother's glass workshop, [Glass Happens Studio](#), around 2001.

“I was intrigued and volunteered once a week and was given studio time in exchange, which I used to learn the art of glass blowing, all the while working as a carpenter full time,” he says. As Keith gained confidence with the basics, he started “creating a whole bunch of experiments.” As any artist will tell you, that usually translates into a storage problem. And so, he began looking for ways to sell it.

“If the glass doesn't break on the floor, you end up with an object you must find space for. So, I started doing crafts shows. I'd team up with other artists, craftspeople, and artisans, rent a hall and try to sell glass. I wasn't necessarily thinking that I'd make money, but I wanted to find homes for these objects that took up space.”

At that time, he still considered glass blowing to be a hobby. He didn't think he could make a living from it, so he kept working as a carpenter. But his hobby became a major focus in his life.

“I didn't really have to make money with glass,” he says. “But I wanted to prove that I could design something like a cup, execute it and sell it.”

He didn't start thinking about opening his own studio for a long time and continued to work at [Glass Happens](#) until it closed. That was late in 2008 or early 2009, he recalls.

“I didn't have studio space to work in,” he says. “I did what I could in rented spaces to keep my skills up and continued learning. I also partnered with other artists on local projects and was an artist-in-residence at several local schools. I was always learning while working with others.”

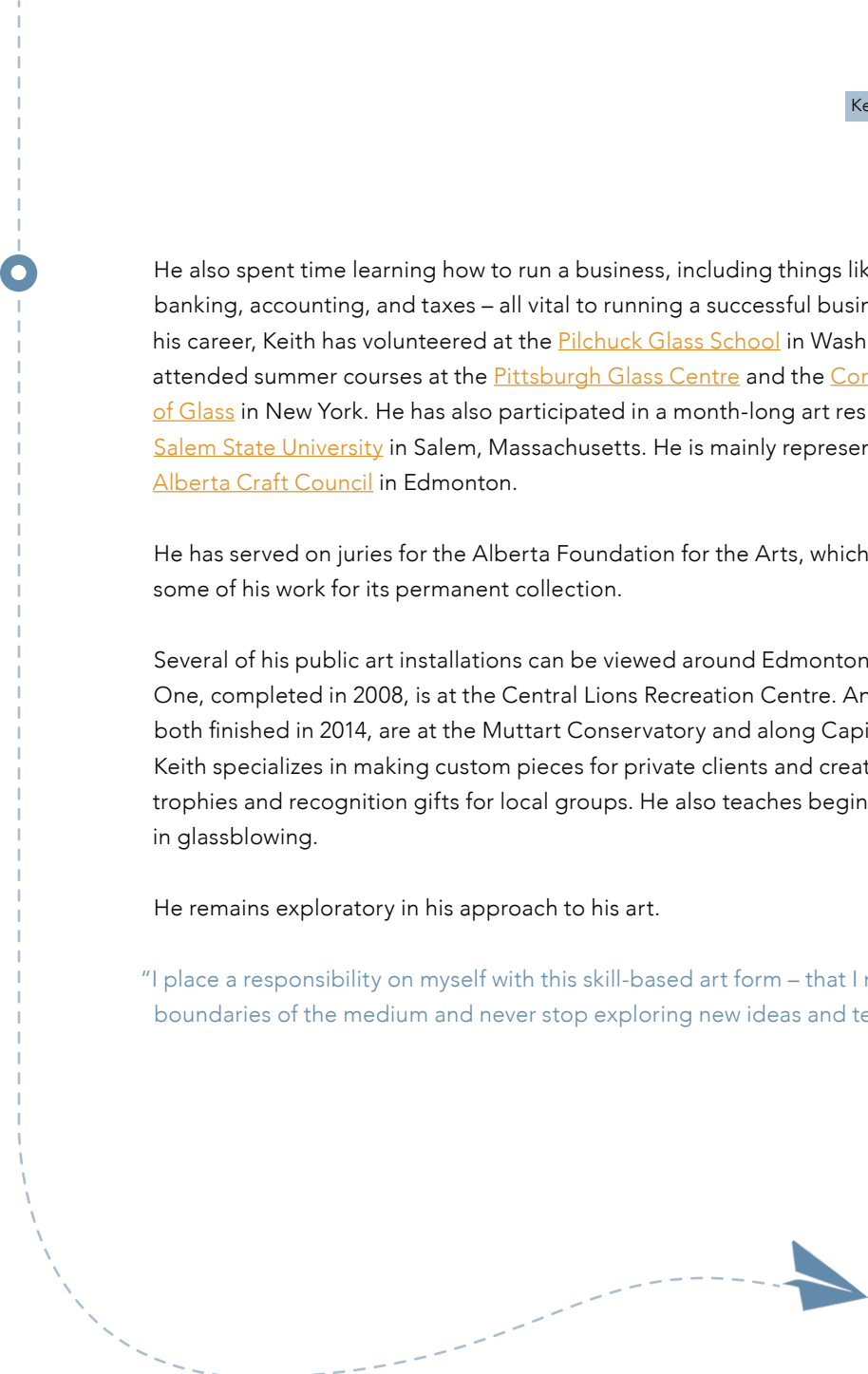
Eventually, he began planning his own full-time art business.

"It took time to learn everything I needed to know," he says. "My property is large enough for a studio, so over two years my friends and I constructed a large multi-purpose space. It took a further three years to develop the specialty equipment used for glassmaking. My wife and I both use it for our art, and it's also where I teach people about my craft."

"I didn't rush the process. First, it's expensive to build a studio and I wanted to do it properly. But I also used the time to keep working at my craft, pushing myself to constantly do better and learn new things."



Photograph courtesy of the artist.



He also spent time learning how to run a business, including things like insurance, banking, accounting, and taxes – all vital to running a successful business. During his career, Keith has volunteered at the [Pilchuck Glass School](#) in Washington and attended summer courses at the [Pittsburgh Glass Centre](#) and the [Corning Museum of Glass](#) in New York. He has also participated in a month-long art residency at [Salem State University](#) in Salem, Massachusetts. He is mainly represented by the [Alberta Craft Council](#) in Edmonton.

He has served on juries for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, which has acquired some of his work for its permanent collection.

Several of his public art installations can be viewed around Edmonton. One, completed in 2008, is at the Central Lions Recreation Centre. And two others, both finished in 2014, are at the Muttart Conservatory and along Capital Boulevard. Keith specializes in making custom pieces for private clients and creating award trophies and recognition gifts for local groups. He also teaches beginner classes in glassblowing.

He remains exploratory in his approach to his art.

“I place a responsibility on myself with this skill-based art form – that I must push the boundaries of the medium and never stop exploring new ideas and techniques.”



Protect Your Work

QUICK INTRODUCTION TO COPYRIGHT



Canadian copyright laws protect original intellectual properties – like works of art – from being used without permission. They also allow copyright holders – like artists – to generate income from their creations.

Copyright law is a complex field. This quick introduction points to some of the key principles. For a more detailed discussion, go to [Appendix X](#).

Copyright laws protect the expression of ideas, but not the ideas themselves. For example, an original painting of a sky can be protected by copyright, but the idea of painting a sky cannot.

For visual artists, copyright includes three rights – *exhibition, reproduction and moral rights*.

- The exhibition right requires art displayed in public to be licensed by the copyright holder unless it is for sale.
- The reproduction right governs print, audio-visual and digital uses, as well as the copying of books.
- Moral rights protect a work from being used for unapproved purposes, such as promoting a product or cause, and also protect it from unapproved alterations or distortions, such as cropping or colouring.

In Canada, the creator of a unique expression of an idea is automatically the copyright owner. (Exceptions may occur when works are commissioned, or an artist creates work as an employee, unless a legal agreement specifically states the artist owns the copyright.)

It's not legally necessary to use the copyright symbol in Canada. But using it can remind people your work is protected. And if you're working internationally, remember that some countries do require it. When you sell an artwork, copyright automatically stays with you unless a legal agreement states otherwise. It's good to mention routinely in sales agreements that you retain copyright so that is understood by the work's purchasers.

Copyright can be a source of revenue. It can be assigned – the transfer of partial or all rights to another party – or licensed, which means someone else can use a work for certain purposes under certain conditions, but copyright remains with the creator. [CARFAC](#) recommends against assigning copyright.

If you believe your copyright has been infringed, it's up to you to take legal action. It's wise to consult a lawyer or seek advice from [CARFAC](#). A first step is often to send a "cease and desist" letter asking that the infringement stop and requesting compensation.



COPYRIGHT COLLECTIVES

While artists can license their own works, they can opt to have their copyright managed by a copyright collective.

CARFAC administers the copyright collective, Copyright Visual Arts, COVA-DAAV an organization that manages licensing for artists. Membership is free and the collective has an online Image Bank where artists can showcase up to 10 images for licensing.

The *CARFAC-RAAV Minimum Fee Schedule* sets out minimum fees for exhibitions, artist talks and other services provided by artists.

If an artist has their work in a publication, they can join a copyright collective such as Access Copyright, which collects fees for the copying of books and distributes royalties to creators.

For more information on copyright click [here](#).

CARFAC (Canadian Artists' Representation/Front des Artistes Canadien) and **RAAV** (Regroupement des Artistes en Arts Visuels) have collaborated to develop the *CARFAC-RAAV Minimum Recommended Fee Schedule*, which sets minimum recommended rates for the use of artwork and certain services that visual artists provide.

These fees are updated yearly to reflect increases in the cost of living. This fee schedule functions as a widely recognized standard, and the listed fees are considered minimum payments for the use of copyrights (exhibiting or reproducing artwork) when the work is not for sale, and/or for the professional services of visual and media artists.

It's important to understand, however, that the rates are not mandatory – they are recommendations. You can use this fee schedule as a guideline for reviewing offers or contracts for exhibitions and professional services you may be asked to provide.

An example:

In 2023, Mary will have a solo exhibition of her work in an Edmonton non-profit artist-run gallery. Because the work is not for sale during the exhibition, she is entitled to an exhibition copyright royalty fee for the use of her work.

She is entitled to:

- An exhibition royalty of \$2,204.
- A reproduction royalty of \$25 for the use of an image of her work on print invitations.
- A professional fee of \$335 for an artist talk she will deliver at the gallery.

Remember that fees change annually, so be sure to check online for the latest fees.

See CARFAC's website. For more information click [here](#).

What do you do if you are offered less than the recommended minimum?

Not every gallery or museum pays [CARFAC-RAAV minimum recommended fees](#). Some galleries have developed their own fee schedule for compensating artists at different rates. So, if you are offered less money than you expect for exhibiting work in a gallery, you can try to negotiate for a better fee, or you could ask [Copyright Visual Arts](#) to negotiate for you. But ultimately, if you are offered less than you need or want, you must decide if showing your art at this venue is worth it. A good question to ask yourself is whether the exhibition will advance your career. Remember, your art practice is your business, and you are the boss – you get to make the decisions that are best for you.



AJA Louden

Edmonton-based artist AJA Louden's early artistic inspiration was graffiti on trains and under bridges. Now he is a sought-after muralist with works in Spain, Germany, Britain, the United States and Canada, including small communities and First Nations.

Website: <https://www.ajalouden.com>



[@ajalouden](https://www.instagram.com/ajalouden)



[AJA Louden Studios](https://www.facebook.com/AJALoudenStudios)



Photograph courtesy of the artist.

When you're an artist and you
don't charge enough, it's not just your time
you're devaluing, it's also the time and
energy of the whole industry.

— AJA Louden

When AJA Louden was growing up in a small town near Calgary, art wasn't seen as a viable career path.

"It was just seen as a hobby and something you did on the side," says AJA, which is pronounced like 'Ajay' and is short for Adrian Joseph Alexander. "I just didn't see that you could make art as a business."

AJA, from a Jamaican-Canadian settler family, was one of the few Black people in his community, which gave him outsider status, and later inspired him to think about the importance of visibility.

"The one thing I realize as I get older as an artist is just how powerful representation is, especially local representation," he says. "Being able to see someone around you doing something, it just makes it seem achievable and more real."

AJA moved to Edmonton in 2003 and worked in the restaurant industry before studying graphic design and illustration at what is now [MacEwan University](#). He learned to use technology and optimize his processes, while adding design theory to his tool kit. At the same time, he was doing graffiti under the city's bridges and getting arrested.

"There was one time when I almost couldn't pay tuition because I had lawyer fees that I had to pay," he recalls. "But then I got a scholarship at the same time, which allowed me to go back to school."

After graduating, AJA got a job creating signage and plaques. He continued to paint and started working as a freelance designer. He painted at public events like Hip Hop in the Park and [The Works](#) and began getting requests to do murals, which allowed him to build his portfolio.

"I had some ideas around how to structure a business – how much I'd have to make off each mural, how much I would have to make per year. I started to build a really informal business plan in my head." He quit his job to become a full-time artist in 2015 and incorporated it as a business the following year. Learning to charge properly for his art was a slow process, with lots of trial and error.

"I'm really glad to have organizations like [CARFAC](#) that see value in creating some system of standardization," he says. "When you're an artist and you don't charge enough, it's not just your time you're devaluing, it's also the time and energy of the whole industry," he says.

"We need solidarity, and we need to value our work because we are valuable."

AJA often collaborates with other artists and non-profit groups. Mentorship is also a big part of his practice.

In a recent public art project with [Edmonton Light Rail Transit](#) called *Paint the Rails*, AJA worked with two young artists, **Matthew Cardinal**, and **Dana Belcourt**. They participated in consultations and helped design and paint five works. He advises artists to invest in relationships.

"Respect your relationships with the people who are collecting and commissioning your work," he says. "Those connections are valuable."

To grow his business, AJA recently hired a part-time studio assistant, so he can focus on his strengths. He also outsources many office tasks, such as bookkeeping, so he can spend more time making art and nurturing connections.

AJA says he thinks about the future and how to position his business ahead of trends. "Muralism is hot right now, and people see value in it," he says. "I know markets get saturated over time. I'll always be painting murals, but I'm always looking for opportunities for me to do cool, creative things I'm interested in."

He has included augmented reality technology in recent murals, and is expanding his business by exploring new opportunities, creating everything from Piney P socks and stickers to videos and large installations.

"I like to make sure that my skill set and the things I do are valuable and diverse, so that when one area dries up, or I'm just not as interested in doing it, I have something else that I can shift to right away."





Sign On The Dotted Line

CONTRACTS & AGREEMENTS



Artists must understand their rights and responsibilities to direct their careers in a professional way. Similarly, individuals and organizations need to know their rights and responsibilities when engaging artists. Contracts and agreements ensure everyone has a clear understanding of processes, as well as what is expected for any project.

The following information has been adapted from CARFAC's publication, [*Best Practices for Craft, Media & Visual Artists in Alberta*](#).

Many projects – whether exhibitions, public art commissions or representation by a commercial gallery – are governed by agreements and contracts.

Contracts and agreements are similar – but they are not the same thing.

An **agreement** is a form of understanding about what each party will carry out, but it may not be as legally enforceable as a contract. A **contract**, on the other hand, is a legally binding agreement between two or more parties, whether individuals, organizations or corporations.

Contracts and agreements can be verbal or written. A written document is always preferable as it provides a formal record. Written agreements and contracts increase protection for artists and their intellectual property and can clearly define the rights and responsibilities of both artists and those who engage their services. They provide clarity for everyone involved and allow trust to develop because all parties know what is expected of them.

Agreements should list all terms, conditions and responsibilities. They can include things such as the work to be undertaken, payment, copyright and moral rights. This helps avoid misunderstandings and future conflicts and serves as a reference point throughout the relationship. They can be useful, as well, in establishing details for insurance coverage and issues related to taxation.

All parties should read, understand and agree with the terms before signing. They should also keep a signed copy for their records.

If a written contract is not offered, it's a good idea to negotiate one.

Tip

CARFAC Alberta offers workshops and professional development programs for artists about a range of legal and financial matters, including the use of work, contracts, copyright, legal remedies, accounting, income tax and GST. Go [here](#) for more information.

What do contracts include?

The legal names of the various parties and the effective date and duration of the agreement should be listed. As well, there should be a description of the work, including terms, duties, responsibilities, expectations and conditions for everyone involved, as well as an agreement on any limitations on the use of the artist's work.

Watch out for any waiver of moral rights in agreements or contracts. Waiving moral rights allows an engager to use or adapt your work in ways that may not be intended by, or acceptable, to you.

All payments and any other financial considerations must be clearly listed – this includes terms and conditions of payments to the artist and the delivery date of the work.

It's customary to state that signatories have the authority to agree to a contract, and to deliver the items to which they commit.

Contracts often specify how often the parties communicate regarding the work. Other clauses can specify the compensation required if the agreement is terminated before completion, along with dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Exhibition Agreements

A common agreement that artists make is for exhibitions with public galleries or artist-run spaces. These documents are usually signed well before an exhibition and specify the opening and closing dates of the show, details around the delivery and return of artwork, and the fees that will be paid to the artist, among other things.

In Canada, artist fees are set out in a document called the [CARFAC-RAAV Minimum Recommended Fee Schedule](#). To view the document click [here](#).

Minimum rates vary based on the size of the gallery, the type of show and the length of the show.

The fee schedule also specifies minimum payments for performances and screenings, as well as other artistic services, such giving an artist talk or serving on a jury.

It is updated regularly to reflect increases in the cost of living.

The fee schedule was developed by **CARFAC (Canadian Artists' Representation / Le Front des artistes canadiens)**, an artist-run organization founded in 1968. CARFAC is certified as the national representative organization of professional visual and media artists in Canada. **RAAV (Le Regroupement des artistes en arts visuels du Québec)** is the organization representing professional visual and media artists from Quebec at the federal level.



Negotiations

Negotiation is a process of coming to an agreement or contract between two or more parties. The goal is to find a professional arrangement beneficial to all parties. This should not be an adversarial process.

You have the right to have a representative for negotiations and are entitled to an explanation of all aspects of the agreement.

Often, artists are presented with a contract and asked to sign it. Attempting to negotiate terms can be stressful. Undertaking research and having a full understanding of the issues will help reduce anxiety.

YOU SHOULD NOT FEEL PRESSURED TO:

- Participate in an exhibition or art auction, or have your work used for marketing, promotion, or reproduction.
- Assign all or part of your copyright or to waive your moral rights.
- Pay a fee or commission.
- Agree to all terms of a contract.

Although often standardized, contracts help to define a relationship that can be unique. If you want to revise the details, feel free to present your ideas, and explain why.

Try to present your perspectives in a professional way and be open to compromise. You have the right to state a point of view, propose alternatives and terminate the discussion, either temporarily or permanently. You have a right to say no.

RESOURCES:

[Copyright Visual Arts / Droits d'auteur Arts Visuels](#) has information on copyright fees and artists' fees. They can also manage and negotiate copyright agreements and licensing for artists who become members. For further information, go [here](#).

INDIGENOUS ARTISTS

There are special cultural considerations when engaging the work of Indigenous artists:

- Engagers have a duty to become aware of protocols related to customs and traditions of Indigenous artists.
- Both engagers and Indigenous artists have a duty to set out protocols regarding the use of Indigenous symbols and artifacts, as well as aspects of Traditional Knowledge or other matters of importance to Indigenous peoples. It's paramount to ensure all parties agree from the start.
- Indigenous artists may request an oral agreement that can be notated and signed, or alternatively, an option to have the agreement read to them and for negotiations to be stated orally and noted afterwards in a written agreement.

Tip

Indigenous individuals belong to a myriad of cultural groups, and they do not all share the same cultural protocols and awareness. It is important to make sure the engagers are consulting with traditional elders and knowledge keepers when it comes to cultural matters. Authorship and statements of responsibility are important.

GLOSSARY

A

AGREEMENT An agreement is a form of understanding that should be mutual, between two or more parties, indicating respective undertakings that each party will carry out. Written agreements are preferable to verbal agreements, but more preferable is a written contract signed by all parties. An agreement may not carry as much weight, nor be as legally enforceable, as a contract. For instance, a paper trail of emails may indicate perceived agreement by one or more parties but is not so valid as all parties negotiating terms of an agreement and then formalising them in a written, signed and dated, contract. See Contract.

ART; ARTWORK The products of human creativity, not limited by form, process, or medium, presented in an exhibition, gallery, museum or similar artistic context or mode of dissemination, such as community-based art, public art, etc. See Work.

ARTIST The creator of art or artwork, not limited by form, process, or medium.

ARTISTS' (PROFESSIONAL) FEE(S) Artists' Fee(s) is a term often used to describe monies received for an exhibition, and sometimes for reproduction of works, but more properly these would be either Exhibition Royalties (a copyright fee for exhibiting art) or Copyright Royalties (a copyright fee for reproducing art). An Artists' Professional Fee is compensation that an artist receives in exchange for presentation or consultation services, participation on a jury, installing artwork, writing tasks, or preparation of support for an exhibition. See Copyright Royalties.

B

BEST PRACTICE(S) Recommended industry standards or professional guidelines for specific fields of work. Best Practices facilitate fair, ethical interactions and equitable dealings between artists and individuals or organizations that engage the work or services of artists.

C

CALL, FOR ENTRIES, FOR SUBMISSIONS A solicitation for artists to submit their work for an opportunity e.g., exhibition or commission. Sometimes known as Expression of Interest (EOI).

COMMERCIAL GALLERY A gallery whose primary aim is the sale of exhibited artwork, or the inventory of artists.

COMMISSION 1. A fee paid by an artist to a gallery, agent, or other intermediary for services rendered 2. A fee paid to an artist to secure or obtain specified artistic requirements, i.e., receiving a commission to make an artwork, e.g. public art. 3. The artwork(s) or service(s) resulting from the payment of a commission i.e., commissioned work.

COMMUNITY-BASED ART Community-based art practices generally involve community members, who may not be professional artists, in the creation and production of art, often working alongside a professional artist and/or group. A community may be a place, or an interested group. Examples of community-based art include collaboration, community cultural development, social practice and co-creation.

CONDITION REPORT A written record, often supported by visual documentation, noting the condition of an artwork before and after transport, loan, or sale.

CONSIGNMENT Works deposited with a dealer, commercial gallery, or other agent for the purpose of sale, with an agreement to pay the supplier of the works when they are sold. The artist retains ownership of artwork deposited with the gallery/agent until the work is sold.

CONTRACT A record between two or more parties, indicating what terms, conditions and responsibilities have been agreed for respective action by said parties. Terms, conditions and responsibilities in a contract may be negotiated. A written contract provides a reliable record and is generally more legally binding than an agreement alone. A contract may be verbal or written, but where the parties differ in their interpretation of what has been agreed, a written contract signed by all parties carries more weight. See Agreement.

COPYRIGHT, ARTISTIC The right to authorize reproduction of an artwork and/or to benefit from such authorization. In Canada, copyright belongs to the creator of the work except under certain circumstances specified in the Copyright Act of Canada. In Canada, copyright includes moral rights and the exhibition right (see also Exhibition Royalty; Moral Right).

COPYRIGHT ROYALTIES These cover Exhibition Royalties (fees) for the presentation or exhibition of artwork, and Reproduction Royalties (fees) for when artworks are reproduced. Exhibition Royalties are essentially copyright fees and payment is required by the Canadian Copyright Act for the use of work created after June 7, 1988, in an exhibition in a public space where the gallery receives public funds. The Exhibition Fee only applies when the artwork shown is not being actively presented for sale or hire. When artworks created after June 7, 1988, in a gallery's permanent collection are exhibited, a Permanent Collection Exhibition Royalty fee is required to be paid unless some other agreement exists.

D

DEALER A person who operates as a buyer or seller of artwork, the operator of a commercial gallery.

DOCUMENTATION, VISUAL A visual record of what exists, e.g., video recording of an installation, or photograph of art to support a condition report.

DONATION, ART A gift of art or services made by an artist, often in exchange for a charitable receipt or tax-deductible receipt. Artists need to be aware of Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) regulations. e.g., If an artist creates a work with the intention of selling it but instead donates it, the donation is considered to be a disposition of property from the artist's inventory.

E

EXHIBITION (ROYALTY) FEE(S) Often known as Exhibition Fees; An Exhibition Royalty is a copyright fee paid to an artist for the exhibition of their art. See Copyright Royalties and Artists' (Professional) Fees.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) See Call, for Entries, for Submissions.

I

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY Intellectual property refers to creations of the mind: inventions; literary and artistic works; and symbols, names and images used in commerce and includes copyrights, patents, trademarks and trade secrets.

INVENTORY, ART The stock of artwork which an artist accumulates through his/her artistic production and which has not been sold or otherwise disposed of. Persons that record artistic expenses in their tax returns are required to maintain the appropriate inventory records.

L

LIABILITY Risk; responsibility in case of damage; an insurable condition.

M

MAQUETTE Preliminary model (or sketches): a visual prototype for a proposed artwork, normally to scale.

MORAL RIGHTS Bundle of rights reserved by the artist, including integrity, authorship and association which is included in the Canadian Copyright Act. Moral rights are inherent in copyright. Moral rights may not be sold or licensed, though the artist may choose not to exercise them. Moral rights are defined in the Copyright Act and include: 1. The right to protect your artwork against distortion, alteration or mutilation in a way which prejudices your reputation; 2. The right to associate your name as the author of your work or remain anonymous if you choose, and 3. The right to protect your visual image from association with a cause, a product, service, or institution to which you are personally opposed.

P

PROFESSIONAL DISPLAY Adherence to professional-standard mounting of art in framing, plinths, hardware, wall surfaces, lighting, etc., for the presentation of an artist's work in an exhibition or other means of artistic dissemination, e.g., public art.

PUBLIC ART Art in any media that has been planned and executed with the specific intention of being sited or presented in a public place, whether permanent or temporary. Public art is often commissioned by corporations, municipalities, and other bodies for the purpose of enhancing public spaces. See Commissions.

PUBLIC DOMAIN, IN THE Artwork for which copyright has expired or does not apply, therefore accessible for use or reproduction by anyone.

PUBLIC GALLERY A gallery whose primary aim is exhibiting, collecting, conserving and/or promoting art in the public interest. Often these are not-for-profit organizations that receive funding from local, provincial, and/or federal government sources.

T

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE RECEIPT A record of expense that can legitimately be used to reduce income tax paid. Not all charitable receipts are tax-deductible. See Donations.

W

WORK Refers to any professional activity undertaken, whether creation or production of art, a business activity, consultation, presentation, enterprise, or service rendered by an artist, or contracted by an engager.

MORE RESOURCES

The following is the complete article about Copyright - this information has been abridged on Page 127 of *BECOMING: a Visual Artist*.

COPYRIGHT FOR VISUAL ARTISTS IN CANADA

by Marcia Lea MFA, Executive Director of *Copyright Visual Arts (COVA-DAAV)*

Copyright laws aim to protect creators' original intellectual properties from being used without permission and to allow the copyright holders to generate income from their creations. *The Canadian Intellectual Property Organization (CIPO)* describes the Copyright Act this way:

"Simply put, the Act prohibits others from copying your work without your permission. Its purpose is to protect copyright owners while promoting creativity and the orderly exchange of ideas."¹

What can be Copyrighted?

Copyright "protects the expression of ideas, but not the ideas themselves."² For example, an original painting of a sky can be protected by copyright, but the idea of painting a sky cannot be. The work must be original, as the Copyright Board of Canada states:

"Works that are not original are not protected by copyright. The courts have established that an original work must necessarily be the product of exercise to a sufficient degree of the author's talent and judgment."³

Copyright for Visual Arts Includes:

The **Exhibition Right**, the **Reproduction Right** and the **Moral Right**. The Exhibition Right requires that artwork displayed in public be licensed by the copyright holder unless it is for sale.

The Reproduction Right includes print, audio-visual, digital, and reprography (copying of books).

And as stated by the *Canadian Artists Representation (CARFAC-RAAV)* the Moral Rights,

"Protect a work from associations with unapproved causes or products, and from unapproved alteration or distortion (including overprinting and cropping)."⁴

Copyright Ownership:

In Canada, the creator(s) of a unique expression of an idea is the owner(s) of the copyright.⁵

However, when an artwork is commissioned, the copyright may not belong to the artist unless there is a legal agreement stating that the artist owns the copyright. The same applies when an artist creates art as an employee.⁶ Using the copyright symbol is not legally necessary in Canada, however, this can be a good practice as it is required in some countries, and it reminds people that the artwork is protected.

¹ Government of Canada, Canadian Intellectual Property Organization, https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/h_wr02281.html#copyrightDefined, accessed May 14, 2021.

² Copyright Board of Canada, <https://cb-cdea.gc.ca/en/faq>, accessed May 12th, 2021.

³ Copyright Board of Canada.

⁴ CARFAC-RAAV Minimum Fee Schedule, A.1.0.2, <https://carfac-raav.ca/2021-en/2021-en-1/>, Accessed May 19th, 2021.

⁵ Copyright Board of Canada.

⁶ The Copyright Act of Canada: [HTTPS://LAWS-LOIS.JUSTICE.GC.CA/ENG/ACTS/C-42/PAGE-3.HTML#H-102747](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/page-3.html#H-102747) PART I, SECTION 13 (3), Accessed May 10, 2021.

● **Sales Agreements:**

When artwork is sold by an artist, the copyright automatically stays with the artist unless there is an agreement that states otherwise. It is good policy to state in a sales agreement that the copyright ownership remains with the artist to make it clear to new owners. If a purchaser provides the sales agreement, it is advisable to review and/or get legal advice for copyright clauses.

● **Financial Benefits of Copyright:**

Visual artists can make income from the sale of their artwork, but copyright can be another source of revenue. The copyright can be assigned or licensed and it is important to understand the difference. CIPO explains:

"An **assignment** occurs when a copyright owner transfers part or all of their rights to another party. The assignment may be for the whole term of the copyright or for a certain part of it. A **licence** allows someone else to use a work for certain purposes and under certain conditions. The copyright owner still retains ownership."⁷

CARFAC does not recommend that artists assign their copyright.⁸

● **License Management:**

An artist can choose to license their own artworks, or to have their copyright managed by a copyright collective. **CARFAC-RAAV** administers the *copyright collective*, **Copyright Visual Arts (COVA-DAAV)**, as an organization to manage licensing for artists. Membership is free and the collective has an online Image Bank where artists can showcase up to ten images where galleries can see and license their artwork.⁹ The *CARFAC-RAAV Minimum Fee Schedule* is a guide for the minimum fees for licensing. If an artist has their work in a publication, they can also join a reprography copyright collective such as Access Copyright,¹⁰ who collect fees for the copying of books and distribute royalties to creators.

● **Copyright Infringement:**

If your artwork is reproduced, exhibited (in Canada where we have the exhibition right) or altered without your permission, this is likely to be a case of infringement. "Copyright infringement occurs when a person uses content protected by copyright in a way that violates rights granted in the Copyright Act."¹¹ While the **Canadian Intellectual Properties Organization (CIPO)** grants the rights to the copyright holder, they do not enforce it. It is the copyright owner or their representatives that must take action against infringement.

Some cases of copyright infringement are clear, while others may be harder to determine.

For example:

- If someone unintentionally creates a work that is similar to your work, particularly without knowledge of your artwork, this may not be considered infringement.
- If your artwork was created as a commission, you may need to review the original commission agreement to verify copyright ownership and permitted uses.

For this reason, it is wise to consult with a lawyer or to get advice from an arts-organizations such as **CARFAC**, **RAAV** or **COVA-DAAV** before you take action.

⁷ Government of Canada, CIPO.

⁸ CARFAC-RAAV Minimum Fee Schedule, A.0.2. <https://carfac-raav.ca/2021-en/2021-en-1/>, Accessed May 19th, 2021.

⁹ Cova-Daav IMAGE BANK, <https://www.cova-daav.ca/licenseart/en/>, accessed May 19th, 2021.

¹⁰ Access Copyright, <https://www.accesscopyright.ca/creators/>, Accessed May 19th, 2021.

¹¹ Government of Canada, CIPO, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/wr04884.html>

What to do about Infringement?

An effective first step can be to write a 'cease and desist' letter that states your copyright ownership and that directs the copyright violation to stop. You can also require compensation. The *CARFAC/RAAV Minimum Fee Schedule* can be used as a base for compensations that are based on royalties. If you are a member of a copyright collective at the time the infringement occurred, you can request that the collective act on your behalf to send a letter and/or to ask for compensation.

If, however, the infringer refuses to stop or challenges whether a copyright infringement occurred, it may be necessary to proceed with legal action. This can be costly for an individual artist or even a copyright collective, but if a court action is successful, the court can set the amount for compensation and order that the infringement stops.

Also, be careful not to unintentionally infringe yourself!

It is also important as an artist to be careful not to infringe on the rights of other visual artists or creators. For example, if you reference photographs or magazines as part of your process, be very careful that your final work is completely your own. You can only own the copyright on a work that is original!

Copyright has great significance for artists: to protect the moral integrity of their work and as a potential source of income. In a constantly evolving digital and socio-economic world, it is important for artists to keep themselves informed about copyright and what it can offer the creator.

This information is for educational purposes and it does not replace qualified legal advice from a copyright lawyer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Access Copyright Collective, <https://www.accesscopyright.ca/about-us/> Accessed May 10, 2021.

CARFAC-RAAV Minimum Fee Schedule, <https://carfac-raav.ca/2021-en/2021-en-1/>, Accessed May 19th, 2021.


Copyright Act of Canada, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html> , Accessed May 10, 2021.

Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO), [Canadian Intellectual Property Office](#), Accessed May 13th, 2021.

[Copyright Board of Canada](#). Accessed May 13th, 2021.

Copyright Visual Arts (COVA-DAAV), <https://www.cova-daav.ca/en/legal-framework>.

*All copyrights reserved. © 2021 CARFAC Alberta and Marcia Lea.
This publication can only be reproduced with the written permission of either
CARFAC Alberta or Marcia Lea. Reproduction by CARFAC organizations or
Copyright Visual Arts (COVA-DAAV) is permitted.*



With a two-year project grant from the Edmonton Arts Council, CARFAC Alberta started *BECOMING: A Visual Artist* in the spring of 2020 just as COVID - 19 emerged and transformed how we could work and connect with communities. As this project required community input, we used Zoom, conference calls, the telephone and emails to reach out. As a digital document, *BECOMING: A Visual Artist* was written by CARFAC Alberta for new and emerging visual artists that need information on how to start an art career and/or become more professional as a visual artist.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Agnieszka Matejko
Sydney Lancaster
Ann Mansolino
Verna Vogel
Sharon Moore Foster
Chris W. Carson
Katherine Kerr
Rhonda Kronyk
Audrey Gamponia
Trevor Peters
Annaliza Toledo
Toyin Oladele
Yong Fei Guan
Marcia Lea
Tiffany Shaw
Melissa Cole
Jay Bigam
Jennifer Annesley
Ed Bader
Manar Abo Touk
Danielle Siemens

Lana Whiskeyjack
Mariam Qureshi
Samantha Williams Chapelsky
Elsa Robinson
Shane Golby
Sharon Rose Kootenay
Tara Vahab
Danyon Reeves
Mona Kadkhodamoradi
AJA Loudon
Monica Li
Wayne Jackson
Borys Tarasenko
Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts
Portia Priegert
Christy Morin
Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Edmonton Arts Council
Copyright Visual Arts
CARFAC