



2024-2029

Strategic Plan



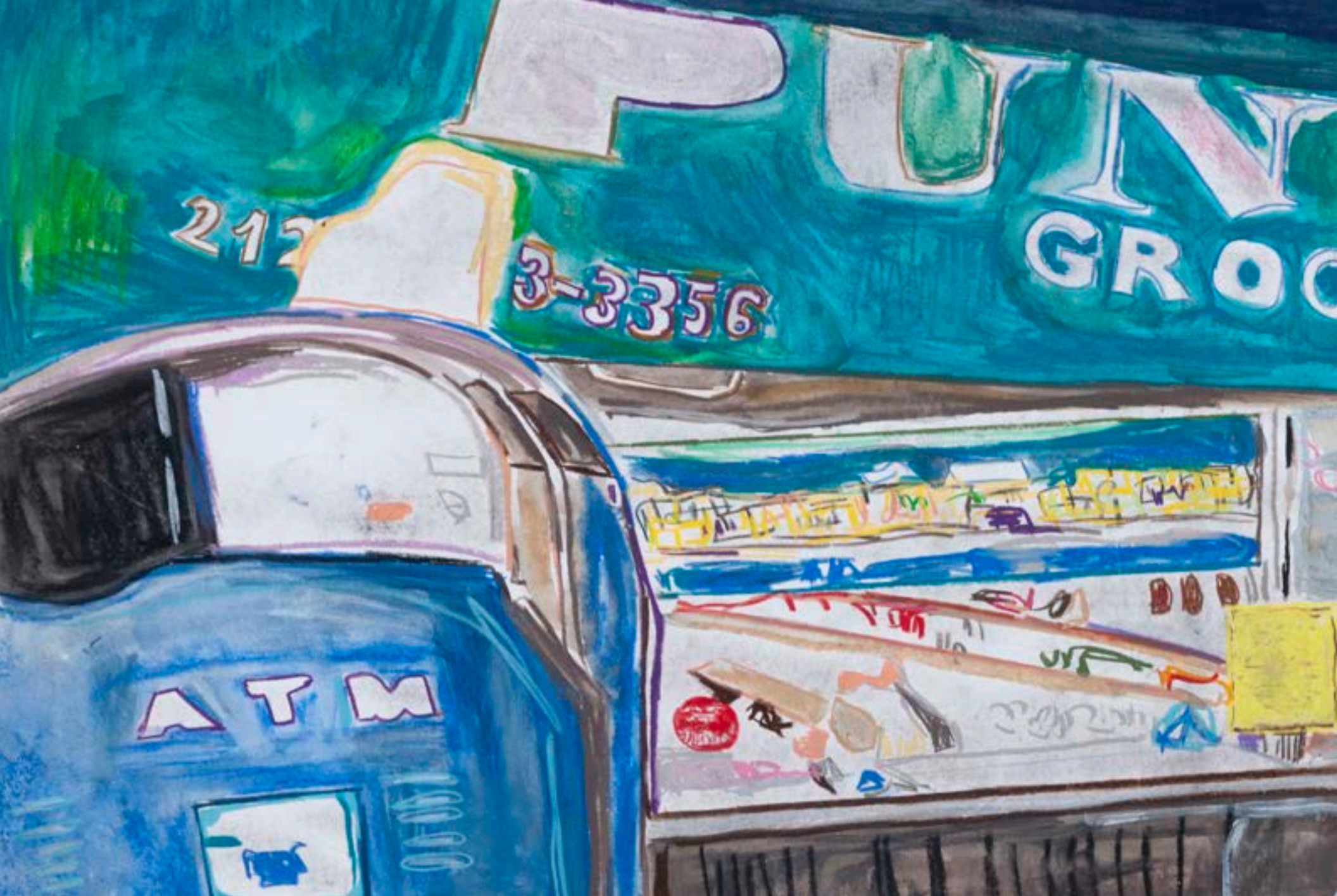
Art Gallery
of Guelph

The Art Gallery of Guelph resides on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation of the Anishinaabek Peoples, who are the ancestral holders – and today the treaty holders – of this land.



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Jagdeep Raina, *Friday Nights* (detail), 2016
ART GALLERY OF GUELPH COLLECTION

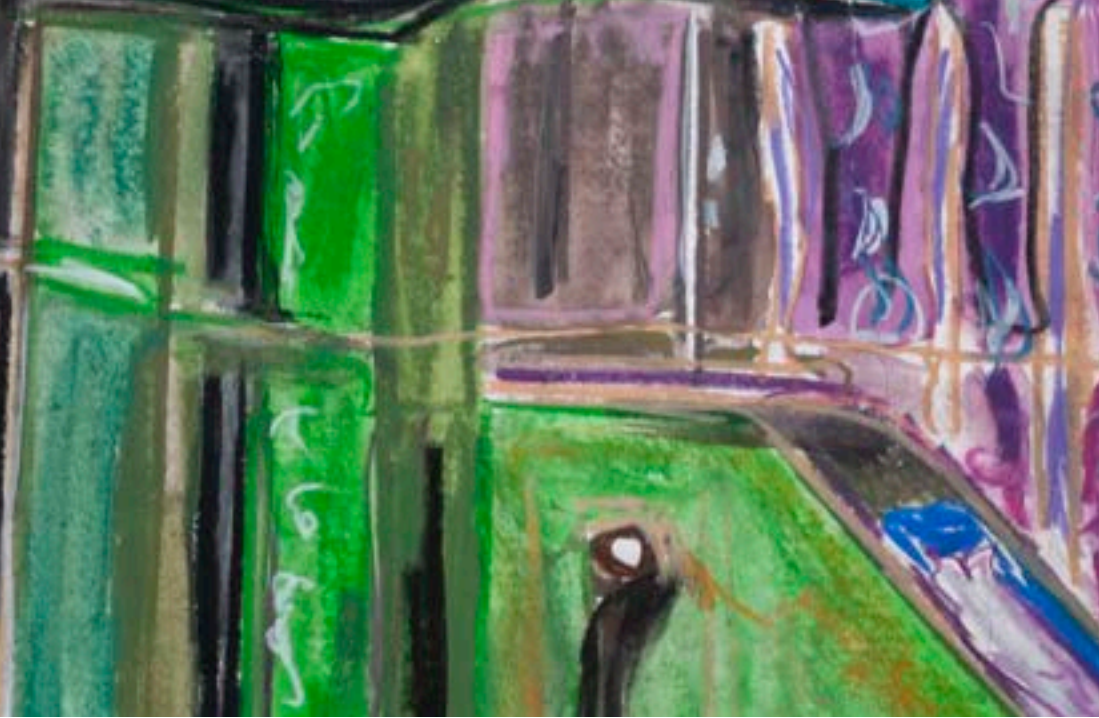


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ENTRANCE

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Planning, as always, is a process. While this renewed strategic plan officially begins in 2024, it is the result of continuous dialogue and reflection that has taken place over an extended period. As a learning institution, the Art Gallery of Guelph (AGG) evolves through active engagement with our community, continually integrating insights and feedback.

The past five years have been especially transformative for art museums, and this plan is designed to build on these experiences, ensuring that we remain responsive and adaptive to the ever-changing cultural landscape as well as the pressures of an inflationary, post-pandemic environment.

In 2018, we set ambitious goals to enhance our work, guided by the values of excellence, inclusiveness, relevance, collaboration, sustainability, as well as creativity and innovation—all of which are extended here. These values have informed a wide array of activities, encompassing not only art but also the world-changing ideas at the heart of creative practice. A continuing priority for the gallery is to centre this content in the public sphere, ensuring

that art has a real life in communities and serves as a potent contributor to civic and social change. All our efforts—from exhibitions and programs to collections development and digital initiatives—remain aligned with this aim.

The importance of this work became especially evident with the onset of the pandemic—a critical historical moment globally as well as a significant juncture for arts and cultural institutions. As everyday life was transformed in incalculable ways, AGG was among the first art museums to highlight the visual culture emerging out of these new conditions and to reconsider the core work of museums in this context. Much of our activity reflects a careful consideration of how the gallery can support global

OPPOSITE: Tarralik Duffy, *Quickstop* (detail), 2021
ART GALLERY OF GUELPH COLLECTION



conversations while ensuring our responsibility to place, expanding the communities reflected in our spaces as a way of both reframing the past and shifting the future.

At once a challenge and an opportunity, these questions have guided our response to the transformation of engagement and interaction as well as broader calls for equity and social justice. In this renewed strategic plan, we reaffirm our commitment to the ongoing evolution of our practices. As we move forward, we remain focused on several strategic pillars, now realigned in terms of priority. Sustainability takes centre stage, supporting our core focus on community engagement and social impact. A robust and diversified funding strategy is essential for maintaining our social mission and ensuring long-term relevance—a directive to be implemented through an emphasis on actively growing resources to support our artistic programming and staff complement

through fundraising, as well as through development efforts of the Board to address the needs of our aging physical structure. At the AGG, this adaptability has become part of the institution’s DNA, providing a foundation to develop strategic goals, targets, and metrics for greater direction, impact, and accountability.

Organized into three phases—discovery (environmental scan and organizational assessment), development, and implementation—the process was a collaborative effort involving Board members, staff, and community participants, supported by the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. We extend our gratitude to Britt Gallpen of VELA Arts for her invaluable expertise and dedication throughout this process.

SHAUNA MCCABE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Drive (installation), 2019 featuring Frank Shebageget, *The Housing*, 2009 and Kelly Richardson, *Leviathan*, 2011
COURTESY OF JOHN COOK AND THE ARTIST



WHO WE ARE

The Art Gallery of Guelph is one of Canada's premier public art spaces, engaging audiences with the most innovative artists and ideas from around the world.

MANDATE

The Art Gallery of Guelph is a platform for artistic practice and participation in the arts for the city of Guelph and the wider region. We strive to set the highest possible standards for excellence, relevance and sustainability, fostering the visual arts locally, regionally and internationally by means of a rigorous exhibition, publication, education and collection program that advances the artistic field.

ag Art Gallery
of Guelph



HISTORY

Founded in 1978, the Art Gallery of Guelph was established as the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, an independent not-for-profit and charitable arts organization that serves the municipality of Guelph as well as the wider region, emphasizing access to and appreciation of the arts through programming and education reaching the very youngest to life-long learners.

Governed by a Board of Trustees, as outlined in the Art Gallery of Guelph Act (2014), the AGG is sustained through the ongoing support of its sponsoring bodies – the University of Guelph, City of Guelph, and the Upper Grand District School Board. As an anchor institution in the region, the gallery sits at the intersection of civic culture, a university partner and an educational institution.

Housed in a 31,000-square-foot former school built in 1904 owned by the Upper Grand District School Board, the gallery manages and oversees four distinct collections: The Donald Forster Sculpture Park, The Art Gallery of Guelph Collection, The University of Guelph Art Collection and the Macdonald Stewart Art Collection. These distinct and unique collections have also

grown over the years and now total more than 10,000 objects with concentrations in the work work of Indigenous and Canadian artists, as well as historical prints and contemporary works.

The AGG is known for its championing of artistic development, socially engaged exhibition making, educational programming and community-oriented approach, situating art as central to everyday lives, civic discourse, and social change. We also understand the AGG operates in relation to harmful colonial and racist legacies. We are committed to the ongoing decolonization of our institution and will continue to unlearn and challenge supremacy to co-create spaces of safety, belonging and respect for the diverse communities we serve.

OPPOSITE: Art Gallery of Guelph, featuring Derek Sullivan's *Push Pin*, 2003

© ART GALLERY OF GUELPH

WHAT WE DO

MISSION

To stimulate, provoke and inspire through artistic experiences that nurture creative excellence, strengthen community, and inform public discourse, contributing to positive social change.

VISION

To advance the arts globally as a leader in exceptional, impactful, and inclusive programming, cultivating and interpreting artistic practices that ignite engagement with important issues of our time.

WHAT WE VALUE

Our values, defined on the following pages, inform and guide our ways of working.

EXCELLENCE

INCLUSIVENESS

RELEVANCE

COLLABORATION

SUSTAINABILITY

**CREATIVITY
AND INNOVATION**



EXCELLENCE

Setting the highest standards of best practices in our artistic programs, audience engagement, partnerships, and governance.

INCLUSIVENESS

RELEVANCE

COLLABORATION

SUSTAINABILITY

CREATIVITY
AND INNOVATION

OPPOSITE: KC Adams, *Maada'oonidiwag (Coming together)*, 2022
PHOTO © COLINDA CLYNE



EXCELLENCE

INCLUSIVENESS

RELEVANCE

COLLABORATION

SUSTAINABILITY

CREATIVITY
AND INNOVATION

Striving for diversity in programming, exhibitions, staffing, and governance in ways that engage and reflect our increasingly global communities and deepen empathy and cross-cultural understanding, taking measures to eliminate all barriers to accessibility in the arts.



Informational text panel on the wall.



EXCELLENCE

INCLUSIVENESS

RELEVANCE

Facilitating opportunities for dialogue and exchange that affect positive social change through artistic practices that are engaged, inspiring, and bold.

COLLABORATION

SUSTAINABILITY

CREATIVITY
AND INNOVATION



EXCELLENCE

INCLUSIVENESS

RELEVANCE

COLLABORATION

SUSTAINABILITY

CREATIVITY
AND INNOVATION

Developing mutually beneficial relationships with leading local, national and international artists and arts organisations, exemplary community partners, as well as funders and financial supporters through meaningful experiences and dialogue.



EXCELLENCE

INCLUSIVENESS

RELEVANCE

COLLABORATION

SUSTAINABILITY

Embracing transparent organizational practices and relationships with stakeholders in order to build creative, organizational, and financial capacity.

CREATIVITY
AND INNOVATION



EXCELLENCE

INCLUSIVENESS

RELEVANCE

COLLABORATION

SUSTAINABILITY

**CREATIVITY
AND INNOVATION**

Fostering interdisciplinary and interactive practices that stimulate creativity and fuel innovation and new knowledge, transforming our relationship with audiences as well as our ways of working.

OPPOSITE: *José Luis Torres: Temporary Territories* (installation view), 2023

© ART GALLERY OF GUELPH



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PHOTO © TONI HAFKENSCHIED



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This plan is built in support of the Art Gallery of Guelph's vision to advance the arts globally as a leader in exceptional, impactful, and inclusive programming, cultivating and interpreting artistic practices that ignite engagement with important issues of our time.

Over the next five years the following interconnected strategies will help us achieve that vision.



**STRENGTHEN
ORGANIZATIONAL
CAPACITY**

We recognize that a sustainable future for the Art Gallery of Guelph must be rooted in organizational capacity and care, and that inclusion and community-building are core values in this work.

We will focus on strengthening our financial, governance, and human resources to meet our goals as well as future challenges.

To achieve this we will:

- Ensure our activities are aligned with our resources
- Grow our community of supporters to diversify revenue generation, developing new sources of public and private support
- Continue to focus on policy and process development
- Grow human resources and accessible infrastructure
- Increase the diversity of our staff and board, and engage them fully in revenue generation to build resources for all our programs

PREVIOUS: Public drawing activity in front of Alison Norlen, *Covered Bridge*, 2023

© ART GALLERY OF GUELPH

Over the next five years we will regularly conduct program reviews and assess strategic priorities, develop new avenues for financial growth and capital needs, update our governance by-laws, develop a five-year fundraising plan, increase the number of supporters and overall donations and champion a culture of philanthropy at all levels including the Board of Trustees.

This builds on our recent fundraising successes. Over the past five years, we have successfully generated over \$1.5 million in new public investment, crucial in supporting our exhibitions, programs, and innovation initiatives. Sustained relationship-building has resulted in productive partnerships and collaborations enabling resource-sharing and bolstering our capacity to deliver diverse and high-quality programs and exhibitions.



INCREASE

SOCIAL

IMPACT

We believe art can support wellbeing, create shared understanding, promote belonging and pride, and support dialogue and learning.

We will focus on impact to ensure that the gallery's work has a real life in various communities and is a catalyst for social change.

To achieve this we will:

- Embed the principles of social impact into everything we do
- Prioritize exhibitions and programs that bring together a range of perspectives
- Amplify the impact of our educational programs
- Ensure the gallery is an open, safe and welcoming space
- Share the value and transformative potential of the arts to diverse publics

Over the next five years, we will engage in active listening to address the needs of our communities, regularly and transparently report on our activities, measure the qualitative and quantitative impact of our work, co-create value, meaning and purpose with our partners and publics, champion the work of socially-engaged artists as well as focus on land and sustainability as priority content, and undertake a marketing campaign that articulates the gallery's value (art+) .

This builds on our emphasis on embedding social impact principles, ensuring our work resonates meaningfully within the communities we serve, as well as our work establishing AGG as a vital site for important conversations, creating an impact that extends beyond our walls and into the broader public sphere.

**OTRO
MUNDO
ES
POSIBLE**

**SANCTUARY
NOT
DEPORTATION**

**CITIZENSHIP
FOR
ALL**

**UNDOCUMENTED
AND
UNAFRAID**

**THE
CLIMATE
CRISIS**
DISPROPORTIONATELY
AFFECTS
WOMXN

**FIGHT
IGNORANCE
NOT
IMMIGRANTS**

**BROWN
IS
BEAUTIFUL**

**SAY HER
NAME**

**RESPECT
OUR
MOTHER**

**ADVANCE
ARTISTIC
DEVELOPMENT**

We know the arts enrich the quality of public life. At the Art Gallery of Guelph, art and artists are at the heart of everything we do.

We aim to be leaders in supporting artistic development, through innovative and diverse programming that explores the visual arts and their impact on audiences and our communities.

To achieve this we will:

- Undertake programming that advances artistic practice
- Support artistic residencies and commissions of new work
- Prioritize collecting and presenting of work by BIPOC artists
- Showcase a diversity of artists at various stages of their careers
- Advance ideas that fuel creative innovation and engage wider audiences

Over the next five years, we will advance projects that encourage interactivity, critical thinking and dialogue, review our acquisition policy and create a complimentary five-year collecting plan, commission new work that reflects the diversity of our communities, leverage our resources and expand our network through partnerships with other arts organizations, be a platform for the work of emerging, mid-career and senior artists, and develop processes for our work with artists that centre care and reciprocity.

This builds on our record of innovative creation and residency opportunities that have meaningfully engaged artists with our collection, context, and community. Our history of working with diverse artists and curators from emerging to established has ensured a rich and dynamic program that foregrounds nuanced perspectives and worldviews.



**DEEPEN
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

We celebrate our position as an anchor institution in city of Guelph and as such strive to be an influential contributor to civic life.

We serve the public good by prioritizing inclusivity in our work and reducing barriers to access through the co-creation of spaces of safety, belonging and respect.

To achieve this we will:

- Support audiences in finding relevance and meaning through art
- Invest in reciprocal, ongoing relationships with diverse groups
- Co-create projects with the communities we seek to engage
- Work with artists from diverse communities, genders and generations across Ontario and beyond
- Promote dialogue and exchange through our work

Over the next five years, we will reimagine the use of the gallery's public spaces, engage the public in ongoing dialogue about the role the gallery plays in civic life, better understand more about who uses the gallery's spaces and how to make those spaces more widely accessible, deliver responsive programming that integrates community perspectives and feedback, continue to develop programming founded on the principles of reconciliation and diversity, and conduct program reviews annually to ensure accountability and relevance.

This builds on our emphasis on inclusivity and active engagement with a diversity of communities that has established us as a significant contributor to the cultural and civic life of Guelph through our focus on relevance and responsiveness. Our commitment to cultivating the public good has built both trust and value, fostering a more inclusive, engaged, and dynamic community through the arts.

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**TRANSFORM
THROUGH
INNOVATION**

We embrace innovation to support new ways of creating, collaborating, and learning.

We will continue to apply the use of technology at the Art Gallery of Guelph for artistic and organizational purposes as a means of engagement, conversation, dissemination and participation.

To achieve this we will:

- Invest in technology and learning to support our goals
- Collaborate with artists who work with digital technologies
- Leverage our assets to reach, engage and grow our audiences
- Integrate new tools and technologies into existing processes
- Support creativity and sustainability by investigating new solutions
- Champion experimentation as a generative methodology

Over the next five years, we will pursue fundraising and partnership opportunities to invest in new technologies, explore the complex and generative roles visual culture plays in the world and online, test new ways of working with digital tools and technologies across all our activities, create new avenues for access and engagement for our communities in exhibitions, programs and collections, establish partnerships that support our learning and use of technology at the gallery, and focus on youth engagement to build audiences for the future.

This builds on our ongoing embrace of design thinking to support the redefinition of problems and the creation of novel solutions, as well as our work to enrich the quality of public life through the arts, ensuring our work is relevant, inclusive, and impactful.

