
Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery

Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021

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ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

The Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery is a museum dedicated to exhibiting, interpreting and collecting innovative contemporary ceramic, glass and enamel artworks. Our exhibitions actively engage diverse audiences by addressing issues and themes relevant to our times. We promote both emerging and established artists whose works are considered to be ground-breaking or influential. The Gallery's public programs offer multiple pathways for engagement with contemporary artworks and art-making practices. The Gallery Shop is recognized on its own merits as a fine-craft gallery, showing the best of Canadian ceramic and glass work. Housing a collection of historical and contemporary Canadian ceramic, glass and enamel art, the Gallery is proud to conserve and promote an active component of Canada's rich cultural heritage.

BACKGROUND

With support from Ceramists Canada and the Glass Art Association of Canada, what would become the national gallery for ceramic and glass art was incorporated as a not-for-profit in 1982. After a feasibility study and architectural design competition, the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery opened in June 1993. The Gallery consulted widely with its constituents and adopted a broad national mandate to show contemporary work in ceramic and glass. In 1993, the primary manifestation of the mandate was to mount exhibitions of functional or 'traditional' sculptural artworks. Since then the practice of silica-based artists has diversified to include contemporary practices such as installation, video, kinetic, performance and ephemeral works.

The Gallery is recognized as an important part of the cultural landscape in Waterloo Region. We offer free admission to approximately 20,000 people per year. Visitors and exhibiting artists appreciate the unique architectural features of our Governor General's Award-winning building, designed by Patkau Architects of Vancouver. Community members from our region and beyond visit the Gallery to find treasures in the Gallery Shop and to take part in hands-on programs. We offer our facility for events or meetings at low or no cost to various community groups as part of the Gallery's outreach efforts to help our community and expand our audience. Thanks to funding from the City of Waterloo and the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, beginning in the fall of 2017, the Gallery building underwent a \$1.3 million upgrade.

In 2012, the Gallery completed a strategic planning exercise to help guide the organization from 2013-2018. That plan concentrated on three main goals:

1. More space for programs and activities
2. A state of ongoing financial stability
3. Enhanced presence in the community.

The Gallery has made significant progress towards these goals since then. For example, we have achieved six operating surpluses in the past seven years. This has brought our accumulated deficit from \$118,833 at March 31, 2010 to \$10,158 at March 31, 2017. These significant improvements in the Gallery's financial stability have resulted in the organization's reputation with municipal and business funders being transformed and relationships strengthened. As evidence, the Gallery has been formally identified as one of the four Key Cultural Institutions in the Region of Waterloo.

As the Gallery begins a new chapter, this strategic plan will help us to focus on other areas of growth including artistic programming, community engagement with diverse audiences, and building our organizational capacity.

It should be noted that the Gallery's continued financial stability is an underlying goal of all of the strategic directions contained within this plan. The financial health strategies contained within the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan will continue.

VISION, MISSION & MANDATE

VISION*

The Gallery is a national centre of research, scholarship and artistic excellence. A site of leadership that influences both craft and fine arts communities, we are an essential organization within the Canadian cultural landscape.

MISSION*

Engaging our community through contemporary ceramic and glass art.

MANDATE*

With an emphasis on Canadian artists, the Gallery brings exhibitions to the public that are grounded in craft processes, engaged in contemporary experimentation and meaningful to diverse audiences. By exhibiting and collecting contemporary works in ceramics and glass, the Gallery inspires dialogue, critical discourse and new ways of thinking. The Gallery's media specificity is its distinguishing characteristic and greatest strength. Through exhibitions that address issues relevant to our times, an impressive selection of works in our Gallery Shop and intriguing public programs that engage, educate and inspire, we are accessible to all.

**The Gallery's Vision, Mission and Mandate will be reviewed by staff and board as part of the "Moving Towards Creating & Sharing Our Story" strategic direction.*

CONTEXT FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS 2018-2021

The strategic planning process was particularly important at this time, since it was made public in the fall of 2017 that Executive Director Bill Poole will be stepping down at the end of July 2018. The Board decided to complete the strategic plan at this time so that, while undertaking the search for a new Executive Director, they would be confident that the successful candidate understands the context in which he/she will lead the organization. While identifying the broad strategic directions and related organizational goals, the completed strategic plan does not limit the incoming Executive Director's ability to achieve those goals using action plans he or she may want to enact.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Strategic Direction: Moving Towards Creating & Sharing Our Story

GOAL: The Gallery's relevance to its community is understood and communicated, attracting a broader audience base.

The Gallery recognizes the need to better communicate that it is a vital contemporary art gallery.

Strategies:

- **Envisioning / Internalizing / Articulating:** The vision, mission and mandate will be reviewed and agreed upon by staff and board, leading to increased understanding and 'ownership' of the Gallery's story and the ability to articulate it to our public.
- **Story Telling:** The Gallery will explore the use of a variety of platforms and communication tools in order to tell its story more effectively.

GOAL: The Gallery is a recognized leader in contemporary ceramic and glass. It is viewed as bold and daring and its reputation continues to grow. Its reach and programming have expanded with its reputation. The Gallery has an international reputation leading to collaborations and partnerships locally, nationally and internationally.

The Gallery is recognized as one of four Key Cultural Institutions in the Region of Waterloo. It is an active participant in the Alliance for a Grand Community consisting of 12 arts and culture organizations in the Region. It is time to begin expanding its influence beyond the Region, attracting more 'angel investors' and giving it the capacity to expand its programming and facility.

Waterloo Region is striving to achieve a worldwide status as a desirable community in which to live, work, study and play. The Gallery's physical location gives it an edge in participating with other organizations seeking to build and/or expand this reputation. It is located at a desired intersection that includes the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics (PI), Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and Shopify. The Gallery can contribute to and benefit from working with these organizations in its desire to also gain an international reputation.

Strategies:

- **Engaging Across all Borders:** Identify desirable partners and be the organization that initiates partnerships or agreements reaching beyond our current sphere of influence. Expanding our influence locally, nationally and internationally will provide further opportunities for engaging sponsors.

GOAL: The Gallery is exemplary in its support for artists and the development of their practice.

As artists are at the core of the Gallery's offerings, greater support for and care of those involved through exhibitions, lectures and the Shop will lead to the ability to attract higher profile artists, support the development of emerging artists and expand the profile of Canadian artists.

Strategies:

- **Celebrating and Supporting Artists:** The artists are at the core of what we do. We will strive to support them through providing greater profile locally, nationally and internationally. We will identify and implement ways in which we can provide appropriate professional development and garner increased financial support.

Strategic Direction: Moving Towards Thoughtful, Effective Mobilization of People

GOAL: An employer of choice, the Gallery has ample and engaged staff members supported by a strong, dedicated volunteer presence. The staff and volunteers reflect the diversity of the community.

Concentrating on expanding its volunteer base in numbers and diversity, the Gallery can begin to increase its offerings and enhance the experience of visitors. The Gallery is committed to formalizing and developing a service-volunteer program that will allow the professional staff to focus on core duties. Well-trained, committed volunteers will be able to support staff by taking on duties that are necessary but do not require specific professional knowledge.

When human resources are being used effectively and staff, board and service volunteers understand organizational priorities, the organizational capacity will increase, thus contributing to the Gallery becoming an employer of choice.

Strategies:

- **Multiplying & Mobilizing our Human Resources:** There are multiple avenues for expanding our HR capacity through volunteer programs, internships, and leadership development. The intention is to provide additional resources so that staff's expertise is used effectively and those necessary jobs that do not require the same skill set can be completed using these additional resources.
- **Prioritizing Our Priorities:** Set an organizational goal to review our plans on a regular basis so efforts are focused on those activities that will have greater impact on the organization and community.

GOAL: The Gallery is a popular gathering place, attracting audiences that reflect the diversity of the community.

The demographics of the Gallery's geographical community continue to shift due to economic, political and social changes. The Gallery desires to be appealing to a broad audience base and relevant to and reflective of the community's demographics. This can be achieved through changes to the physical space as well as development of the Gallery's programming.

Strategies:

- **Creating an Inviting Space:** The Gallery space should be made more accessible and welcoming to all visitors by improving interior and exterior signage, 'warming up' the space and providing multiple points of interaction and engagement. Continuing the practice of beginning public events with a Land Acknowledgement is a fundamental first step in contributing to an open and welcoming space.
- **Expanding & Diversifying Our Audiences:** The Gallery will find concrete ways to identify and reach out to under-represented groups including Indigenous people, those of culturally diverse backgrounds, new Canadians, the Deaf community, people with disabilities and teens and young adults. We will engage in a two-way conversation with these communities and will be receptive and nimble in responding to their needs, opening up authorship of what happens at the Gallery. The Gallery should find ways to go out into the community through off-site programs and activities.

GOAL: The Gallery is valued as an essential resource to the local community and the larger arts community, offering diverse and expansive education programs.

The Gallery must continue to celebrate the expertise and knowledge of its staff and contributing artists and build partnerships that lead to outreach opportunities and programming to attract a broader audience interested in learning about ceramic, glass and enamel art.

Strategies:

- **Elevating Education:** The Gallery should consider allocating additional space for education and creation. This might be the Dr. Douglas Wright Education Gallery for a period of time until a more appropriate space is available. The Gallery should find ways to consult with its constituents and explore new ways to interact with and educate various groups: students, teachers, post-secondary institutions, libraries and the public.

Strategic Direction: Moving Towards a Digital Strategy

GOAL: Develop the means and expertise required to have meaningful engagements through digital tools.

In an increasingly digital world, the expectation of the audience increases. Some visitors will expect to interact digitally with the artworks, and the Gallery will need to offer an enhanced experience.

By reaching out to the technology sector to build a bridge between their creative energies and ours, the Gallery can develop a better understanding of how to provide a focused digital experience. Increased effectiveness through digital means will support all of the key strategic directions contained within this Strategic Plan.

Strategies:

- **Seeking Technology Sector Partnerships:** The Gallery will develop activities that connect with our audience and demonstrate the role of art in their environment, contributing to health and wellness and creativity and productivity.
- **Integrated Technology and Hands-on Experiences:** Develop an enhanced digital experience, meeting the expectation of today's audience through an integrated technology and hands-on experience.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic planning work was based on Technology of Participation, a consensus driven process leading to effective and creative solutions. The process consisted of a series of activities including: Historical Scan, Determining Practical Visions, Identifying Obstacles, Determining Strategies and Developing Action Plans. The working group consisted of the board, staff and community members with a long-standing relationship with the Gallery. Each exercise followed a common pattern consisting of time for individual brainstorming and prioritizing of thoughts; discussing the top five individual ideas with a small group, then coming together as the large group and sharing. Each idea was captured on sticky notes, using three to five words. The individual ideas were then clustered and each cluster was given a name that captured the intention of the cluster.

Board and staff participated together with the addition of two volunteers who had been involved with the gallery since its inception. The intention was to have a clear internal understanding of the gallery, its vision and capacity. As the plan progresses there will be additional outreach to key members of the local and artistic community to help finesse planning strategies.

In preparation for the sessions, participants were provided with a Background and Prep paper outlining key points provided to funders in recent funding requests, the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan and responses to a survey distributed to CAMDO (Canadian Art Museum Directors Organization) members.