



# Visual Arts Ontario

## Strategic Report

Prepared by Consulting Matrix  
April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
Julie Girceys

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
VAO Artist Consultations – Themes and Findings .....	3
Support for Artists .....	3
Changes in the Artist’s world .....	4
Towards a future with thriving visual artists and communities.....	4
Conclusion .....	5
Environmental Scan.....	6
VAO Mission.....	6
Artists in Ontario.....	6
Issues for Artists .....	7
A Collective Agenda for the Visual Arts .....	7
Arts Service Organizations (ASO).....	8
Governance of ASOs.....	9
Funding of ASOs.....	9
Visual Arts Alberta.....	9
Visual Arts Nova Scotia.....	10
Other Province-wide Organizations serving Artists in Ontario.....	10
Local Organizations Serving Artists in Ontario .....	12
Organizations Serving Artists Online .....	12
Summit.....	14
Board Retreats.....	15
Conclusions/Outcomes.....	15
Appendices .....	16
Appendix One – List of VAO Summit Participants.....	16

## Introduction

Visual Arts Ontario is a provincial arts service organization that has been helping artists for over 30 years, providing a range of services that include training and professional development opportunities, publications, exhibition opportunities, events, art rentals and member newsletters.

The Board of Directors and the new Executive Director entered into a strategic planning exercise to respond to changes in the external environment (technology, funding etc) as well as to the diverse needs of visual artists across the province.

Consulting Matrix was retained in mid 2008 to support Visual Arts Ontario in developing a strategic plan. The study process included conducting an environmental scan, facilitating consultations with artists in 10 communities across Ontario, and designing and facilitating a summit with participation from Board, staff, members, artists and key informants in the visual arts community. Consulting Matrix then facilitated one staff consultation and three Board retreats. This draft report summarizes the findings from this process.

## VAO Artist Consultations – Themes and Findings

As part of its strategic planning process, VAO engaged Consulting Matrix to facilitate consultations with visual artists using an Appreciative Inquiry approach, which focuses on strengths, assets and a desired future. The consultations asked:

- where artists turn for support,
- what is changing in the world for artists; and,
- what a future looks like in which visual artists and communities are thriving.

Consultations with artists were held across the province between August 6 and November 5, 2008 in the following locations: Minden, Windsor, North Bay, London, Thunder Bay, Barrie, Sault Ste Marie, Ottawa and Belleville. A Toronto consultation was held on November 26, 2008.

## Support for Artists

Artists find both informal and formal arrangements for the types of assistance that VAO currently offers. Advice about exhibiting, shipping, writing artist statements, and applying for grants is provided by the local public art gallery, Arts Council, Art Club, co-operative or a local art supply store. In every case, these venues had become a hub for the community of artists, where information could be exchanged and support – both moral and practical – found. Artists typically are not connected to art schools beyond graduation.

Artists strongly articulated the need for a place to be with other artists, away from the “mainstream”, especially given the solitary nature of their work. Many artists have created their own informal support networks with fellow artists, in which they share information, hold each other accountable for execution of business plans, and create their own exhibition opportunities. Several artists were members of various on-line communities that are local, regional or international, often related to their particular type of practice (ie fibre artists, print makers, photographers, etc). Many communities, regardless of size, had different circles of artists, who rarely interact, even to attend each other’s openings or events. Mutual support among artists was strongest in communities where an entrepreneurial spirit led artists to self-organize events and promotion, often in adverse circumstances.

Artists also noted the value of support from someone who took an interest in their art practice: a teacher or professor, a family member or friend, a fellow artist or a purchaser or collector. The key to this support was ongoing interest and encouragement, which affirmed the artist’s otherwise solitary path.

Artists valued support that was practical and simple: the loan of hardware to help hang a show; the skill of a communications professional to develop a press kit; written feedback when a piece was not accepted for a show; and connecting an artist to a person or resource.

Artists share the frustration of developing business skill sets in order to grow their businesses, although by and large it was viewed as a necessary evil. In particular, artists who were creating new events felt they were reinventing the wheel and articulated the need to have easy access to resources that would provide answers to the basics of organizing exhibitions and events.

Municipal support for artists was a frequent theme. Artists who felt well supported had local arts councils, were seen as part of a local economic development strategy and were supported by public art programs and policies. There was considerable variation in how politically engaged artists are in municipal life; communities in which artists felt they had little power expressed frustration that their roles in promoting the local economy and tourism were not acknowledged with tangible support. In Northern communities, the support from the OAC was often noted and appreciated.

## Changes in the Artist's world

### TECHNOLOGY

The most commonly mentioned change cited by visual artists is the evolution of the Web. Artists find exhibition opportunities, materials and technique information, research and on-line communities on the internet. Many promote their work and events on-line through their own websites and social networking tools (most commonly Facebook and Yahoo groups). While there are some concerns about potential appropriation of work shown on-line, in most cases the Internet was viewed as a powerful tool for creating and promoting art. Digital technology is also yielding new forms of art, and collaborations between artists of different disciplines are facilitated by the ability to collaborate on-line. One artist was teaching an on-line course, working with students around the world. In a small number of communities, access to high-speed internet at reasonable cost was noted as an issue.

### ARTS EDUCATION

In every consultation outside Toronto, artists noted the negative impact of arts education cutbacks in the schools, especially on future audiences for their work.

### NETWORKS AND COLLABORATIONS

Collaborations between artists, visual artists and other artists, visual artists and local businesses and tourist attractions are leading to greater number of events other than traditional gallery openings (ie Art walks, tours, bus tours, exhibitions in businesses) and exposure to new audiences who do not visit art galleries.

### PUBLIC AWARENESS

Artists viewed shifts in environmental awareness, support for local food and farmers, and appreciation of the value of hand-made artifacts as indicative of possible greater interest by the public in local artists.

The growth of visual art events (ie Nuit Blanche), public interest in design and architecture and the creative class are indicative of greater public awareness and attention to art. The ability of artists to interpret societal change, trauma and new ideas points to potential growth in the current environment. The growth of contemporary art, especially performance art and installation art was viewed as a shift to art that is experienced, and in which the viewer interacts with the art, rather than viewing art as an artifact to be preserved.

Artists saw the media and public attention to arts funding cuts during the most recent federal election campaign as a hopeful sign that more Canadians are becoming passionate about arts and arts funding.

### GLOBAL ECONOMY

Globalization was seen as both a threat to local artists and a source of inspiration and creativity. Opportunities to exhibit more widely also meant that there was greater competition for purchases by collectors. The current economic climate is expected to reduce the money people were willing or able to spend on art; it is also seen as a shift that might lead to a realignment of values or greater awareness of the value of art as an investment.

## Towards a future with thriving visual artists and communities

In the future, there will be:

Mentorships and apprenticeships – especially intergenerational.

Some art schools are formalizing these relationships as part of their curriculum – artists want to see more opportunities, including those for mid-career artists such as master classes.

Expanded exhibition and travel opportunities for artists in every community.

There is great benefit in exchanges between communities and greater mutual support within communities for both audience development and artist development.

More and deeper collaborations among artists, businesses, academia, youth and environmental organizations.

Some artists see a greater role for artists in applying their creativity to societal challenges (ie decline of manufacturing sector, environmental issues, revitalization of downtowns).

Artists will have a formal, recognized role in economic development and tourism, including acknowledgement in municipal planning.

A central role for art as an element of our culture and society.

Art will be recognized as a vital part of the health and wellbeing of all citizens, and all citizens will have access to creating and appreciating art. Art will play a greater role in public education. There will be higher levels of public art literacy and comfort with art, as well as more art in public spaces.

Financially accessible studio, live/work, or residency space in locations where some artists live in remote communities and travel great distances to visit the nearest city.

For example, there are artists in over 40 remote native communities who need somewhere to stay and work when they travel to Thunder Bay to sell their work or purchase supplies.

Full-time art careers that are financially sustainable.

This was often articulated as both a practical need and symbolic affirmation of the importance of artists to a society. The example of enhanced financial support for artists in other jurisdictions (Quebec, Europe, Japan) was often cited.

A body of knowledge that is common to artists about the art market and how to reach this market efficiently and effectively.

While the internet offers many sources of information, artists want to be able to navigate the multiplicity of resources that are applicable to them in a time efficient way. Artists want to know more about effective marketing strategies in this new environment.

## Conclusion

Artists see a world that is increasing in connectivity and the sharing of information and ideas. The future demands increasing collaboration – among artists of all types, artists and other groups in their communities, and within and among communities of artists.

## Environmental Scan

The purpose of this background report is to provide the Strategic Planning Committee and the Board with information on the current climate for artists and the organizations that serve them in Ontario.

This paper will cover:

Artists in Ontario: number, location, demographics, issues

Arts Service Organizations:

Definition

Governance

Funding

Other Province-wide Organizations serving Artists in Ontario

Local Organizations serving Artists in Ontario

## VAO Mission

Visual Arts Ontario (VAO) empowers artists at every career level by providing professional development opportunities and by cultivating an appreciation of their work in communities across Ontario.

## Artists in Ontario<sup>1</sup>

### NUMBER

There were 52,500 people in 9 categories of artist (including painters, sculptors, crafts, film, new media, as well as practices unrelated to visual arts) living in Ontario in 2001.

The average density of artists is 0.8% of the labour force.

### LOCATION

Toronto has 17 of the postal regions with the highest density of artists in Canada, including 3 of the top 10 neighbourhoods: Annex, West Queen West, Little Italy. Other areas with relatively high density neighbourhoods include Ottawa, the area around Kingston, the area around Belleville (including Prince Edward County), Bracebridge, Parry Sound, Manitoulin Island, Gravenhurst, Stratford. Hamilton, London, Algonquin Park, North Bay, Thunder Bay and Sudbury each have neighbourhoods with about average concentrations of artists.

An area north of Lake Erie and West of Niagara Falls (includes Pelham) has an unusually high concentration of artists, the highest in rural Ontario and eighth highest in rural Canada.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Little is available about the age or ethnicity of artists in Canada. They tend to be well-educated and earn less than or about average incomes. Anecdotally we hear that the population of artists is aging, yet enrolment in OCAD and in art-based programs in community colleges appears to be steady or growing. (The preferred media for students is changing, however: OCAD, for example, is investing heavily in technology while it has closed its pottery program.) It could well be that the population of artists in Ontario is bi-modal: there are many people in their 20s and 30s who see themselves as professional artists, relatively few people in their 40s who do so, and then an increasing number of people in their 50s and 60s who have left other professions and are now practicing artists

We have heard, anecdotally, during the consultations of the growing number of retirees or partial-retirees, people over the age of 50, who are turning or returning to the practice of art. These individuals are new to the art market but have considerable experience (and sometimes financial resources) from their previous careers. They are often located outside of major centres, where the cost of living is lower and the quality of life is potentially higher. As the number of people in this age bracket continues to grow, we can anticipate that there will be growth in the number of people who are interested in practicing art.

Statistics Canada reported in *New Frontiers of Research on Retirement* that, “Patterns of retirement from paid work among women will be much more prominent when the wave of baby boomer retirement gets underway, and their retirement patterns will be unique. Baby boomer women will be the first female cohort to have participated in the labour force for most of their adult lives. They will start their transitions with far higher levels of pension coverage than earlier female cohorts. The behaviour of baby boomer women will greatly influence what Canadian retirement looks like in the future. Studies reported in the book have found that women are much more likely than men to see

<sup>1</sup> From Artists by Neighbourhood in Canada, Hill Strategies.  
[www.hillstrategies.com/docs/Artists\\_by\\_neighbourhood.pdf](http://www.hillstrategies.com/docs/Artists_by_neighbourhood.pdf)

retirement as involving more than just getting a pension or stopping paid work. Women tend to include in their concept of work the time they spend doing unpaid work, such as care giving, volunteering, and so on.”<sup>2</sup>

## Issues for Artists

The Visual Arts Summit<sup>3</sup>, held in 2007, drew over 450 people to Ottawa to engage in discussions about the visual arts in Canada. Participants included artists, collectors, art dealers, arts writers, publishers, art historians, teachers, critics, curators, corporate leaders, arts service organizations and public sector funders. Highlights of the summit report add context and relevance to current issues facing Visual Arts Ontario:

In the context of dismal earnings statistics for visual artists (average earnings of only \$18,700 for visual artists and \$15,500 for artisans and craftspeople, well below the average earnings in the overall labour force in Canada – \$31,800), it is not surprising that the issue of the need for artists to make a living was a key theme of the Summit.

One artist noted that: “The profession of artists should be viable, not suicidal. Individual artists are human. We cannot dismiss the human needs of the people who make the stuff that this industry is based on. Artists don’t fit neatly into systems. We disrupt. We are an untidy problem.”

Compared with other Canadian workers, visual artists’ earnings do not increase substantially with age or education. Some participants indicated that “there is very little for mid-career artists. There are countless opportunities for emerging and established artists, but mid-career artists are left in limbo.” “We need more steps for artists to ascend, more glory, more successes.”

There was much discussion of the idea of a Public Lending Right model – where writers receive royalties from libraries. Could a fund be created for museums to pay artists for the exhibition of their work?

Another discussion highlighted the need for affordable, raw studio spaces in cities. In addition, many art materials are highly toxic. Could there be a study of artists’ occupational health and safety?

One participant noted that there is currently unprecedented art market activity. Is it artificial? Will the bubble burst? In theory, having more art collectors should mean a better living for artists and art dealers. However, in other discussions, a participant noted that “the secondary market leaves artists completely out of the loop.” Questions concerning private collectors include their appropriate role (if any) in the formation of public policy and their obligation (if any) to collect Canadian art. Another market issue concerned the relative lack of representation of Canadian artists at art fairs in Canada and abroad.

The issues above echo those raised both at VAO’s regional consultations. Artists across the province, indeed across the country, face similar issues regarding their own career trajectories, their abilities to connect and be represented and the struggle to unite their voices on issue facing artists across the country. *A Collective Agenda for the Visual Arts* which arose out of the Ottawa summit, is reprinted here. This agenda, can and should help form a blueprint for the work of Canadian arts service organizations.

## A Collective Agenda for the Visual Arts<sup>4</sup>

Art is the face of Canada. We, as artists, curators, collectors, dealers, educators and supporters, are united to enhance the opportunities for Canadian art to be created, seen, understood and enjoyed. We come together in the largest gathering of the visual arts in our history, to proclaim the critical role of the visual arts in an innovative and compassionate society in the 21st century. We know what is needed: we call on the governments, nations and peoples of Canada to join us in realizing our potential.

The visual arts community acts within an increasingly complex environment, with stagnant or shrinking resources. The growth in public engagement with the visual arts is no reflected in government policies or support. Canadian artists, galleries and museums have been starved for too long. Too many people work in the visual arts without an adequate livelihood or long-term security.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, The Daily, March 27, 2006 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/060327/dq060327b-eng.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Summarized by Hill Strategies, *ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.museums.ca/visualartssummit/en/>

The lack of vigorous and consistent policy, particularly from the federal government, is unacceptable. The visual arts provide a high level of service while receiving an unjustly low level of support from most government agencies and departments. In a time of global challenges calling for dialogue and understanding, the Canadian government has cut support for our international cultural profile. The unique and diverse character of Canada is under threat. The visual arts offer the best opportunity to counter this threat. It is time to recognize the place of visual arts at the centre of society.

We commit ourselves to work together:

- To satisfy the public's growing demand for participation in visual culture;
- To communicate the sector's needs with a united voice;
- To provide a secure livelihood for artists;
- To acknowledge the varied cultures of the indigenous peoples of this land;
- To reflect the diversity of our society; and
- To strengthen the institutions that advance the visual arts.

With a united voice, we advocate:

1. To create a new alliance across the sector, to advance the position of the visual arts;
2. To engage public appreciation for, and connection with, visual arts in all their forms;
3. To provide stronger and stable support to artists and to the individuals and institutions that present, preserve and interpret the work they create;
4. To establish a dedicated fund for the payment of artists for the public exhibition of their works;
5. To increase investment in arts education for all ages and from all levels of government;
6. To provide dedicated support for Aboriginal arts; and
7. To recognize and support the leading role of visual arts in strengthening Canada's international profile.

We envision a Canada that embraces creativity in all its dimensions. We believe in art that challenges us, deepens our understanding, and bridges our differences. Visual arts build a more tolerant, diverse and creative world.

## Arts Service Organizations (ASO)

### DEFINITION

An organization that provides professional services for artists and arts organizations  
The OAC funds ASOs that provide services and programs to support their members' professional, career or organizational development and promote an awareness of the arts in Ontario.

Services of ASOs may include:

- Networking / information sharing
- Publications
- Advocacy and recognition, promotion of employment of members
- Collective bargaining
- Discounts on frequently purchased items
- Establishing and enforcing standards for relationships between artists and clients
- Professional development
- Exhibition and sales opportunities
- Advice and consultation
- Resource centre for members and others
- Promotion of the sector to the public

For example, ARCCO (Artist-Run Centres and Collectives of Ontario) provides a communication network for artist-run centres throughout Ontario which:

- promotes the recognition of artist-run centres throughout Ontario
- supports the development of artist-run centres
- advances the professional standards of artist-run centre employees and artists throughout Ontario
- strengthens and stabilize artist-run centres throughout Ontario
- educates the public on the roles of ARCs and facilitate access to public
- provides a resource centre for artist-run collectives and centres and the public throughout Ontario

## Governance of ASOs

### NON-PROFIT STATUS

All Arts Service Organizations are incorporated non-profits. They are unlikely to have charitable status because of their advocacy activities. A competitive advantage for VAO is that it does have charitable status, enabling it to receive funds from Foundations (as well as individual donors).

### MEMBERSHIP

Membership is generally voluntary, although some demonstration of commitment to the profession or the sector may be required (i.e., resume, references).

### ELECTION TO BOARD

Election to the Board is generally from and by the membership.

### STAFF

The OAC requires its ASO grant recipients to be led by qualified professional personnel.

## Funding of ASOs

ASOs are funded by member fees, by operating grants from the Ontario Arts Council, by self-generated revenue and, to a small extent, by private donations and corporate sponsorships. Self-generated revenue can include fees for workshops, publications and conferences, sponsorships and advertising of programs and services, and commissions from suppliers of such things as group benefits or discounted services. VAO is a registered charity, which gives it great scope to raise funds from private foundations and individual donors. (The rules have recently changed to allow accredited National Arts Service Organizations to be registered charities, but only a few organizations have been approved. Provincial arts service organizations are typically engaged in advocacy or lobbying, activities which would prevent them from obtaining charitable status.<sup>5</sup>)

As the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) is a key funder of VAO, it is important to be aware of its strategic plan and priorities. It recently published its new plan for the next three years, in which it outlines the following strategies (emphasis ours):

- Seek partnerships between the arts and other sectors, including education, social services, health, tourism and business.
- Build stronger relationships with communities, municipalities, and provincial and federal governments to leverage support for Ontario artists and arts organizations.
- Build relationships with Aboriginal band and tribal councils, agencies, elders and community leaders to increase the support, viability and recognition of Aboriginal artists and organizations.
- Support artists and arts organizations to build actively engaged audiences who reflect the changing generational and cultural demographics of Ontario.
- **Work with partners, including arts service organizations, to improve services to artists and arts organizations.**
- Share research to advocate for the value of the arts in people's lives.

A core part of our environmental scan is to research organizations with similar mandates to VAO. Two other Canadian provinces have similar ASO's: Alberta and Nova Scotia. While Visual Arts Alberta and Visual Arts Nova Scotia share a similar focus to VAO on information sharing, exhibition and education, both organizations offer expanded services beyond VAO's core offerings. Visual Arts Alberta also facilitates the process for providing funding to qualified artists and arts organizations. Visual Arts Nova Scotia also offers an advocacy component.

## Visual Arts Alberta

Visual Arts Alberta Association is a non-profit Provincial Arts Service Organization (PASO) for the visual arts which celebrates, supports and develops Alberta's visual culture.

Goals:

- to facilitate and encourage greater appreciation and understanding of the significant contributions by the visual arts to the quality of life in the Province of Alberta;

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/osna-naso/info-eng.cfm>

- to recognize the value of its partnership with its members and the public;
- to facilitate the education of its members and the general public on the visual arts in Alberta;
- to provide the structure to facilitate the process for grant funding to qualified visual artists and visual arts organizations.

Member benefits include:

- Quarterly newsletter, VAAA Voice - an informative publication, with articles on topics of concern and/or interest to Alberta's visual artists, locally and internationally.
- Opportunities to exhibit in the VAAA Gallery - 10 juried exhibitions annually & over 5,000 visitors.
- Annual Membership Show in the VAAA Gallery.
- List Serve - members with email addresses receive regular Calls for Submissions, Competitions, Public Commission Calls and any other information deemed of value to Alberta visual artists.
- Member Rates for Artist Marketing Programs including artcards and business cards-- for more information please contact the VAAA office.
- Opportunities to Exhibit in the Virtual Gallery - Who's New on the website with at least two exhibitions annually.
- Becoming part of the Alberta Visual Artist Database.
- Invitation to monthly exhibitions.
- Networking opportunities & support service.

## Visual Arts Nova Scotia

Visual Arts Nova Scotia (VANS) is a non-profit arts service organization which fosters visual arts in the province. It promotes and supports the visual arts and artists of Nova Scotia by providing a voice and advocating for the rights of visual artists. The organization supports its members by providing exhibition, marketing and educational opportunities. VANS is a primary resource for artists, providing access to a community of peers. It fosters excellence and lifelong learning in the arts.

To achieve these goals, VANS offers these programs and services:

- **visual arts news:** 36 page magazine, published three times a year containing features, profiles, interviews, news and reviews about the visual arts in Nova Scotia. Membership in VANS includes a subscription to the magazine.
- **exhibitions:** Curated, juried, annual open exhibitions, Corridor Gallery and regular regional exhibitions.
- **communication services:** VV (Virtual Vans) electronic bulletin, Members' News
- **media library:** A major collection of current images by Nova Scotia's working visual artists.
- **resource centre:** Reference materials on contracts, grants, residencies, tax law, copyright, commissions, competitions, etc. Also current information on exhibitions, jobs, etc. and lending copies of Canadian art magazines. They also loan out photographic equipment including 35mm camera, flash, tripod, lights, and slide projector.
- **internships:** Administrative work terms for art college students.
- **advocacy:** Promotion of arts awareness in government, business, schools, media, and the general public.

## Other Province-wide Organizations serving Artists in Ontario

### FUSION<sup>6</sup>

Mission Statement:

*“The mission of the association shall be to encourage and promote excellence and quality in clay and glass, provide opportunities for fellowship and a sense of community involvement, provide continuing education resources for members and people interested in clay and glass and to reach out, demonstrating tolerance, caring, and acceptance for the diverse aspects of expression in clay and glass.”* (Established by the constitution of 1985)

Fusion is:

- the only Ontario arts organization dedicated solely to makers and collectors of handmade clay and glass
- a not-for-profit organization led by a volunteer board of directors
- a diverse membership of artists, students, teachers, guilds, collectors, libraries, hobbyists, and businesses
- the 'voice' of the clay and glass community to government, business and the general public

Activities include:

- Website

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.clayandglass.on.ca/>

- Artist of the Month
- Winter Workshops
- Annual Conference
- Fireworks Exhibition
- Pottery & Glass Sale
- Scholarships & Awards
- Magazine

### **Funding**

Fusion is funded by membership fees, an annual conference, shows and sales. They were formerly funded through the revenue generated by a retail location. When the retail location failed, they faced a severe shortfall that was reduced through major fundraising. Fusion now has an endowment that is used to ensure the sustainability of the organization.

### **DANCE UMBRELLA OF ONTARIO<sup>7</sup>**

DUO's arts managers enable Ontario's dance professionals to access administrative services at a fraction of the cost of hiring staff themselves. Services can be purchased separately or in packages that suit the individual's needs - from short-term production co-ordination to annual service.

A comprehensive range of arts management services is available.

### **CULTURAL CAREERS COUNCIL ONTARIO<sup>8</sup>**

Almost 300,000 people work in the cultural sector in Ontario. Cultural workers tend to be well-educated, mobile, and about 50% are self-employed. In addition to extensive self-employment, individuals and organizations working in culture face challenges that include financial marginalization, unpredictable career paths, uniquely specialized skills, and small staffs - which can lead to high turnover and burn-out that jeopardize the cultural sector's success.

There is ample evidence that sound human resources practices reduce stress, increase workplace fairness, and improve morale. In the cultural community, however, there is a lack of priority given to human resources, limited availability of relevant information and tools, and even a perception that human resources practices don't apply to work in culture.

It is widely recognized that inadequate human resources practices weaken the cultural sector. The professional development and human resources needs of the cultural sector are unique and diverse. Working in partnership with all disciplines in the sector, the CCCO assesses and anticipates human resources needs, and works to ensure that those needs are met. In the last five years, including matching from partners in our community, CCCO has initiated activities of over \$8 million in value that address capacity building, human resource needs, and support internships in which there have been over 160 participants.

### **CARFAC ONTARIO<sup>9</sup>**

CARFAC Ontario is the association of professional visual and media artists. Founded in 1968, CARFAC (Canadian Artists' Representation/le Front des artistes canadiens) has worked for 40 years on the legal and economic issues facing visual artists. CARFAC believes that artists, like professionals in other fields, should be paid for their work and share equitably in profits from their art practice. The work of CARFAC Ontario is to develop policies, publications and services that assist artists, galleries, curators, art patrons, and other stakeholders in creating an economic climate that benefits all visual artists. There are five key principles guiding the organization: Reaffirmation; Networking; Advocacy; Visibility; and Diversity. CARFAC maintains its focus on advocacy and networking yet offers an extensive range of professional development offerings, including a number of Career Skills Teleseminars. Similar to the work of VAO, the CARFAC workshops cover important subjects that artists need to understand to manage the business side of their careers. Other organizations that are similar to CARFAC Ontario include the Writers' Guild of Canada, the Directors' Guild of Canada and the Association of Canadian Television and Radio Actors (ACTRA).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.danceumbrella.net>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.workinculture.on.ca/about/>

<sup>9</sup> [www.carfaontario.ca/](http://www.carfaontario.ca/)

## Local Organizations Serving Artists in Ontario

### ARTIST-RUN CENTRES AND COLLECTIVES

There are nearly 50 artist-run centres and artist collectives in Ontario. Artist-run centres provide opportunities for networking and community, for exhibition or publication and for production.

### COMMERCIAL GALLERIES AND DEALERS

The Art Dealer Association of Canada lists 44 members in Ontario, most of which are located in Toronto. The actual number of commercial galleries in the province is far higher. Commercial galleries represent professional artists to the buying public. They often nurture artists' work, train them in how to present their work to the public, support them financially while they find a market, and promote them to media and other audiences.

### PUBLIC ART GALLERIES

The Ontario Association of Art Galleries lists about 100 Galleries among its members (there may be some small overlap with artist-run centres.) Galleries educate, engage, exhibit. They promote the value of art and art appreciation to local, regional, national and global audiences.

### POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS (UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES) AND DEPARTMENTS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Colleges and Universities across Ontario offer undergraduate, post-graduate and continuing education programs in art practice and in the business of managing an art career. The cost, time commitment and value of these programs vary greatly.

### PRIVATE ART SCHOOLS

Toronto School of Art, Avenue Road Art School and others throughout the province offer employment to practising artists as teachers and offer ongoing development to emerging artists.

### GUILDS AND CO-OPS

Many communities have Guilds or Co-ops of artists. Guilds and Co-ops offer networking, community, information, professional development workshops and sales opportunities (fairs, studio tours) to their members.

### MUNICIPALITIES

Many Ontario municipalities have started to recognize the value of artists in their communities and are responding, for example, by altering land use policies to permit live-work arrangements. Some are developing cultural plans that foster the climate that nurtures artists and encourages the economic development that has been proven to follow cultural activity.

### ART SUPPLY STORES; FRAMERS

Retailers of art supplies often provided other value-added services, such as information about other artists, studio space, exhibition space and teaching opportunities. They are often the cornerstone of local art communities, providing gathering space for artists to meet.

## Organizations Serving Artists Online

Artists connect with other artists, suppliers, galleries and purchasers in their local community and in major centres both in the physical world and online. There are both formal and informal internet services that link artists with like-minded individuals and organizations. Informal networking takes place every day on sites such as MySpace and Facebook – not to mention YouTube. Artists are able to connect with each other, invite each other to events and even display their work. A quick search of Facebook revealed hundreds of organizations, networks and individuals linked by keywords such as 'visual arts'. MySpace indicates that they have nearly 19,000 'topics' active under the heading of Arts.

Each of the sites listed below supports artists in different ways. One is simply the website for a consulting firm. One is a vast database of information of specific use to artists at every stage of their career. The third offers practical support to artists and organizations in their business practices.

<http://www.artadvice.com/>

#### Contemporary Artists' Services

Contemporary Artists' Services, founded in 1979 by Sylvia White, is one of the few management consulting firms specializing in the career development of visual artists, advising artists on all matters related to business, exhibitions, and marketing. In addition to individual consultations, CAS represents select artists who have retained our services to promote their work. CAS artists have participated in hundreds of exhibitions, nationally and internationally.

<http://www.artquest.org.uk/>

Artquest provides critical engagement and practical support to London's visual artists and craftspeople, working with practitioners in London throughout their careers.

Artistic practice can feel quite isolated, even in a large city with lots of arts infrastructure like London. Artquest, which is staffed by professional artists, can help to encourage artists to seek critical feedback and networking around their practice. They encourage the setting up of peer mentoring groups and artists networks, provide practical advice on exhibiting your work, have articles and tips about building and sustaining a network that can help you take control of your career and move where you want to go.

Every artist, at some stage in their careers, needs to know something pretty mundane but vital piece of information to get along. How do I find an accountant? Where can I buy art materials? How much should I charge for my services? How do I claim housing benefit? Where can I find a list of UK arts residencies? All of these questions, and many, many more, can be answered on the listings and articles pages of this website. Use the search option and sitemap page for a full overview of the information available.

Artquest aims to provide advice and information that covers every aspect of an artist's life and career, including:

- Visual arts materials sources
- Studio spaces around London
- Venue listings, and advice on approaching them
- Funding and funders who can help artists
- Residencies in the UK and overseas
- Reference materials for visual artists and craftspeople
- Lists of agents and agencies
- Opportunities and deadlines listings
- Lists of press contacts
- Printers, framers and graphics companies
- Extensive marketing and publicity advice and contacts
- Huge legal archive and free online legal advice
- Business advisory and support services
- Advice on benefits, housing, employment and childcare
- Social, business and professional networks
- Step by step advice on becoming self-employed
- Extensive international section with venues, residencies, advice services overseas and networks of artists
- Training listings of courses and training providers
- Advice on artist rates of pay, VAT and artists resale royalty right

Artquest has over 800 pages of information and advice on its website alone.

<http://www.fracturedatlas.org/>

Fractured Atlas is a non-profit organization that provides services and support to artists and arts organizations. Fractured Atlas is a community of over 50,000 artists and arts groups from every discipline across the United States and around the world. Fractured Atlas is an innovator in the use of technology and 21st century business models to empower the community it serves. Fractured Atlas offers a broad infrastructure of support for the arts community. The common thread among its programs and services is that they help artists and arts organizations be more effective as businesses. That means providing the tools and resources that other industries and large organizations take for granted, including all types of insurance, as well as professional development and advocacy.

## Visual Arts Ontario Summit

On Friday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Consulting Matrix consultants Judy Wolfe and Julie Gircys facilitated a summit of prominent members of the visual arts community as part of the consultation on a future direction for VAO. Thirty six participants from across the province (listed in Appendix One) included funders, gallerists, associations, artists, educational institutions, arts councils, arts entrepreneurs, the VAO Board and staff. Presentations from 9 am to 9:30am provided information about Visual Arts Ontario, the findings from the artist consultations and the environmental scan. Between 9:30 and 10 participants shared high point stories of providing assistance to a visual artist in his/her career or receiving assistance from someone in order to further a visual arts career. At 10am, the facilitators convened an Open Space, in which self-formed groups chose to participate in dialogues emerging from the following questions over two sessions:

1. “We are in a time when there is a major shift in how art is created and disseminated, in how the public explores and appreciates art, and in the integration of art into everyday life. Just as an artist develops a practice through the creative impulse, experimentation, formal learning and self-teaching, an artist also creates a career. How can artists create their own careers in this emerging world?”
2. “How can a visual arts community work together to foster the careers of artists?”

Groups convened on the following topics:

Marketplace – Creating Value  
 Business Education for Artists  
 International Exposure for Artists  
 Mentorship  
 Transitions in the lives of Artists  
 “Success” in the career of an artist  
 Networking for artists  
 Branding  
 Potential Business and Artists conference  
 Artist Celebrity/Public Perception of Artists

Groups reported back on their conversations and posted summaries of their conclusions, proposals and suggested actions for everyone else to read. After lunch, the consultants facilitated a whole group discussion of the highlights from the morning conversations and the implications for VAO.

The following comments were offered to assist the VAO Board as it moves forward with its strategic plan:

- VAO’s job should be not necessarily to provide all the information, but to connect people with information to those who need the information – close the triangle
- Who is a member of VAO? Should VAO consider establishing a standard or criteria for membership, or be wide open. Who can benefit most from the services offered?
- Should VAO offer information beyond its membership—would allow for building profile of artists, widening impact
- Need to better market the VAO brand – create a clearer image of what makes it distinct
- Use Web 2.0 to create new networking opportunities (blogs, forums, etc)
- Some concern of the role of the internet; can/should VAO serve the community beyond the reach of the internet? What about holding a big signature event (like XXX in the past)
- Can VAO expand the marketplace for artists by directing a branding campaign for Ontario Visual Art – ie “Foodland Ontario” campaign
- Can VAO match businesses and artists – help facilitate opportunities on both sides to engage in the creative process
- Can it facilitate events / portfolio reviews with dealers and artists – ie Contact
- Need for VAO to become more ‘hip’: Just do it – transform entitlement to empowerment by following the lead of younger artists

Throughout the discussions, the themes of connection and collaboration, networking and mentorship, mutual learning and career development emerged. There were many suggestions as to how VAO could build/develop relationships within the arts community and beyond for the benefit of visual artists.

VAO clearly enjoys goodwill within the arts community and is seen as an organization that positioned to improve how it meets the needs of artists across the province.

## Board Retreats

Following the summit, Consulting Matrix facilitated three Board retreats to identify and examine strategic alternatives. Consulting Matrix also facilitated a half-day staff retreat to review the findings of the environmental scan and artist consultations and determine the staff's perception of VAO's strengths and weaknesses.

The Board was in agreement that the status quo option is neither sustainable nor desirable given the changes in the environment in the 30 year period since VAO was founded. The Board agreed that VAO's relevance and financial viability are both under serious threat. The current business model needs to be reinvented in order to serve more artists more effectively across the province.

Ten potential strategic directions were considered to address the issues raised at the Summit in the context of the environmental scan and artist consultations. These directions included the possibility of winding the organization down. Of ten, the options were narrowed down to two by the end of the first retreat. At the second retreat on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the Board identified its preferred strategic option, and drafted a description of the strategy, a 5 year vision, the values of the new VAO, specific issues to be addressed and conducted a risk analysis. The retreat notes are included as Appendix Two. At its third retreat on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the Board began work on a high-level implementation plan for its new strategy.

## Conclusions/Outcomes

The Board has identified its preferred strategic alternative, which it has described as a collaborative on-line community of artists and those involved with art (including collectors, gallerists, reviewers, etc) built around the business of being an artist. This model differs from the current delivery model in that VAO would be positioned as a facilitator, rather than as an expert, information would flow in all directions, rather than top-down, and members would be members of the VAO on-line community, which will replace paid membership. The strategy provides a space in which artists can help each other create their own careers. The VAO community will be open, current, welcoming, diverse, inclusive and relevant. People will become members of the community because it will be current, easy to access, accurate, "in the know", have a variety of perspectives, connections to other markets and other individuals and organizations in the arts community and "art-speak" free. It will enable artists to build their brands and their businesses.

The Board has identified a draft transition strategy, which includes a funding feasibility assessment, developing Board capacity, developing a new business model and an interim membership and operational strategy. These are outlined in Appendix Three. The Board recognizes that the successful execution of the new strategy will require a significant commitment from the Board and broad support from its funders and the greater arts community in Ontario.

## Appendices

### Appendix One – List of VAO Summit Participants

*Friday, January 30, 2009*

**Phil Anderson**, Director, Gallery 1313  
**Jamie Angell**, Director, Angell Gallery  
**Flavio Belli**, Chair, Board of Directors, Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition  
**Rebecca Carbin**, Public Art Office, Toronto Cultural Services  
**Demetra Christakos**, Executive Director, Ontario Association of Art Galleries  
**Kristian Clarke**, Executive Director, CARFAC Ontario  
**Elizabeth D'Agostino**, Curriculum Coordinator, Toronto School of Art  
**Utsy Hadaro**, Executive Director, Arts Council Windsor Region (ACWR)  
**Bob Hambly**, RGD, Partner, Creative Director, Hambly & Woolley  
**Clara Hargittay**, Cultural Affairs Officer - Public Art Toronto Culture, City of Toronto  
**William Huffman**, Deputy Director, Toronto Arts Council  
**Laurie Jones**, Executive Director, Rails End Gallery, Haliburton  
**Linda McMaster**, Executive Director, Artbarn School, Toronto  
**Chris Mitchell**, Director of Exhibitions, Marketing, and Development, Gladstone Hotel  
**Jane Perdue**, Public Art Coordinator, Urban Design, City Planning, City of Toronto  
**Carolyn Taylor**, Director of Special Projects, Artscape  
**Emma Quinn**, General Manager, Ontario Crafts Council  
**Mary Sue Rankin**, Director, Edward Day Gallery  
**Kelly Rintoul**, Executive Director, Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition  
**Carolyn Vessely**, Visual and Media Arts Officer, Ontario Arts Council  
**Ann Webb**, Executive Director, Canadian Art Foundation  
**Heather Webb**, Director, Open Studio  
**Lisa Wohrle**, Associate Visual and Media Arts Officer, Ontario Arts Council  
**Christina Zeidler**, President, Gladstone Hotel

#### VAO STAFF

**Kim McBrien**, Executive Director  
**Avril Loreti**, Manager of Marketing and Communications, Editor - Agenda: Opportunities for Artists  
**Tiffany Joy Villahermosa**, Membership Coordinator

#### VAO DIRECTORS

**Ed Phillips**, Outgoing Chair, 2008  
**Nelson French**, Incoming Chair, 2009  
**Michael Allen**  
**Jennifer Bizzarri**  
**Yael Brotman**  
**Simon Clements**  
**Dolores Gubasta**  
**Perry Tung**  
 Adri van Hilten