

**The Ottawa Visual Arts Environment:
Infrastructure Services, Artist-Run Culture
and the Business of Art**

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Contents

Abstract.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Chapter 1: Being a Professional Visual Artist in Today's Art World.....	7
Becoming a Professional Visual Artist.....	7
Understanding the Contemporary Art Market.....	9
Artist-Run Centres — An Alternative to the Art Market.....	11
Modelling the Business of Art.....	13
Chapter 2: The Ottawa Visual Arts Environment.....	18
Ottawa's Hybrid Business-of-Art Model.....	21
The Internet as a Portal to the Global Art World.....	22
The Art Market and Local Commercial Galleries.....	23
Museums and Public Galleries.....	25
Educational Institutions and Professional Development.....	27
City of Ottawa Arts and Culture Programming.....	31
Government Funding.....	35
Arts Services Organizations.....	38
Ottawa's Artist-Run Centres and Other Artist Organizations.....	39
Chapter 3: The Ottawa Artist-Run Culture Survey.....	48
Conclusions.....	53
Bibliography and Other Sources of Information.....	56

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide a snapshot of the Ottawa visual arts environment, and to determine whether it provides the infrastructure and resources necessary for individuals to “make it” as professional visual artists living and working in Ottawa. Initial research was conducted through a graduate research project from May through July 2019, which included a survey of Ottawa’s artist-run culture. Despite being home to the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa is not reputed as a visual arts centre, like Montreal, Toronto or New York. Nevertheless, Ottawa has a vibrant if underrecognized visual arts community. Emerging and having a successful career as a professional visual artist presents unique challenges. While managing their careers as businesses, visual artists must make choices regarding how to make a living within “for-profit” and “not-for-profit” economies. For Ottawa, I propose a hybrid business-of-art model with overlapping economies. Although its commercial market is weak, Ottawa offers a moderately supportive environment through the City of Ottawa’s arts-and-culture programs, institutions and schools, the availability of government funding, and a diverse artist-run culture. Ottawa’s advantage in retaining a vibrant visual arts community is its strong arts-and-culture employment sector.

Keywords: Ottawa, visual arts, professional artist, business of art, commercial art market, emergence, visual arts environment, arts infrastructure, artist-run culture, artist-run centres.

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Research for this paper was undertaken as part of a self-directed project during the summer of 2019, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in Art History. Despite having the idea for this project, I was having trouble finding a research advisor to sponsor me. I approached Dr. Stéphane Roy, Associate Professor and graduate supervisor for the Carleton University Art History Department. Although Stéphane’s expertise is in eighteenth-century French prints, he agreed to take on my project. He supervised my research and shared my progress over the summer as I investigated the inner workings of the Ottawa visual arts scene. I submitted my project report, entitled “The Ottawa Visual Arts Environment: Infrastructure Services, Artist-Run Centres, Collectives and Grass

Roots Enterprises,” on July 27, 2019. I appreciate Stephane’s support and advice over the course of the project. I am also grateful for the input of everyone who contributed during the information-gathering stages. I trust I reflected their insights accurately and take full responsibility for any errors and omissions.

Despite considerable interest from my colleagues, I postponed writing a summary research paper for publication while focusing my academic attention on completing other requirements for my degree. Little did I know that, within months of completing research for this project, the art world — and, in fact, the entire world — would be profoundly changed by COVID-19, a pandemic that has altered how we conduct business and our daily lives.¹ As I undertake writing this paper in the summer of 2020, galleries and art institutions are just starting to reopen. At the same time, many conferences, art exhibitions and festivals have been cancelled, postponed or moved online. Arts organizations, galleries and museums have taken to the Internet offering online educational content and virtual visitor experiences such as tours and exhibition openings. Meanwhile artists work to capture and represent the shared cultural moment. Arts services organizations and their financial supporters have realigned their resources to provide relief for artists and arts organizations. It is hoped that this paper will serve as a baseline as the Ottawa visual arts community continues to move towards a “new normal.”

¹ COVID-19 is the name for coronavirus disease 2019, a pandemic caused by the novel corona virus SARS-CoV-2, <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.

Introduction

Despite studying art history for almost a decade — learning about Europe-centric art, and its transformation into transnational art within a global art world — I never quite understood how an Ottawa artist could “make it” professionally. To thrive, artists need markets, resources and infrastructure, as well as a vibrant artist-run culture, and I was not clear as to how Ottawa’s visual arts environment provided these requirements.

In the summer of 2019, I undertook a research project to document Ottawa’s visual arts environment. This was done as a self-directed study — a credit towards a Master of Arts degree in Art History at Carleton University. From my studies of the globalization of art, I knew that Ottawa is far from the centre of today’s contemporary art world. Traditionally, artists who want to be commercially successful have had to leave Ottawa for Toronto, Montreal or New York, where there are strong commercial art markets linked nationally and internationally, vibrant artist-run cultures, renowned museums, and bases of wealthy collectors and donors. Although Ottawa lacks a significant commercial art market, I know it is nonetheless home to a vibrant and diverse community of visual artists.

My aim in undertaking my 2019 research project was to achieve a clear understanding of Ottawa’s unique visual arts environment from the perspective of visual artists and, from there, gain insights into how that environment supported visual artists at different stages in their careers.² Unlike what I found for other Canadian urban centres, there appears to be very little published information on the Ottawa arts scene, and its visual arts

² According to the Ontario Council for the Arts, the discipline of visual art includes painting, drawing, printmaking, installation, sculpture, book works, performance art, photography and electronic media. A visual artist is one whose practice falls within the visual arts. “Visual Arts.” Ontario Council for the Arts, <https://www.arts.on.ca/grants/discipline/visual-arts>.

scene in particular. What was available was largely web-based, on individual websites, covering all arts disciplines including dance, theatre, literature, film as well as the visual arts.

What I wanted was a “big picture,” laying out how it all worked — but solely from the perspective of the visual artist. In my research project, I addressed these questions: What constitutes the Ottawa visual arts environment? What facilities and services does the Ottawa arts environment provide for visual artists at the emerging, mid-career and established stages, and how are they accessed? What roles do artist-run centres, collectives and other grassroots or artist-driven initiatives play within the community? And, can artists living and working in Ottawa make it in the wider art world?

In art history, we often refer to an amorphous and ever-changing “art world.” To understand it more definitively, I consulted Georgina Adam’s book, *Big Bucks: The Explosion of the Art Market in the 21st Century*. Adam describes an increasingly global system of trading in art, in which Old Masters and modern art routinely hit record prices at auction. Unfettered demand for art as an investment has opened up opportunities for contemporary art, and this market continues to grow exponentially.³

Research by Jill Thayer on the social and material conditions of artist emergence contributed greatly to my understanding of what developing a successful career as a visual artist might entail.⁴ Thayer uses the term “emergence” to describe the process by which people become artists and move along their chosen career path to the point of success, which generally means being recognized as a professional artist.⁵ In addition to talent, hard work,

³ Georgina Adam, *Big Bucks: The Explosion of the Art Market in the 21st Century* (Farnham: Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 9-11.

⁴ Jill Thayer, “Artist Emergence in Contemporary Culture: A Dialectic in Social and Material Conditions of Southern California Artists” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2011).

⁵ Thayer, “Artist Emergence,” 32-3.

perseverance, and developing the right relationships, artist emergence is heavily influenced by the culture, dealers, institutions, peers, and professional support structures in the artist's locale.⁶

Being a successful artist can take a variety of forms — not everyone wants or expects to become a Damien Hirst or Jeff Koons. In fact, many artists avoid the commercial marketplace entirely, preferring to pursue a variety of research, aesthetic, activist or community-based agendas. Artist-run centres and other artist-run initiatives are important, both supporting emerging artists and providing alternatives to the commercial art market. Although artists may not opt for the highly competitive contemporary art market, they still need to make a living. In most cases, artists operate as independent businesspeople and need to be cognizant of how to navigate the business of art, whatever their career choices may be.

In describing the Ottawa visual arts environment, I drew heavily upon Internet sources. I also conducted a number of interviews, attended arts events, and engaged in informal conversations with local artists and cultural workers. Interviewing people during the summer has its challenges, and was further complicated by renovations underway at the Ottawa Art Gallery and Arts Court, and at Gallery 101. I was fortunate to benefit from the “arm's-length arts-and-culture planning process” underway in Ottawa in 2018–2019, which provided a wealth of information about the city's arts-and-culture infrastructure.⁷

In order to gain more insightful information on the region's artist-run culture, I conducted an online survey in July 2019, directed to the heads of various artist-run organizations, including artist-run centres, collectives, community-based arts organizations

⁶ Thayer, “Artist Emergence,” 60-1.

⁷ See the Ottawa Cultural Alliance website for a list of documents produced in the 2019 Ottawa arts-and-culture planning process: <https://ottawaculture.ca>.

and arts service providers.⁸ The results of that survey offered useful information on how Ottawa — both officially, and less formally — approaches the challenges unique to visual artists. Throughout history, visual artists have tended to live precarious lives. Unless fortunate enough to have patrons, significant financial success and widespread recognition, visual artists often toiled under difficult conditions. To many, “starving artist” has become an accepted — and acceptable — notion.

Today, however, there are new tools and business models that can give artists a reasonable level of recognition, success and financial remuneration. Although my research showed mixed results when it comes to current support for Ottawa’s visual arts community, it also suggests that there is reason to hope that an artist living in Ottawa can still “make it” in the art world.

⁸ Beth Shepherd, “Ottawa Artist-Run Culture Survey,” in “The Ottawa Visual Arts Environment: Infrastructure Services, Artist-Run Centres, Collectives and Grass Roots Enterprises,” (MA Self-Directed Study, Carleton University, July 27, 2019), 41-55.

Chapter 1: Being a Professional Visual Artist in Today's Art World

In school, I studied many contemporary artists. Inclusion in a university curriculum meant, to my mind, that the artist had “made it.” What I never learned was how these artists achieve national and international success . . . and what does that success even look like? To begin to answer this I consider what it means to be a professional artist, and how artists emerge and become successful within the contemporary art world.

Becoming a Professional Visual Artist

Emerging and having a successful career as a professional visual artist presents unique challenges as compared to other professions, in that an artist's success reflects not only financial success, but also reputation within the community. Unlike other professions, such as law or architecture, says author Alison Bain, artists do not have the same clear set of credentials that differentiate between artist and non-artist, professional and amateur, or hobbyist.⁹

Becoming a professional artist means taking an alternate career path from the typical nine-to-five job held by many professionals in more regulated or secure fields. Although many artists may be formally qualified through a degree from a fine arts university, it does not follow that they will then get a job in their field, working their way up through increasingly responsible positions until being declared a professional.

The Canada Council for the Arts defines a professional artist as someone who has specialized training in the artistic field (not necessarily in academic institutions); is recognized as a professional by his or her peers (artists working in the same artistic

⁹ Alison Bain, “Constructing an Artistic Identity,” *Work, Employment and Society* 19 no. 1 (2016), 34.

tradition); is committed to devoting more time to artistic activity, if possible financially; and has a history of public presentation or publication.¹⁰ Clearly, there are many aspects to being recognized as a professional artist and, based on this definition, having presence and credibility within one's arts community is very important.¹¹

Artists often work as sole practitioners. This means that, rather than learning professional cultural norms from the workplace, they often learn how to be artists through myths and stereotypes rooted in romanticization of the artist's creative abilities, and the pursuit of one's art without concern for the financial benefits.¹² Since neither self-declaration nor a degree guarantee artistic status or market success, Bain suggests that "[t]o be a professional artist, then, essentially involves successful claim and defence of professional status through the construction and maintenance of an artistic identity."¹³

Artistic identity is just one aspect in developing a successful artistic career. Artists, especially early in their careers, require particular aesthetic and technical skills. In addition, they conceive of and manage their own projects, work in a methodical and labour-intensive manner, then market and promote their work. They invest in materials and carry out their art practice without supervision, and without assurance of an income from their labour.¹⁴ In other words, artists run their own small businesses, be it a for-profit or not-for-profit endeavour and, to be financially successful in the art world, they must be market-savvy and entrepreneurial while also remaining experimental and innovative.¹⁵ A search of the Internet

¹⁰ "Professional Artist," Canada Council, Accessed August 28, 2020, <https://canadacouncil.ca/glossary/professional-artist>.

¹¹ Bain, "Artistic Identity," 33.

¹² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

on “How to have a successful career as a visual artist” will result in literally millions of responses, many written by artists themselves.¹⁶ In addition to the constants of working tirelessly at your art and remaining true to your own vision, most articles and posts advise artists to manage their practice as a business. And one thing a businessperson has to do is know the market.

Understanding the Contemporary Art Market

“Art market” is often used synonymously with “art world” — a place where art is recognized and valued. The art market is ever changing, however, and subject to economic and geopolitical factors, as well as the capricious tastes of buyers and critics seeking something new and exciting. The art market also comprises both primary and secondary markets: in the former, artists sell their own work; the latter involves re-sales by dealers or at auction.¹⁷

According to Georgina Adam, in her book *Big Bucks: The Explosion of the Art Market in the 21st Century*, the total value of the art market in 2013 was estimated globally at US\$65.7 billion.¹⁸ An exact value is not easy to determine, because the industry is unregulated and many transactions are not in the public domain. Despite some record-breaking sales for Old Masters in recent years, growing demand for contemporary art — especially high-impact works by “brand-name” artists — has really ignited sales in the first

¹⁶ Three examples I found through just such a search on July 6, 2020 are: Anna Ortiz, “Five Ways to Jumpstart Your Art Career,” The Career Project, <https://www.theartcareerproject.com/five-ways-to-jumpstart-your-art-career/>; “9 Things You Should Give Up to Be a Successful Artist,” Art Archives, <https://www.artworkarchive.com/blog/9-things-you-should-give-up-to-be-a-successful-artist>; and Renee Phillips, “3 Tips to Plan For Art Career Success,” *Professional Artist Magazine*, <https://professionalartistmag.com/3-tips-plan-art-career-success/>.

¹⁷ Darius A. Spieth, “Art Markets,” *Oxford Art Online*, 2019, <https://www.oxfordartonline.com/page/art-markets>.

¹⁸ Adam, *Big Bucks*, 9.

decades of the twenty-first century. This growth has been spurred by an increase in global art fairs, the Internet as a selling platform for art, influential curators and art consultants promoting artists, and the movement of art museums into the art market.¹⁹

Dealers and gallerists have long served as art's entry point into the art world. Dealers tend to represent living artists, handling primary and secondary sales, while also looking after artists' estates.²⁰ Auction houses, the most famous of which are Christie's and Sotheby's, drive the secondary art market.²¹ This works well in most cases, although some prominent contemporary artists have chosen to bypass dealers by going directly to auction. Galleries such as Gagosian and White Cube sometimes consigned new works directly to auction houses as well.²²

Of the more than 250,000 art dealers worldwide, 1% are very large, turning over more than US\$70 million in annual sales; 90% are small businesses, turning over less than US\$1.4 million a year.²³ Adam notes that it is common practice for larger galleries to "poach" artists with talent and star potential and turn them into individual brands. To achieve this, they must place works in prestigious museums and collections, present them at important art fairs, and may even "ration" them in order to justify and maintain high prices.²⁴ Dealers will promote their art stars and most promising artists at major art fairs, and the prospect of international sales can be very important to artists striving for commercial success.

¹⁹ Adam, *Big Bucks*, 10-11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

²² *Ibid.*, 35.

²³ Clare McAndrew, TEFAF Art Market Report, 2014, TEFAF, Maastricht, 55, in Adam, *Big Bucks*, 50.

²⁴ Adam, *Big Bucks*, 50.

Most of today's contemporary art fairs are explicitly designed for galleries to sell art to collectors. Some of the better-known fairs are Art Basel, Art Basel Miami Beach, Frieze, the Armory Show and Art Dubai, but there are similar fairs all over the world. Art fairs are competitive and costly to present, but they allow dealers to compete with large auction houses by adding an international reach, the "now or never" excitement of an auction, and the cachet of a celebrity event.²⁵

According to Ann Luther, art markets in Western Europe and the U.S. are expanding and changing in response to the introduction of many new and highly competitive art fairs and revised gallery models.²⁶ It has become extremely important that emerging artists quickly develop their curricula vitae (CVs) to include institutional and critical recognition. Some strategic galleries have taken on the role of "patron" by funding emerging artists they see as having potential and ensuring that these artists get critical and institutional recognition that implies work of "museum quality."²⁷

Artist-Run Centres — An Alternative to the Art Market

Luther also suggests that changes in the art market are affecting the roles of artist-run spaces. Since their emergence in the late 1960s and 1970s in Canada, the U.S. and Europe — when avant-garde art and commercial art rarely intersected — artist-run centres (ARCs) have been important in contributing to the career development of emerging, experimental and other artists.²⁸ ARCs have been vital to the development of new artistic practices, and have

²⁵ Adam, *Big Bucks*, 103.

²⁶ Anne Luther, "Artist-Run Galleries — Differentiating Three Models in Current Contemporary Art Markets," *Journal for Art Market Studies* 2, no. 1 (2018), 1-3.

²⁷ Luther, "Artist-Run Galleries," 4.

²⁸ Gabriele Detterer, "The Spirit and Culture of Artist-Run Spaces," in *Artist-Run Spaces, Nonprofit Collective Organizations in the 1960s and 1970s*, eds. Gabriele Detterer and Maurizio Nannucci (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2012), 16-18.

contributed to the expansion of critical discourse through networks of artists, curators, critics and arts administrators. They have also contributed through alliances that enabled them to free themselves from the constraints of traditional art institutions, and to acquire additional exhibition space and support.²⁹

New York-based ARCs are evolving and positioning themselves and their artists at the intersection of art production, sales and institutional recognition. Some ARCs are partnering with commercial galleries that have alliances with institutions (MoMA, Whitney, etc.). Since 2015, artists of standing who are already represented by a gallery have been opening their own artist-run spaces to sell their work in accordance with dealer protocols. Another type of artist-run gallery is more oriented towards other artists, and is used for special projects and exhibiting experimental art. Although project-based exhibition spaces may generate sales, more importantly, they help establish an exhibition record and get publicity for emerging artists.³⁰

Despite a turn towards the commercial and institutional markets in New York, many ARCs still exist in protest to the existing art market. This is more in keeping with the origins of artist-run culture and allows artists to take back some power and control from curators and dealers.³¹ Nevertheless, the relevancy of artist-run centres is frequently questioned: Are they still helping artists in the way they were meant to do, or have they become just another type of institution? The magazine *Canadian Art* posed that question to a number of artists and cultural experts across the country.³² The response by filmmaker Chris Gehman concisely

²⁹ Detterer, "Spirit and Culture," various.

³⁰ Luther, "Artist-Run Galleries," 5-9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

³² Nicholas Brown and Jaclyn Bruneau, "Are Artist-Run Centres Still Relevant? Part One and Part Two," *Canadian Art*, September 16 and 21, 2015.

sums up the situation as follows:

In principle, ARCs are still relevant; larger institutions and commercial markets may have shifted their practices to a certain extent, but structurally they are what they were when the ARC movement began and tend to be conservative in specific ways. And Canada, as a commercial art and collecting market, remains “small.” (Financially successful Canadian artists are, almost by definition, successful in the international art market.) An alternative is needed. A place for emerging artists to show their work is needed. A place to support independent production is needed. But not every specific ARC is still equally relevant.³³

Gehman further suggests that funders reward legacy programs, which may inadvertently be preventing ARCs from responding to the community’s changing needs.³⁴ The failure of ARCs to meet the expectations of the artistic community may also be structural in nature in that, over the years, formal and bureaucratic structures have been imposed as legal requirements related to grants, public campaigns, and private sponsorship.³⁵ This catch-22 and its negative impact on the genuine effectiveness of ARCs was observed in the Artist-Run Culture Survey, discussed below in Chapter 3.

Despite these challenges, many ARCs continue to offer artists and the artist community non-profit alternatives within an increasingly competitive art world. Fixing funding models rather than abandoning ARCs may be one solution.

Modelling the Business of Art

Understanding how artists navigate the art world’s commercial and not-for-profit realms presents its challenges. In 2009, artist, curator and social activist Lize Mogel argued that, while some artists do well within the commercial model, few artists are able to make a

³³ Chris Gehman, quoted in Brown and Bruneau, “Are Artist-Run Centres Still Relevant? Part Two,” p3-4.

³⁴ Brown and Bruneau, “Are Artist-Run Centres Still Relevant? Part Two,” 3.

³⁵ Detterer, “Sprit and Culture,” 43.

living exclusively through art sales — especially early in their careers. To Mogel, the commercial system is highly exploitative of the average artist. Proposing alternate ways of making a living, she developed “Two Diagrams: The Business of Art and The Non-Profit Art Practice” (Figure 1), published in *Art Work: A National Conversation About Art, Labor, and Economics* in 2009.³⁶ The diagrams depict the different economies that exist within the art world, and model how artists can create, deliver and capture value within the different for-profit and not-for-profit economies.³⁷

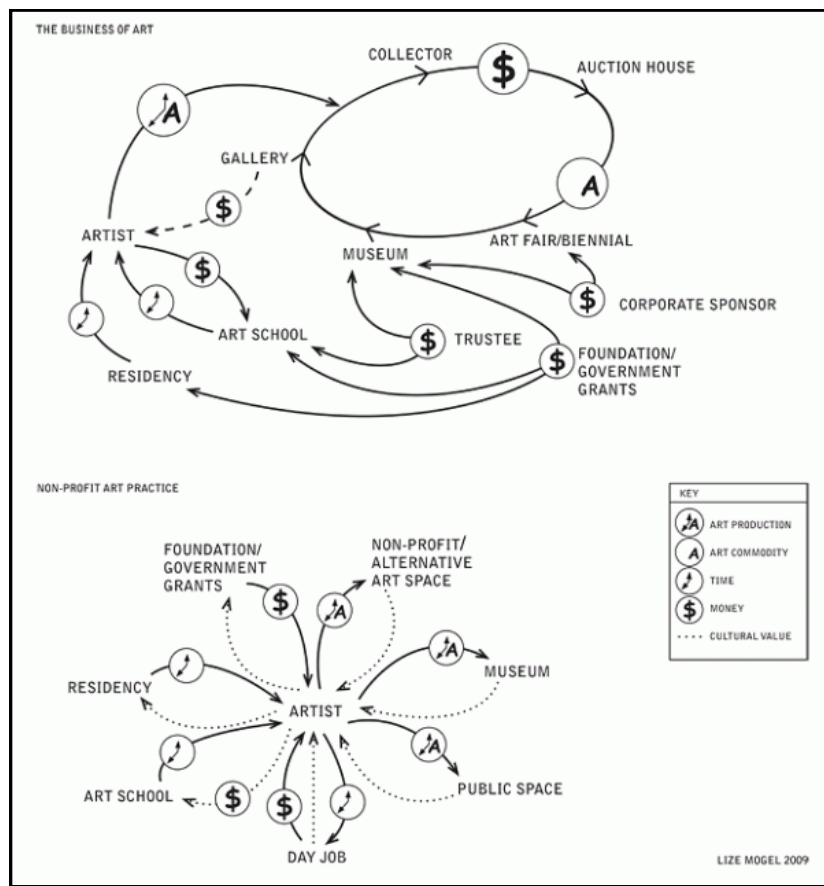


Figure 1. Lize Mogel’s Two Diagrams: The Business of Art/Non-Profit Art Practice, 2009

³⁶ Lize Mogel, “Two Diagrams,” 2009.

³⁷ A business model is one way to express the means by which an enterprise or person creates, delivers and captures value. José Rodríguez, *To Sell or not to Sell? An introduction to business models (innovation) for arts and cultural organisations* (Brussels: IETM, 2016), 3.

In Figure 1, the upper commercial “business of art” model represents the predominant way artists make a living in global art centres such as New York and London, England. The art market is depicted as flows of commodified art and money between a gallery, collectors, auction houses, art fairs and museums. The artist produces a work that enters the primary art market — usually through a gallery — for which they receive payment, less commissions, when the work is sold. The work may then circulate through the secondary market, most likely increasing in value. Although the artist may not receive direct financial benefits from rising resale prices, there may be career benefits such as increased recognition and enhanced reputation, or what Mogel calls “cultural value.” She also notes, however, that “[cultural value] can’t pay your rent.”³⁸

The “non-profit art practice” model in Figure 1 shows how an artist makes a living by means other than commercial art sales.³⁹ In this model, art is not commodified and the artist earns money from a “day job” and/or grants. Artists produce their work for exhibition in artist-run spaces, museums and public spaces. Freed from the tyranny of the commodity art market, their art increases in cultural value, while the artists themselves remain in control of their art and their practice.⁴⁰

Mogel concedes that overlaps exist between the two business models. Many commercial artists may have jobs to support their practice, and non-commercial artists receive money from their practice in the form of exhibition fees and commissions.⁴¹ Nevertheless, these models illustrate that artists have choices as to how they make a living.

³⁸ Lize Mogel’s depiction of the art market appears in Thayer’s dissertation. Thayer, “Artist Emergence,” 47.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Like other professionals, artists may expect to make an ongoing and fair income from their art practice. Unfortunately, few artists seem to achieve this goal. In a study of Canadian professional artists, Bain found that 78% of the artists interviewed had secondary employment, or were receiving pensions from previous employment.⁴² Many artists turned to occupations such as visual arts professor, art teacher/instructor, gallerist, arts administrator, curator, graphic designer and illustrator, or life-drawing model; other artists chose professions outside the creative industries. Secondary employment, even in the arts field, reduced the time and energy available for experimentation, production and promotion of work, and could affect the coherence of the artist's identity.⁴³

Yet being able to make a fair income from one's art practice is widely acknowledged as a key factor in becoming a professional artist.⁴⁴ Even among those who successfully meet the Canada Council for the Arts definition of a professional artist, given earlier in this chapter, low and spotty incomes from the sale of art can still have negative tax implications. According to the Canadian Conference of the Arts 2010 update on the *Status of the Artist in Canada*:

A number of artists who are acknowledged as professionals in the community are not considered to be professionals by the Canada Revenue Agency under the "reasonable expectation of profit" test. Thus, they are considered to be hobbyists and ineligible to deduct their legitimate expenses against income. This can be the case even for artists who have received grants from one of the arts councils which give awards only to recognized professionals.⁴⁵

⁴² Bain, "Artist Identity," 40.

⁴³ Ibid., 40-41.

⁴⁴ Thayer, "Artist Emergence," 36.

⁴⁵ Gary Neil, *Status of the Artist in Canada, An Update on the 30th Anniversary of the UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist*, Canadian Conference of the Arts, 2010, 4, <http://ccarts.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/StatusoftheArtistReport1126101-Copy.pdf>.

Although people may be acclaimed as professional artists by their peers, they may not be identified as artists for income-tax purposes. Artists dependent on their art for revenue will face the challenges of matching income and expenses within a taxation period. On the other hand, artists whose revenue comes from a “day job” may have even more challenges arguing for professional artist status.

In this chapter, I have discussed the coexisting and overlapping for-profit and not-for-profit economies within the contemporary art world that artists must navigate. The for-profit model treats art as a commodity, and the artist produces work to satisfy market demand. In the not-for-profit model, artists control their own practice and earn money from funding grants and awards, and full- or part-time employment or pension benefits. In the next chapter, I describe how these two economies play out within the Ottawa visual arts environment.

Chapter 2: The Ottawa Visual Arts Environment

The Ottawa visual arts environment — the infrastructure and resources that create the conditions in which Ottawa visual artists live and work, and that influence their careers — is somewhat unique. Ottawa is a mid-sized city in terms of population, officially recording one million residents in 2019.⁴⁶ At the same time, it is one of Canada’s largest cities by area, encompassing a blend of urban, suburban and rural communities.

As the seat of Canada’s federal government, and home to a robust technology sector, the city is rich in federal arts-and-culture infrastructure. It also has a relatively stable and prosperous economic outlook, with above-average levels of income and education.⁴⁷ The City of Ottawa offers arts-and-culture programming, which is common to many urban centres in Canada and elsewhere, in a bid to attract and retain a “creative class” of employers and employees engaged in business, technology and other knowledge-based professions.⁴⁸

Ottawa is home to about a thousand professional visual artists, based on an estimate calculated from Canada’s 2016 census.⁴⁹ In addition, there are many amateur and emerging (not-yet-established) artists, as well as hobbyists, patrons and art enthusiasts. The community also includes arts-and-culture professionals, such as curators, arts administrators, visual arts

⁴⁶ “Announcements and Events, June 14, 2019,” City of Ottawa, <https://ottawa.ca/en/news/city-ottawa-has-reached-one-million-residents>.

⁴⁷ “Economy and Demographics,” City of Ottawa, accessed July 22, 2019, <https://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/budget/financial-reports-and-statements/long-range-financial-plans/long-range-financial-plan-iii-part-1-and-part-2/economy-and-demographics>.

⁴⁸ Alison L. Bain, *Creative Margins: Cultural Production in Canadian Suburbs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 10, <https://books.scholarsportal.info/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks3/utpress/2014-01-13/1/9781442666825>.

⁴⁹ This calculation uses data from two sources: 21,000 visual artists across Canada “who spent more time at their art than at any other occupation in May of 2016,” <https://canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2019/03/a-statistical-profile-of-artists-in-canada-in-2016> multiplied by .05 (4.97% of all Canadian artists (all types) live in Ottawa), <https://hillstrategies.com/resource/artists-and-cultural-workers-in-canadian-municipalities/>.

instructors and teachers, gallerists and others, who may or may not also be artists. Together, they comprise a community with overlapping and sometimes conflicting interests.

Planning in relation to arts and culture is a way for municipalities to ensure that arts and culture are funded, that the needs and expectations of constituencies are balanced, and that the benefits are realized. In Ottawa, planning related to arts and culture was undertaken with amalgamation in 2001, when Ottawa merged with the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, the cities of Nepean and Gloucester, and numerous other local municipalities. Needing to integrate a number of art collections and arts-and-culture programs, the new City of Ottawa government approved the *Ottawa 20/20 Arts and Heritage Plan* in 2003, which is revised and revisited regularly.⁵⁰ At its outset, the report noted that Ottawa was losing artistic talent to centres with greater infrastructure and support for the local arts sector. Since then, municipal exhibition spaces have been added, and additional support programs have been developed.⁵¹

When recent five-year plans neared their end in 2019, the City of Ottawa collaborated with the Ottawa Cultural Alliance (OCA) to undertake an “evidence-based arm’s-length process” towards developing a new plan.⁵² The process was funded by the City, and involved a number of independent consulting firms working under the guidance of the OCA Steering Committee — an external advisory committee of community representatives — along with input from local citizens and the wider arts-and-culture community. The final product, *A*

⁵⁰ City of Ottawa, *A Renewed Action Plan for Arts, Heritage and Culture in Ottawa (2013-2018)*, 8, https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents/files/A_Renewed_Action_Plan_2013-2018_EN.pdf.

⁵¹ City of Ottawa, “Ottawa 2020: Arts & Heritage Plan for the City of Ottawa,” City of Ottawa, 2003, 31, https://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/ottawa2020_arts_and_heritage_plan.pdf,

⁵² Ottawa Cultural Alliance, *A Livable City for All: A New Cultural Roadmap for Ottawa 2019–2022*, 2019, 4, accessed August 30, 2020, https://ottawaculture.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/A-Cultural-Roadmap-for-Ottawa_FINAL-Aug-20.pdf.

Livable City for All: A New Cultural Roadmap for Ottawa 2019–2022, was published in August 2019.⁵³

The Roadmap emphasizes the significant role that arts and culture play in “help[ing] Ottawa become the most liveable mid-sized city in North America,” while enhancing the region’s value as a tourist destination.⁵⁴ If arts and culture are invaluable to the city in “place-making,” one would think that the arts-and-culture sector would be appropriately recognized and rewarded.⁵⁵ According to 2016 federal census data, however, artists were among the lowest compensated professionals in the National Capital Region, with annual incomes of only \$25,245.⁵⁶ Further, in order to make ends meet, it is likely that many artists must engage in other forms of employment to support a visual arts practice, and therefore may not be included in the formal artist count.

On the bright side, as the home to Canada’s federal government, Ottawa offers very strong employment opportunities within the arts-and-culture sector. Workers in art-related fields, particularly those working for cultural institutions, can expect to make very good salaries, with persons employed in the “library, archive, museum and art gallery managers” category earning some of the highest annual incomes in the region at \$95,308.⁵⁷

⁵³ All research reports and plans may be found on the OCA website, <https://ottawaculture.ca/cultural-roadmap/>.

⁵⁴ Ottawa Cultural Alliance, *A Livable City for All*, 7, 26.

⁵⁵ Bain, *Creative Margins*, 9.

⁵⁶ Ottawa Culture Research Group, “Counting on Culture, Impacts and Indicators 2018, Executive Summary,” 2018, https://www.spcottawa.on.ca/sites/all/files/ES_EN_V2_FINAL-s_850341.pdf.

(Note on National Occupational Classification (NOC): Code 5136 includes Painters, sculptors and other visual artists creating original paintings, drawings, sculptures, engravings and other artistic works. They are usually self-employed. This group also includes art instructors and teachers, who are usually employed by art schools. <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/Structure/NocProfile/ac6b92da736f4be7b48134e3654b5ce5?objectid=LwV%2FdakdkdiwFRKEy3hF7aXFs66iwa%2B%2FP1D49CjwNoX1agZ%2FQvn1i1GU3EXYsn5L>).

⁵⁷ Also based on the 2016 census year. Ottawa Culture Research Group, “Counting on Culture.”

Ottawa's Hybrid Business-of-Art Model

The Ottawa visual arts environment has been shaped by the strong influence of local government, a relatively weak commercial art market, and the presence of numerous cultural institutions. Using similar graphical notation to Mogel's chart in Chapter 1, I propose a hybrid business-of-art model for Ottawa, as illustrated in Figure 2 below. Ottawa's Hybrid Business-of-Art Model integrates both for-profit and not-for-profit economies within a single business model.

Those choosing a commercial career engage in the art market — locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. Artists choosing a not-for-profit practice seek grants and exhibitions at ARCs and other public spaces. In either case, many artists may also spend their time at a “day job” for which they receive a salary.⁵⁸ Indeed, many artists in Ottawa likely fund their art practices in a variety of ways over the course of their careers. Increasingly, artists may also use the Internet as a portal for accessing local or global services and art-market opportunities.

Regardless of the economic models pursued, most professional artists seek recognition for their work. As their careers progress, an artist's reputation might increase, which may or may not bring increased remuneration or other career benefits. (Mogel refers to career benefits as “cultural value.”)

⁵⁸ This observation is based on information gathered during the study, and anecdotally from various artists.

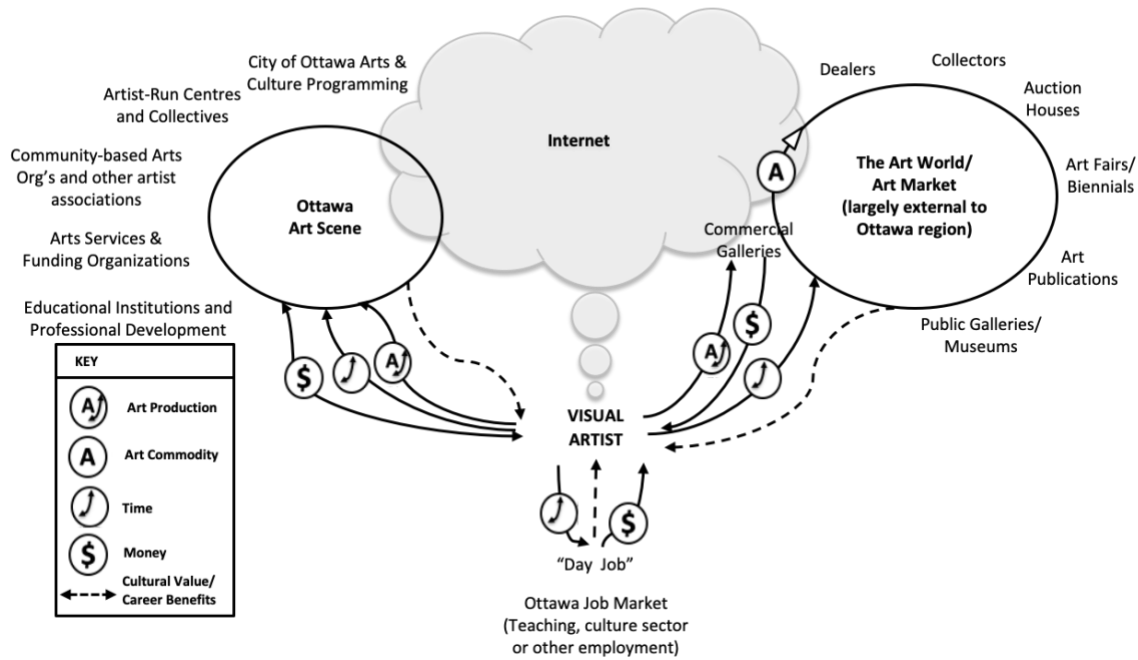


Figure 2: Ottawa’s Hybrid Business-of-Art Model

Using this model as a point of reference, the remainder of this chapter describes the infrastructure, programs, services and artist-run culture that comprise Ottawa’s visual arts environment.

The Internet as a Portal to the Global Art World

Even before COVID-19, the art world was changing rapidly, reflecting both the globalization of art and the growing utility of the Internet as a portal to the art world. In the feasibility study at the beginning of Ottawa’s arm’s-length arts-and-culture planning process in January 2019, digital technology was identified as the single greatest disrupter of our time, “affecting how culture is created, consumed, displayed, distributed and preserved.”⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Ottawa Cultural Alliance, Lord Cultural Resources and Nordicity, “The Big Picture: Scanning the Ottawa Scene,” OCA, January 2019, 37, <https://ottawaculture.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Environmental-Scan-EN-MS.pdf>.

While many artists are exploring the use of new technologies in their art, others are capitalizing on the Internet to bypass the constraints of the traditional art world. In a talk given at the 2019 *Artpreneur* event in Ottawa, artist Elly Smallwood described how she was pursuing a successful full-time commercial career in art by selling her work directly to international collectors via the Internet. She had also secured a number of international exhibitions.⁶⁰

Given that the Internet allows artists to reach collectors beyond the established constructs of the dealer-gallery system, Smallwood believes that the Internet empowers tech-savvy artists to manage their own careers, making location less relevant. In 2019, Smallwood was among a minority of professional artists successfully utilizing the Internet. However, within a single year, stimulated in part by COVID-19 closures, the art world has gone largely digital. Through media streams, new-media technologies, online galleries, and social networking sites, established and new audiences are signing in.⁶¹ The long-term effects on bricks-and-mortar businesses and institutions remain to be seen.

The Art Market and Local Commercial Galleries

As discussed in Chapter 1, the broader art market — with its internationally connected network of dealers, collectors, auction houses, fairs and exhibitions, as well as a relatively wealthier and more engaged collector base — lies for the most part, outside the National Capital Region, in places like Montreal, Toronto, New York, London, and beyond. Many Ottawa artists seek dealers, or at least commercial exposure, in other art centres —

⁶⁰ Elly Smallwood, speaking at *Artpreneur* on May 31, 2019. See Elly Smallwood on Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/ellysmallwood/?hl=en>.

⁶¹ The art world and artists going online has been widely publicized; for example, Thomas McMullan, “The Art World Goes Virtual,” *Frieze*, March 30, 2020, <https://frieze.com/article/art-world-goes-virtual>.

especially Montreal, Toronto and New York — looking for both revenue opportunities and enhanced reputation.

Establishing a relationship with a commercial gallery or dealer can be an important step in an artist's career progression. The gallerist's reputation is important in attracting clientele and top artists. Reputable gallerists will seek to establish long-term relationships with artists who show potential. The artist-dealer relationship involves mutual commitments about production, commissions and expenses, exhibitions, and publicity. Sometimes contracts involve exclusive control over all sales.⁶²

Although serious collectors are likely to shop internationally, Ottawa has many small- to medium-sized commercial galleries providing services for both individual and corporate consumers.⁶³ These galleries often represent or provide exhibition opportunities for local artists. Some of the more established Ottawa galleries representing local artists include Wallack Galleries, established in 1954; Galerie Koyman Galleries, established in 1965; La Galerie Jean-Claude Bergeron and Galerie St-Laurent + Hill, both established in 1977; and Orange Art Gallery, established in 2006. Prior to COVID-19, Cube Gallery had already transformed from a bricks-and-mortar gallery into Cube Projects, an online art business offering an array of gallery services.⁶⁴

More like the “strategic galleries” described in Chapter 1, the Patrick Mikhail Gallery describes career development for artists as follows: “Through its curated program of solo and

⁶² Judith Stephens-Wells, “Doing Business with Commercial Galleries and Dealers,” in *Information for Arts*, ed. CARFAC Ontario (Toronto: CARFAC Ontario, 2005), Chapter 9, 1.

⁶³ One Ottawa art collector of note is Joe Friday. Friday's contemporary art collection has been described as “the most significant private holding of art in the Ottawa area.” According to *Canadian Art*, Friday shops internationally for art, including Canadian art. Leah Sandals, “Top Collector Observations at Art Toronto,” *Canadian Art*, October 27, 2013, <https://canadianart.ca/features/collectors-at-art-toronto/>.

⁶⁴ Don Monet, Cube Projects, <https://cubegallery.ca/blogs/news>.

group exhibitions, special projects, curatorial and academic collaborations, off-site projects, participation in international art fairs and festivals, and through its vital relationships with museums, institutions, corporate collections, and private collectors, the gallery has promoted and nurtured the careers of a new generation of contemporary artists.”⁶⁵ Established in 2006 and headquartered in Montreal, with a branch in Ottawa, it does not appear to represent any local Ottawa artists at present.

Many amateur, emerging and established artists do not develop relationships with dealers but seek exposure and sales through a variety of means. They may respond to periodic calls for art purchases by art banks and collections; they look for consignment opportunities in galleries, restaurants and other public spaces; and they participate in local annual art sales run by organizers such as The New Art Festival in the Glebe, the Ottawa Art Gallery’s annual art auction called Le Party, and the Nepean Fine Arts League spring and fall sales. Some artists sell from their studios and collaborate on open-studio tours. In addition, art by local artists may be found in various public exhibition spaces, recreation centres, lobbies and restaurants across the city. By allowing artists to display their work “for sale,” no artists fees are required and venues or sponsors often take a commission on sales.

Museums and Public Galleries

Having art in the collection of, or exhibited at, prominent museums and public galleries is important in building an artist’s professional curriculum vitae. Public art galleries and museums occupy an important place within the art market through their acquisitions, and contribute to an artist’s stature and reputation by offering exposure and critical publicity.

⁶⁵ “Gallery,” Patrick Mikhail Gallery, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://www.patrickmikhailgallery.com/gallery>.

Unlike commercial galleries and local commercial spaces that take commissions on sales, museums and public galleries generally pay artist fees to artists, based on CARFAC (Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des artistes canadiens) standards.⁶⁶

The National Gallery of Canada, founded in 1880 and located in its own iconic building since 1988, is Canada's national art museum, with a collection of more than 75,000 works of art and extensive library and archival holdings.⁶⁷ In addition to a large collection of historical, modern and contemporary Canadian and Indigenous art, it also has collections of art from other countries and artistic traditions. While not favouring the work of Ottawa artists in its acquisition policies, it is a source of high-value employment within the art-and-culture sector, while also providing a local venue for viewing world-class art and conducting research.

The Ottawa Art Gallery (OAG) is an independent, not-for-profit, charitable organization governed by a volunteer board of directors. First founded in 1988 as the Gallery at Arts Court by "a grassroots movement of artists and cultural trailblazers," it helped address the long-standing problem of lack of recognition and exhibition space in the city.⁶⁸ In 1992, the gallery was renamed the Ottawa Art Gallery. This transformed it into Ottawa's municipal art gallery and coincided with the City's transfer of the important Firestone Collection of Canadian Art.

Following a major building project, the OAG reopened in 2018 in a purpose-built space at 2 Daly Avenue, where it offers a world-class venue for regional art. To

⁶⁶ "Minimum Recommended Fee Schedule," CARFAC/RAAV, accessed July 25, 2020, <https://carfac-raav.ca/about/>.

⁶⁷ "Our History," National Gallery of Canada, <https://www.gallery.ca/about-the-gallery/our-history>.

⁶⁸ Rebecca Basciano et al, *À disòkàmagan/Nous connaître un peu nous-mêmes/We'll All Become Stories: A Survey of Art in the Ottawa-Gatineau Region* (Vancouver: Figure 1, 2017), xiv, 216.

commemorate the reopening, OAG staff undertook collaborative development of the National Capital Region's art history in *Àdisòkàmagan/Nous connaître un peu nous-mêmes/We'll All Become Stories: A Survey of Art in the Ottawa-Gatineau Region*. This work documents the artistic traditions of the region, and features the perspectives of anglophone, francophone and Indigenous artists and curators.

The OAG's exhibition program focuses on regional professional artists, and is largely conceived in-house, although the Gallery does accept exhibition proposals from professional artists and curators.⁶⁹ The OAG also provides artists with a way to show their work and offer it for rent or sale through the Galerie Annexe (formerly known as Art Rental and Sales). Submissions are accepted annually, and works are selected through a juried process.⁷⁰

Educational Institutions and Professional Development

Universities and art schools are foundational to a strong visual arts environment. The University of Ottawa, Carleton University, the Ottawa School of Art, the School of Photographic Arts Ottawa and the region's community colleges offer education and training to artists, curators and art historians. Like museums, they also provide artists with opportunities for employment, in addition to education and training.

The University of Ottawa's Department of Visual Arts is the only institution in the region to offer a Master of Fine Arts (MFA). The full-time bilingual two-year program admits a maximum of six candidates per year, with a total of twelve candidates in the

⁶⁹ "Exhibition Submission Guidelines for Artists and Curators," Ottawa Art Gallery, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://oaggao.ca/submission-guidelines>.

⁷⁰ "Galerie Annexe Submissions," Ottawa Art Gallery, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://oaggao.ca/galerie-annexe-submissions>.

program at any given time.⁷¹ The program integrates studio practice and the theories that inform contemporary art and image culture. Final MFA thesis projects are exhibited in public through the support of local arts institutions including AXENÉO7, DAÏMÔN, the City Hall Art Gallery, and the Enriched Bread Artists studio-gallery. A Bachelor of Fine Arts and other undergraduate options are also offered, including minors and majors in visual arts or the history and theory of art, with an estimated thirty BFAs graduating each year.

Carleton University offers a master's degree in Art History, and a doctorate in cultural mediations. A Graduate Diploma in Curatorial Studies is also offered, which can be undertaken independently by curators wishing to upgrade their skills, or as part of a master's or doctoral program. Students in art history and curatorial studies can participate in internships at local museums and galleries.⁷² Carleton's Sprott School of Business offers a minor in Arts Management, "designed to equip non-business students with the business and management skills to pursue careers in arts and culture, whether in institutions or as sole practitioners."⁷³

Carleton University also has a public gallery — the Carleton University Art Gallery, CUAG for short — that is highly valued by students and by the local art community. CUAG's exhibition program features Canadian contemporary and Indigenous art. The CUAG collection, which is one of the largest university art collections in Canada, provides an invaluable teaching resource for art history, Canadian studies and curatorial students.⁷⁴

⁷¹ "Résumé du Programme/Overview of Program," University of Ottawa Visual Arts, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://www.ottawamfa.com/rsum-du-programme-program-overview>.

⁷² In the course of my research, I discovered that Carleton's M.A. Art History graduates hold many positions with the Ottawa Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Canada, and other artist-run organizations.

⁷³ "Minor in Arts Management," Sprott School of Business, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://sprott.carleton.ca/cu-programs/minor-arts-management/>.

⁷⁴ Carleton University Art Gallery, <http://www.cuag.ca>.

With a history stretching back to 1879, the Ottawa School of Art (OSA) has been in its current location in a heritage building in the Byward Market since 1983. The Ottawa School of Art is a not-for-profit, registered charity and alternate art school, offering both diploma and portfolio certificate programs in traditional visual arts disciplines. In addition, the Ottawa School of Art provides a rich program of studio courses for adults and children, summer camps for kids, and an extensive outreach program. General interest courses and camps are held downtown and at the Shenkman Arts Centre in Orleans. The OSA has galleries in the Byward Market and in Orleans and holds exhibitions offsite at a number of partner locations.⁷⁵

The School of the Photographic Arts Ottawa (SPAO) was established in 2005 as an alternative for study in the photographic visual arts. SPAO is an independent, charitable, not-for-profit photographic visual arts school, and a registered private career college. Through full-time diploma studies and part-time programs, SPAO provides arts education and training in traditional and contemporary photographic technologies and approaches.⁷⁶ Mentoring and residency opportunities are also available. There are two galleries associated with SPAO: the SPAO Centre Gallery at the school's facility in Little Italy, and Exposure Gallery above Thyme & Again in Hintonburg.

Algonquin College's School of Media and Design offers a number of programs, focusing primarily on the technological side of the visual arts, including animation, graphic design, digital arts and photography.⁷⁷ In collaboration with Carleton University, Algonquin

⁷⁵ Information from an interview with Jeff Stellick, Executive Director, and Andrew Fay, Diploma Program Coordinator, conducted June 11, 2019, and the Ottawa School of Art website, <https://artottawa.ca>.

⁷⁶ School of the Photographic Arts Ottawa, <http://spao.ca>.

⁷⁷ Algonquin College, School of Media and Design, <https://www.algonquincollege.com/mediaanddesign/>.

offers a Bachelor of Information Technology in Interactive Multimedia and Design, covering both the creative and technical sides of the digital media industry.⁷⁸

Founded in 1989, La Cité is the largest French-language college in Ontario. Similar to Algonquin, it offers French-speaking students arts and design programs in animation, digital arts, graphic design and photography.⁷⁹

Residencies across the region provide artists with opportunities for artistic development, most often through live-in or work-in arrangements focused on a specific discipline, community or project. Residencies are offered by various hosts, which can include institutions, groups or individuals with a commitment to providing a rich experience for artists (and others). Most residencies require the submission of an application that may be judged on artistic merit.

Ottawa artists can apply for local, national and international residencies. In Ottawa, the Ottawa School of Art and SPAO offer artist-in-residence opportunities. On the Quebec side of the National Capital Region, Ayatana Artists' Research Program provides an annual program enabling artists to undertake guided research on biology and wildlife in local and other venues.

Residencies often involve fees, as well as costs related to travel and room-and-board, payable by the artist. Sometimes, artists apply for grants to help defer the costs of residencies

⁷⁸ Information on the Bachelor of Information Technology in Interactive Multimedia and Design may be found on both the Algonquin and Carleton University websites.

⁷⁹ La Cité programmes en arts et design,

https://www.collegelacite.ca/arts_et_design.htm?utm_campaign=rev5159&utm_medium=menu&utm_source=internal.

or to support the subsequent work. Alternatively, one artist I know ran a Kickstarter campaign to help fund a residency in the Arctic.⁸⁰

After their initial education and training, many artists participate in ongoing education and skills development, as both learners and instructors. The Ottawa School of Art and SPAO offer a variety of part-time studio courses, providing opportunities for artists to learn new artistic disciplines, or enhance or develop existing skills. The City of Ottawa offers an extensive array of adult courses in the visual arts. Art supply stores, galleries and studios also offer courses on a regular basis. In addition, professional development and studio training is offered through the professional development programs of various community arts organizations and service providers.

City of Ottawa Arts and Culture Programming

The City of Ottawa is a key player within the Ottawa arts-and-culture environment. In addition to the Ottawa Art Gallery, the City has public and community galleries, and offers an extensive arts and culture program to the visual arts and wider communities. The City's arts-and-culture programming follows a "municipal department model." In this model, the local government is the primary service provider, supporting cultural development within the region, through dedicated municipal staff who deliver functions and services via a budget funded by taxpayers. This is in contrast to the dual-model approach adopted by most Canadian cities, in which cultural leadership and program development are shared between a municipal department or unit and an agency or foundation.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Sandra Hawkins, "Arctic Circle Expedition & Beyond," <https://sandrahawkinsarcticexpeditionjourney.wordpress.com>.

⁸¹ Lord Cultural Resources, "Arm's Length Cultural Development Feasibility Study," Ottawa Cultural Alliance, 2018, 13, https://ottawaculture.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/OCA-Feasibility-Final-Report-Feb-19_EN.pdf.

Responsibility for the City of Ottawa’s visual arts programming lies within the Recreation, Culture and Facilities Management Services Department, which “provides access to high-quality recreation and cultural services, in collaboration with community partners, to encourage healthy and active lifestyles, and to contribute to Ottawa’s cultural identity and heritage.”⁸² Arts-and-culture programs and services are delivered primarily through the Culture and Heritage Programs and Spaces Branch, and the Arts and Heritage Development Unit within the department.⁸³

The Culture and Heritage Programs and Spaces Branch manages all types of arts-and-culture facilities, including four arts centres, which serve as hubs for delivery of the City’s arts-and-culture programs. These include the recently renovated OAG and Arts Court on Daly Avenue; the Nepean Creative Arts Centre in Bells Corners; the Nepean Visual Arts Centre, housed in the Nepean Sportsplex; and the Shenkman Arts Centre in Orleans. These centres provide space for artists and arts organizations, instructional programs, exhibition space, and other cultural programs and services for the community.⁸⁴

Within the branch, the Community Recreation and Cultural Programs Unit oversees a variety of community spaces. These community-gathering places offer programming and rentals to facilitate participatory activities for children, youth, adults, older adults, and special needs at various municipal recreational and other centres.⁸⁵ Through the Community Arts

⁸² “Budget 2020,” City of Ottawa, accessed July 26, 2020, https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents/files/2020Adopt_EN.pdf.

⁸³ Lord, “Feasibility Study,” 14-15, 33.

⁸⁴ “Arts Centres,” City of Ottawa, accessed July 26, 2020, <https://ottawa.ca/en/arts-heritage-and-events/arts-centres>.

⁸⁵ “Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department Community Recreation and Cultural Programs 2019 Service Area Summary,” City of Ottawa, accessed July 26, 2020, https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents/files/2RCESRECCULT_EN.pdf

Program, this unit also administers the City of Ottawa's community galleries and exhibition spaces, and its Artist Studio Program.⁸⁶

The City's community galleries include Gallery 112 at the City of Ottawa Archives, the Atrium Art Gallery at Ben Franklin Place, and the Trinity Art Gallery: Salon A and Salon B at the Shenkman Arts Centre. Calls for proposals are issued annually in October, and regional emerging and established artists, artist collectives and community arts organizations, working in both the visual arts and fine craft, are eligible.

The City of Ottawa's Artist Studio Program makes studio space available for local and regional established and emerging artists. The City offers long- and short-term arrangements at Gamman House in Vanier; Gardener House in Britannia Beach; Stafford Studios in Bells Corners; and Jockvale Studios in Barrhaven. Applications are accepted every three years, with the next submission due in November 2022.⁸⁷

The Community Recreation and Cultural Programs Unit is also responsible for allocating exhibition space to specific community-based arts organizations. Although the organizations must adhere to guidelines established by the City, the organizations organize, mount and promote their own exhibitions.⁸⁸

The Arts and Heritage Development Unit (AHDU) is responsible collaborating with and supporting artists, cultural workers, and organizations; for executing arts and culture planning initiatives; and for supporting and developing the arts, heritage and cultural sector

⁸⁶ Penelope Kokkinos, Interview, June 4, 2019.

⁸⁷ "Artist Studio Program, Calls and Opportunities in Culture," City of Ottawa, accessed July 26, 2020, <https://ottawa.ca/en/arts-heritage-and-events/calls-and-opportunities-culture>.

⁸⁸ Penelope Kokkinos, Interview, June 4, 2019.

though its programs.⁸⁹ Within the AHDU, there are three sub-units responsible for different programs.⁹⁰ The Cultural Funding Support Section, which is discussed in more detail below, administers the Cultural Funding and Awards Programs. The Cultural Development and Initiatives Section conducts and shares research on culture; develops and facilitates culture plans, policies and protocols; and initiates partnered action. And finally, the Public Art Program Section manages public art commissions, the City's fine art collection, and exhibitions programs at the Karsh-Masson Gallery and the City Hall Art Gallery, both currently located at City Hall. It also manages the City's newest public gallery space: Corridor 45|75, which comprises twenty-five metres of glass display cases at the Rideau O-Train Station. Information about calls and opportunities through the Public Art Program may be found on the City of Ottawa website.⁹¹

The City of Ottawa Art Collection comprises more than 2,800 works of art created by more than 780 artists, primarily from the region. New works are added to the collection by purchase, donation and commission, based on recommendations from a peer-assessment committee.⁹² Funded by a 1% portion of the budget for every municipal project, the Public Art Program commissions art to accompany major capital projects. Although these calls are tendered nationally, the City offers guidance to help prepare local artists to undertake public

⁸⁹ "Arts and Heritage Development Unit 2018 Report," City of Ottawa, accessed July 26, 2020, https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents/files/2018_Arts_and_heritage_annual_report_EN.pdf.

⁹⁰ "Arts and Heritage Development Unit 2018 Report," 2.

⁹¹ "Calls and Opportunities: Public Art Program," City of Ottawa, accessed July 26, 2020, <https://ottawa.ca/en/arts-heritage-and-events/calls-and-opportunities-culture/calls-and-opportunities-public-art-program>.

⁹² "Public Art," City of Ottawa, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://ottawa.ca/en/residents/arts-heritage-and-culture/public-art>.

art proposals and commissions, as value and technical complexity increase with a project's size.⁹³

Government Funding

Funding in the form of grants and awards towards the development of art by artists and collectives, along with operational funding for various cultural and artist-run organizations and programs, is extremely important. The majority of arts funding for Ottawa's cultural sector comes from three levels of government. The bulk (roughly 41%) comes from the federal government, 28% comes from the Ontario government, just over 31% comes from the municipal government.⁹⁴

Federal funding is primarily via the Canada Council for the Arts. Created in 1957 with a mandate "to foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts," the Canada Council is the federal government's principal instrument for supporting the arts. It is a federal Crown corporation, governed by an appointed eleven-member Board that is accountable to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage.⁹⁵

Artists and organizations apply for grants using an online application portal. The grants provided to individuals are used primarily for the creation, production and presentation of works, as well as professional development, residency programs, and travel. According to research conducted by the Canada Council, its grants tend to be extremely important to an artist's career, in that "the grant provides recognition and validation of the

⁹³ Julie Dupont, Public Art Portfolio Manager, City of Ottawa, telephone interview June 21, 2019.

⁹⁴ Ottawa Culture Research Group, "Counting on Culture," 4.

⁹⁵ "About Us," Canada Council for the Arts, <https://canadacouncil.ca/about>.

artistic worth of the artist and his or her work.”⁹⁶ As such, the funding not only allows the artist to undertake artistic development in some way, but also enhances the artist’s credibility and CV.

In 2016–2017, the Canada Council provided approximately \$4.8 million to Ottawa artists and arts organizations. In per-capita terms, this was about 40% less than the average for Canada’s eight largest urban centres, with only Calgary and Edmonton receiving lower per-capita Canada Council funding than Ottawa.⁹⁷ That the Ottawa visual arts community does not receive as much in grants as most other Canadian urban centres may perhaps be offset by the fact that the Canada Council’s offices are located in Ottawa.

In addition to its funding functions, the Canada Council Art Bank is home to the largest collection of Canadian art in the world. With more than 17,000 works by more than 3,000 artists, it offers public access to the visual arts collection through art rentals to government and corporate clients, loans to museums and outreach projects, and an online database.⁹⁸ The Canada Council also organizes and funds the Governor General’s Awards in Visual and Media Arts in partnership with the Governor General of Canada and the National Gallery of Canada.⁹⁹

Provincial funding comes through a variety of sources, the most important of which is the Ontario Arts Council. Established in 1963 to foster the creation and production of art for the benefit of all Ontarians, it is directed by a government-appointed board operating at arm’s

⁹⁶ Canada Council for the Arts, “The Impact of Canada Council Individual Artist Grants on Artist Careers” (2000), 13, <https://canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2000/05/impact-of-canada-council-individual-artist-grants>.

⁹⁷ OCRG, “Counting on Culture,” 5.

⁹⁸ “About the Art Bank,” Banque d’Art Bank, <https://artbank.ca/about>.

⁹⁹ “Governor General’s Awards in Visual and Media Arts,” Canada Council for the Arts, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://en.ggarts.ca/the-awards>.

length from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The Ontario Arts Council provides grants and services to professional, Ontario-based artists and arts organizations. These grants support arts education, Indigenous arts, community arts, crafts, dance, francophone arts, literature, media arts, multidisciplinary arts, music, theatre, touring, and visual arts.¹⁰⁰

The City of Ottawa is an important supporter of arts and culture. Managed by the Cultural Funding Support Unit, (CFSU) the objective of Ottawa's Cultural Funding and Awards Programs is "to spark and support the creation, production, presentation, exhibition, and dissemination of the literary, performing, visual, and media arts, as well as independent film and video."¹⁰¹ The CFSU is responsible for the allocation of an annual budget in excess of \$10 million, approved by City Council to support a variety of arts-and-culture activities, with only a portion going to the visual arts sector.

The CFSU administers the distribution of funds among hundreds of applicants, using a peer-assessment process guided by approved funding priorities (e.g., diversity). Operating and project funding is made available to professional and amateur organizations, while individual funding is accessible to professional artists in all disciplines. Funding from this program addresses the need to support arts education, arts training, community-based artistic activities, and professional groups that develop local arts audiences and provide valuable arts programs and services.

According to the 2018 Cultural Funding Summary Report, the visual arts sector, including fine arts, photography and media arts, received just over 25% of the city's arts-

¹⁰⁰ "About Us," Ontario Arts Council, accessed August 29, 2020, <http://www.arts.on.ca/about-us>.

¹⁰¹ "Arts Funding Program," City of Ottawa, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://ottawa.ca/en/arts-heritage-and-events/cultural-funding/arts-funding-program>.

and-culture budget, with the majority of visual arts funding going to the Ottawa Art Gallery and artist-run centres, in the form of service agreements and operational funding. Art service organizations, such as Arts Network Ottawa and the Ottawa Arts Council, received \$500,000; educational institutions (primarily the Ottawa School of Art) received \$400,000; individual professional visual artists received approximately \$86,000, with small amounts going to other arts organizations.¹⁰²

Arts Services Organizations

An arts services organization is a not-for-profit corporation, actively governed by a board with paid staff, which provides regular and ongoing services to professional artists, arts professionals, and/or arts organizations and communities.¹⁰³ These services may include professional development, support for capacity building, publicity, advocacy, setting fees and standards, networking and communications.

In Ottawa, there are two main arts services organizations serving the visual arts community: the Ottawa Arts Council, located at Arts Court; and Arts Network Ottawa, located at the Shenkman Arts Centre. Founded in 1982, the Ottawa Arts Council is a bilingual umbrella organization that advances, promotes and advocates for the arts in Ottawa. Specific programs include awards for artists, training and development, and event promotion.¹⁰⁴ Arts Network Ottawa is a bilingual service organization that evolved from a community-based arts organization to fill a void in the region. It facilitates or runs community-engaged arts programs, including a Neighbourhood Arts Residency; Selections,

¹⁰² “2018 Cultural Funding Summary Report,” City of Ottawa, 16 and 21, accessed August 29, 2020, https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents/files/2018_-_Summary_Report_-_EN_-_Final_FINAL-s.pdf.

¹⁰³ “Arts Services Organizations,” Ontario Arts Council, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://www.arts.on.ca/grants/arts-service-organizations-operating>.

¹⁰⁴ Ottawa Arts Council, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://ottawaartscouncil.ca>.

an annual juried exhibition; a Young Arts Professional Mentorship Program; and the Exhibition Space at Arts Network Ottawa. It also manages the \$5-million ARTicipate Endowment Fund, along with annual art prizes totalling more than \$100,000.¹⁰⁵

Also important to Ottawa visual artists is Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des artistes canadiens (CARFAC), which has a mission to defend artists' economic and legal rights, while also educating the public on fair dealing with artists.¹⁰⁶ Established by artists in 1968, CARFAC is "the national voice of Canada's professional visual artists." CARFAC National develops most of the organization's policies, advocates for artists' rights at the federal level, and develops and maintains the CARFAC Minimum Fee Schedule. CARFAC Ontario is the affiliated association of professional visual and media artists in Ontario.¹⁰⁷

Originally founded by CARFAC in 1990, Copyright Visual Arts/Droits d'auteur Arts visuels is a non-profit organization providing copyright administration for professional Canadian and Québécois visual and media artists, through comprehensive access to the licensing of art, and related professional services.¹⁰⁸ Copyright Visual Arts is located at Arts Court in Ottawa and has offices in Montreal.

Ottawa's Artist-Run Centres and Other Artist Organizations

Many types of organizations and initiatives developed by artists contribute to a strong artist-run culture that can play an important facilitating role in helping emerging and established artists achieve their career goals. Artist-run centres, collectives, artist cooperatives and community-based arts organizations are cultural assets that underpin the

¹⁰⁵ Arts Network Ottawa, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://artsnetottawa.ca>.

¹⁰⁶ "About CARFAC," CARFAC, accessed August 29, 2020, <http://www.carfac.ca/about/>.

¹⁰⁷ "About CARFAC Ontario" CARFAC Ontario, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://www.carfaontario.ca/>.

¹⁰⁸ "Who We Are," Copyright Visual Arts, accessed August 29, 2020, <https://www.cova-daav.ca/en/about>.

system of interactive, symbiotic relationships among artists within a broader visual arts environment.¹⁰⁹

Artist-run centres (ARCs) are key components of Canada's visual arts landscape, providing community-engaged programs and activities, while also supporting career development for artists and cultural workers, and fostering artistic innovation.¹¹⁰ According to the Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference (ARCA), there are approximately 180 artist-run centres (ARCs) in Canada.¹¹¹ ARCs are incorporated not-for-profit organizations run by boards comprising artists and possibly other arts-minded people, which may or may not have charitable status. ARCs generally offer production, research and presentation space to artists and the communities they serve, along with other amenities. Although not commercial galleries, ARCs generally are committed to the payment artist fees and royalties, based on CARFAC guidelines.¹¹² Members of ARCs are actively involved in the arts community, and are typically highly educated arts professionals, including artists, curators, art historians and educators.

Although artist-run centres date back to at least the 1970s in Ottawa, compared to many other urban centres, the region has relatively few well-established ARCs. The city's oldest ARC is Galerie SAW Gallery, established in 1973 as the Sussex Annex Works, then located within the legendary Café Le Hibou on Sussex Drive. In 1981, SAW expanded into a research, production and presentation space, located at Arts Court. The SAW Gallery was

¹⁰⁹ Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts Research, *Understanding the Arts Ecology of Saskatchewan* (Regina: University of Regina, 2012), 1-2.

¹¹⁰ Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference (ARCA), "The Advocate's Tool Kit: 2016 Pre-budget Consultation," 2014, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://www.arca.art/en/resources/the-advocates-tool-kit/>.

¹¹¹ "Who are we?," Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference (ARCA), accessed August 30, 2020, <http://www.arca.art/en/arca/>.

¹¹² "Who are we?" ARCA.

fully renovated in 2019, and exhibits edgy art with a social or political message in a club-like atmosphere. In addition, Club SAW features a licensed, state-of-the-art indoor and outdoor live performance and event venue; and Nordic Lab is an Indigenous-led international research and production hub for the facilitation of Northern and Nordic collaboration and exchange.¹¹³

Gallery 101 (G101) was founded in 1979 as a non-profit gallery at 101 Fourth Avenue by a small group Ottawa artists. The original aim was to give the group a place to exhibit their work, which could not be shown in more traditional public exhibition spaces — either because the work was too controversial, or because the artists were not yet established. environment.¹¹⁴ This ARC has occupied a variety of locations, and has shifted focus over the years, but continues to explore social issues while building a more respectful and inclusive arts environment. G101’s current mission is to bring people of diverse identities together to participate in contemporary art programming, with subject matter addressing social and environmental justice.¹¹⁵

In the 1980s, AXENÉO7 and DAÏMÔN were established in Gatineau, Quebec.¹¹⁶ Both currently occupy space at La Filature, former home of the Hanson Hosiery Mills.¹¹⁷ AXENÉO7 was founded in 1983 as an artist-run centre dedicated to advocating, promoting, and exhibiting the visual arts, while developing a critical arts discourse. It is a gathering place for sharing and experimentation, serving as a bridge between different generations of

¹¹³ “About Us,” Galerie SAW Gallery, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://saw-centre.com/#about-us>.

¹¹⁴ Donna Wawzonek and Andrew Hunter, *Shifting Territory: Artist-run Centres and Exhibition Practice* (Ottawa: Gallery 101, 2000), 10.

¹¹⁵ “The Gallery,” Gallery 101, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://g101.ca/gallery>.

¹¹⁶ Although the study’s scope was limited to Ottawa, I did include two well-known Gatineau artist-run centres, because their gallery spaces are used as exhibition venues by the University of Ottawa Visual Arts Department, and because they have interesting programming that benefits the entire region.

¹¹⁷ “La Filature inc.,” DAÏMÔN, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://daimon.qc.ca/en/about/>.

artists, mingling established practices with newer ones. The community surrounding the centre is primarily composed of visual artists and new-media artists, as well as art historians, writers and teachers.¹¹⁸

DAÏMÔN, founded in 1986, is an artist-run centre with a mandate to support the research and creation, production and dissemination of media arts. It encourages artists to push the limits of their practice and to develop new and original approaches to image, video, sound and electronic art, including installation, interactive and performance-based work.¹¹⁹

Located at Arts Court, Artengine was created in 1996 to promote the accessibility of technological tools within the local and regional arts community. Artengine aims to deepen the practices of artists, designers and critics around emerging technologies for creative production, and to reflect upon specific urgencies in society and the arts. Artengine supports members, local and regional artists, and many cultural organizations, providing essential online tools such as website/email services, community networking, shared knowledge, and conceptual and technical assistance in the creation of art.¹²⁰ In 1999, Artengine launched Artlist, a listserv, to communicate information on local art-related events and activities to subscribers, free of charge.

Founded in 2007, Le Centre d'artistes Voix Visuelle supports the Franco-Ontarian arts community, offering a contemporary art exhibition space and providing support in promoting the work of francophone and francophile artists to a wider audience. The Centre's programming emphasizes digital arts and digital publishing, and facilitates presentations,

¹¹⁸ AXENÉO7, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://axeneo7.com>. (Website currently "under development")

¹¹⁹ "About," DAÏMÔN, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://daimon.qc.ca/en/about/>.

¹²⁰ "About Us," Artengine, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://wordpress.artengine.ca/about/>.

lectures and other activities that support exhibitions and further the comprehension of art in its community. It also supports young emerging artists through focused activities in schools.

Ottawa's ARCs have each carved out an individual niche to serve a specific community. Without the formation of new artist-run centres, some visual artists clearly feel left out, and ask whether ARCs have become just another type of institution.¹²¹ What Ottawa lacks in ARCs, it seems to make up for in other arts organizations and artist spaces.

Artists seek a community of fellow artists and, with a do-it-yourself attitude, they have created many formal and informal relationships, organizations and artist spaces. This has helped build a diverse arts community in the shape of artist collectives, cooperatives and other initiatives, enabling artists to carry out a wide range of artistic production.

An artist collective is an often informal organization, managed without hierarchy, in which artists identify or collaborate around shared ideologies, aesthetics, political beliefs or a common purpose, such as sharing space and equipment.¹²² For example, the 44.4 mothers/artists collective is a recently formed Ottawa collective of women artists who are mothers. In addition to supporting and encouraging mothers/artists to keep up their practice during all stages of motherhood, the pool provides resources around an online storefront.¹²³

Research in Art (RIA) is another type of informal artist organization that has no institutions, no money, and no jury system behind it. Nonetheless, it is an important constituent within Ottawa's visual arts landscape. First formed in 2006 by artist-writer-curator Petra Halkes and her husband, artist Rene Price, RIA has operated from the Artist

¹²¹ Shepherd, "Ottawa Artist-Run Culture Survey."

¹²² "Artist Collective," Wikipedia, accessed August 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artist_collective.

¹²³ "Creating a collective; building a community," 44.4 mothers/artists collective, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://fortyfourpointfour.com>.

Project Room established in the Halkes/Price residence, where members convened for salons, study groups, and conversations. Post-COVID-19, RIA continues to foster interchanges and collaborations among Ottawa artists, curators, art historians and others, around current issues such as social justice and climate change.¹²⁴

Similar to the artist collective is the artist cooperative: a formal for-profit or non-profit organization or business that is owned and democratically governed by and for the benefit of its members. Cooperatives often provide facilities and services for their members, such as studios, workshops, equipment, exhibition galleries, and educational resources.¹²⁵ Arts organizations identifying themselves as artist cooperatives include Art Lending of Ottawa (ALO), a not-for-profit artists' cooperative established in 1970. ALO presents public art shows at the multipurpose RA Centre, where original works by local artists are offered for rent or purchase. It now operates an online gallery as well.¹²⁶ Similarly, Enriched Bread Artists (with more than twenty members) is currently Ottawa's largest artist-studio cooperative building, providing studio space and exhibition opportunities in a former bread factory.¹²⁷

Ottawa does not have well-established arts hubs or an abundance of studios and exhibition spaces. One reason for this is that Ottawa has not had the same kind of heavy industry as cities such as Toronto and Vancouver, both of which have transformed industrial areas into large and dynamic arts hubs. At the same time, Bain and March describe the

¹²⁴ Petra Halkes, "About RIA," Research in Art, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://researchinartottawa.wordpress.com>.

¹²⁵ "Artist Cooperative," Wikipedia, accessed August 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artist_cooperative.

¹²⁶ "About Us," Art Lending of Ottawa, accessed August 30, 2020, <http://www.artlendingofottawa.ca>.

¹²⁷ "About Us," Enriched Bread Artists, accessed August 30, 2020, <http://www.enrichedbreadartists.com/about.htm>.

struggles faced by Toronto artists in retaining affordable artist studios and housing in central Toronto. Established in abandoned manufacturing and warehouse facilities, vibrant artist communities become the first step in gentrification, which brings redevelopment, higher costs and the displacement of artists.¹²⁸

Ottawa's Centretown West district — incorporating artist-friendly areas such as Mechanicsville, Hintonburg, Chinatown and Little Italy — has long served as an informal arts hub, featuring many artist studios and galleries. For almost 30 years, the property at the northeastern corner of Gladstone and Loretta Avenues has been home to Enriched Bread Artists, with the later additions of Loft Studios and the Gladstone Clayworks Co-op. Approximately a hundred independent artists are likely to be displaced due to a proposed residential and commercial project by Trinity Development.¹²⁹ Although Trinity is publicly promising to make room for artists, artists doubt they will be able to afford rents in the new buildings.¹³⁰

One of the greatest needs expressed by visual artists in both the arm's-length planning process and in the survey conducted as part of this project, is more affordable studio space. Studio space not only provides a place for artists to work, but also a place to collaborate on projects, share ideas and just enjoy the camaraderie of fellow artists. Although Arts Court and the Shenkman Arts Centre house artist-run centres and other cultural organizations, they have limited capacity to provide studio space for individual artists and collectives. The City's

¹²⁸Alison L. Bain and Loren March, "Urban Redevelopment, Cultural Philanthropy and the Commodification of Artistic Authenticity in Toronto," *City & Community* 18, no. 1 (2019) 186.

¹²⁹ Peter Simpson, "Awaiting their fate: Enriched Bread Artists ponder future as development planned for their site," *Arts File Ottawa*, February 12, 2019, <https://artsfile.ca/awaiting-their-fate-enriched-bread-artists-ponder-future-as-development-planned-for-their-site/>.

¹³⁰ Shepherd, "Ottawa Artist-Run Culture Survey."

Artist Studio program provides some additional space in a competitive process (described earlier).

Acknowledging these challenges, “Roadmap” Priority 4 — Improve Cultural Infrastructure — includes carrying out needs assessments and planning. It will also involve updating the City of Ottawa’s policies and processes to encourage the maintenance of existing cultural districts, hubs and spaces, as well as the creation of new ones. This, in turn, would (presumably) lead to more affordable studio space.¹³¹

Taking matters into their own hands, a group of artists formed a non-profit organization named Studio Space Ottawa in 2019. In collaboration with the property managers of 2477 Kaladar Avenue, located in one of the city’s inner suburbs, a number of affordable studios have been made available in the light-industrial warehouse building.¹³²

Although artist collectives and cooperatives are more likely to be the purview of primarily professional artists, myriad community-based arts associations have emerged in Ottawa over the decades. The roots of the Ottawa Arts Association, for example, are entwined with the founding of the Ottawa School of Art in the nineteenth century; and the Nepean Fine Arts League was founded in the early 1960s to serve artists in Ottawa’s suburban areas. Although many community-based arts organizations were initially founded to serve artists in a particular locale, others are medium-specific, such as the Ottawa-Gatineau Printmakers Connective, the Ottawa Watercolour Society, and Ottawa Mixed Media Artists.

¹³¹ OCA, “Cultural Roadmap,” 11.

¹³² Mathew Adams, “Now open: Studio Space Ottawa is a new space for artists,” *Apt613*, October 23, 2019, <https://apt613.ca/studio-space-ottawa/>.

The City of Ottawa defines a community-based arts organization (CAO) as a formal or informal not-for-profit organization providing a variety of programs, activities and/or services that are recreational, instructional and/or cultural in nature, benefitting city residents.¹³³ Today, most CAOs contract with the City's Community Recreation and Cultural Programs for exhibition space in a location within the City's Parks and Recreation jurisdiction. Following the City's guidelines, CAOs manage their own exhibitions. Because their galleries allow sales, no artist fees are paid, and often commissions are collected. Being community-based, CAOs feature a mix of artists from hobbyists to professionals at various stages in their careers. They offer a variety of programs and benefits for members, including education and professional development, sales, exhibitions, online galleries, social events, publicity, etc. Artists often have multiple memberships to increase their exposure within the local art market, and to enjoy a wider range of benefits.

Although Ottawa's visual arts environment no doubt has other unexplored avenues, this combination of official programming and funding support, as well as a wide range of artist-run initiatives comprise the backbone of Ottawa's current visual arts landscape.¹³⁴

¹³³ "Partners and Community Organizations," City of Ottawa, accessed August 30, 2020, <https://ottawa.ca/en/recreation-and-parks/partners-and-community-organizations>.

¹³⁴ Even before undertaking this research project, I had begun compiling an Ottawa Visual Arts Directory, a running list of galleries, arts service providers, arts programs, funders, visual arts organizations and other relevant resources. The list has hundreds of entries, and seems to grow weekly.

Chapter 3: The Ottawa Artist-Run Culture Survey

Working on my self-directed project during the summer of 2019, I began to feel hard-pressed to interview representatives of a number of Ottawa’s artist-run centres and other artist-run organizations in the time remaining. The idea of doing an online survey seemed a feasible solution.

Earlier in the summer, I had read YYZBOOKS’ 2008 *decentre: concerning artist-run culture/à propos de centres d’artistes*, edited by Robert Labossiere.¹³⁵ This overview involved more than a hundred artists and other arts and culture workers — mainly in Canada, and mostly from Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Halifax — inviting them to answer a set of questions about artist-run culture. The resulting book describes the extent, value and issues of artist-run culture and artist-initiated programs, projects and events. *Decentre* clarifies both the potential of artist-run culture and its pitfalls, as well as what artist-run organizations do and the issues and challenges they face, which helped inform my own interview questions.

My methodology involved developing a list of artist-run centres, collectives, community-based arts organizations and arts service providers, from my Ottawa Visual Arts Directory. Although artist-run centres and arts service providers provide general structure to the Ottawa visual arts scene, collectives and community-based art organizations fill the interstices by facilitating collaborations and providing meeting places for hundreds of artists across the region.

I launched the “Artist-Run Culture Survey” in July 2019, using SurveyMonkey. I invited eighteen organizations to participate, directing the invitation to the organization’s

¹³⁵ Robert Labossiere (Managing Editor), *decentre: concerning artist-run culture/à propos de centres d’artistes*. (Toronto: YYZBOOKS, 2008).

president, executive director or other authority — in other words, someone who could reasonably be expected to provide similar information to the public. I received responses from four artist-run centres (ARCs), three collectives, four community-based arts organizations (CAOs) and two arts service providers (ASPs), for a total of thirteen organizations. The survey data reveal that each of the four types of artist-run organizations plays important overlapping, and sometimes unique roles within the region's visual arts environment.

All of the responding organizations provide sales opportunities for their members, and almost all offer networking, exhibitions and professional development. About half the organizations are able to provide some kind of studio space or equipment to members. I also discovered that collectives are more likely to share research than other types of arts organizations. CAOs are also more likely to provide critiques, while ASPs and CAOs present awards. Few organizations provided any publication or archiving services — once an important function of ARCs.¹³⁶

All respondents indicated that they support emerging artists (that is, persons entering the profession, or actively seeking recognition as visual artists) in a variety of ways. These included barrier-free participation in programs, non-juried exhibitions, professional development and residencies. Similarly, all but one organization indicated support for experimental art, through annual awards for innovation, a mandate for digital art and new media, the sharing of new techniques, etc.

Funding profiles varied considerably by organization type. All ARCs and arts services organizations receive grants from government funding agencies. However, only one

¹³⁶ ARCA, "The Advocate's Tool Kit."

of the COAs, and none of the collectives, receives grants. COAs with consistently higher membership numbers function without much external funding or support. Of the organizations that apply for grants, five find the application process quite onerous while four rate the effort as what they would expect. Some commented that, when funders ask for programming upfront, this can make them less responsive to their communities. ARCs and arts service providers that regularly apply for grants indicated that they were confident in getting the funding they apply for, whereas few collectives or CAOs felt the same.

The majority of respondents believed that an organization's independence and autonomy of programming is directly affected by funding requirements. According to Gabriele Detterer, in *Artist-Run Spaces, Nonprofit Collective Organizations in the 1960s and 1970s*, artist-run centres during that period was to remain had the intention of remaining self-financed so that they could remain autonomous. Over the years, ARCs became dependent on outside funding such as grants, public campaigns, and private donations, and formal structures and more bureaucratic processes became legal requirements.¹³⁷

Artist-run centres and arts service providers are non-profit corporations, and two of the ARCs have charitable status. ARCs and ASPs employ staff, with the majority employing fewer than four. All collectives have informal structures and employ no staff. Community-based arts organizations take many forms, including non-profit corporation, non-registered association with bylaws, and informal organization. Despite having memberships of more than a hundred, the CAOs that responded to the survey do not employ staff to administer programs. Unfortunately, many artists belong to several art organizations at once, and find

¹³⁷ Detterer, "Spirit and Culture," 27, 43.

themselves too busy to volunteer. The resulting crisis in voluntarism means that the people who do volunteer become overwhelmed and eventually stop volunteering at all.

The sentiment about artist-run centres is mixed. ARC respondents described the vital roles they play as incubators for experimental art and new ideas, as a counterweight to art institutions, and as a platform for emerging artists. Other respondents suggested that Ottawa's ARCs were not meeting the expectations of the local visual arts community. Rather than responding to community needs, it was felt that ARCs play a restricted role, based on their mission statements and what their boards and grantors permit. Some artists find it much easier to get an exhibition at a city-run community gallery than at an artist run-centre. Several mentioned that Gallery 101 and SAW Gallery, in particular, need to present local artists more often.

When asked how they rated the City of Ottawa on its level of support for artist-run culture in the community, eleven of thirteen respondents answered this question, giving the City a cumulative support rating of 3.2 out of 5. Separately, CAOs gave the City a 4.7 out of 5, arts service providers a 3.0, ARCs a 2.7, and collectives a 2.3. Although CAOs were generally happy about the availability and affordability of space provided by the City, other groups expressed concern about the lack of affordable studio space and local exhibition opportunities.

My cap question involved rating Ottawa as a place to "make it" as a visual artist. Eleven of thirteen respondents answered this question, resulting in an overall rating of 2.7 out of 5, indicating that most respondents did not find Ottawa a great place to make it as a visual artist. One positive rating was particularly telling, noting that "Ottawa is in close proximity to Montreal and Toronto." Again, community-based organizations ranked Ottawa more highly

than other types of organizations, perhaps because the majority of their members are recreational artists. Although they receive the least funding, community-based arts organizations expressed the highest opinion of the City's support, along with support for Ottawa as a place where artists can make it.

In sum, funding and its attendant complexities remain key issues for artist-run centres and arts services organizations. Collectives are struggling to find affordable space in which to work and collaborate. Finding sufficient volunteers to operate and run their programs is the biggest threat for community-based arts organizations. Although these concerns are felt across the board, marginalized artist groups — First Nations, Métis, Inuit, immigrant, refugee, and transgender communities — experience a constant struggle for recognition, funding and space. Many barriers have to come down in order for the whole artistic community to thrive. Opening more barrier-free space for collaboration, exhibition, and just to get together and talk would be a first step.

Conclusions

As an art history student, I had more knowledge of what it means to be a successful contemporary artist in the transnational art world, than what it would mean in Canada, let alone Ottawa. To address this gap, in 2019 I undertook a self-directed project entitled the Ottawa Visual Arts Environment: Infrastructure Services, Artist-Run Centres, Collectives and Grass Roots Enterprises, which was aimed at documenting the Ottawa's arts environment from a visual artist's point of view.

My initial premise was that the Ottawa arts environment seemed confusing, disjointed and hard to navigate, and that a document was needed to lay out everything for the reader. In the process of documenting the Ottawa Visual Arts Environment, I realized how complex and challenging the task really was. Although much of the descriptive information presented is available online, I hope that organizing it into an easy-to-understand format will be of benefit to readers.

Wanting a "big picture," I also developed Ottawa's Hybrid Business-of-Art Model, integrating a variety of means by which an artist can create, deliver and capture value over the course of an artistic career. The model reveals that artists may function locally within the Ottawa arts scene, or participate in the wider art world, seeking representation with galleries in more established centres.

Using Ottawa's Hybrid Business-of-Art Model as a point of departure, I have documented Ottawa's visual arts infrastructure, programs, services and artist-run culture. I started with the Internet as a potential gateway to the global art world, then turned my attention to the art market and local galleries, art museums and art schools, the City of

Ottawa Arts and Culture Programming, government funding, arts services organizations and finally, the artist-run sector.

One of my key questions was to determine whether Ottawa provides the infrastructure and resources necessary for individuals to “make it” as professional visual artists. In the course of writing, I realized that the answer is, “It depends.” It depends on the choices artists make for their careers, as well as the means they take to achieve their goals. Emerging and having a successful career as a professional visual artist presents unique challenges in relation to other professions, in that an artist’s fortunes depend not only on financial remuneration, but also on recognition and reputation. In addition to producing high-quality, innovative work, emerging artists need to form relationships that enable them to quickly develop their CVs to include institutional and critical recognition. This gave me new appreciation regarding the importance of art schools, residencies, exhibitions and grants in an artist’s career.

Given the complexity of the art world — and even the local art scene — part of my confusion was in not understanding that artists, while always having to manage their careers as businesses, have choices about what business of art they are in. Some artists may choose a career as business-savvy “artpreneur” operating in a large unregulated global high-stakes industry with no guarantees or safety nets. Other research-based and activist artists often take the not-for-profit route, by depending on grants and artist-run centres. Many artists may choose to incorporate stable employment with their art practice — for example, working as teachers, curators, or arts administrators.

Although Ottawa has not been the optimal location for launching a commercial career in the global art world, technology may change this in future. Technology is not only a means

of creating and sharing new and outstanding art, but also a way for tech-savvy artists to bypass the traditional restrictions of the art market and tap directly into the global art market on their own.

The role artist-run culture played in the careers of Ottawa artists was another important question that needed to be addressed, since little has been written. According to the findings of the Ottawa Artist-Run Culture Survey, some artist-run centres and funding programs are not living up to community expectations. More needs to be done to provide exhibition opportunities, affordable studio space, and barrier-free space for collaboration among local artists.

In conclusion, with the exception of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa does not have a global reputation as a visual arts hub. Nonetheless, it does have a vibrant, if under-recognized, visual arts community. With a weak commercial market, Ottawa provides a moderately supportive environment through its arts infrastructure, the City of Ottawa's arts-and-culture programs, its institutions and schools, available government funding, and a diverse artist-run culture. Ottawa's advantage in retaining a vibrant visual arts community is its strong arts-and-culture employment sector.

As COVID-19 continues to affect our lives, the visual arts community is finding ways to adapt and adjust. Art, videos and other resources abound online. People adapt to working at home and meeting via virtual platforms. Government and other agencies have announced support and recovery funding for the arts and culture, and arts services organizations are undertaking surveys and assessments of the pandemic's impact. If nothing else, this paper will document the pre-pandemic visual arts scene in Ottawa and serve as a reminder of the way things were.

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Interviews, Meetings and Events in 2019*Interviews*

- May 21: Interview with Petra Halkes, founder and organizer of Research in Art.
- June 4: Interview with Penelope Kokkinos, Community Arts Program, City of Ottawa, at her office at the Nepean Creative Arts Centre.
- June 11: Interview with Jeff Stellick, the Executive Director, and Andrew Fay, the Diploma Advisor, at the Ottawa School of Art.
- June 21: Phone interview with Julie Dupont, Public Art Portfolio Manager, City of Ottawa.

Meetings and Events

- May 21: Attended CUAG opening event for Marlene Creates exhibition and Robert Houle catalogue and print launch.
- May 31: Participated in *Artpreneur*, an annual event bringing artists and cultural workers together to discuss the “business of art” in Ottawa. Speakers included artists, municipal employees and cultural entrepreneurs.
- June 5: Attended the Annual General Meeting of Arts Network Ottawa, at the Shenkman Arts Centre.
- June 11: Attended the Ottawa Art Gallery Annual General Meeting.
- June 18: Attended the Ottawa Arts Council AGM at the Ottawa Art Gallery.
- June 25: Attended the opening of *Open Channels* at the Canada Council for the Arts, in its Âjagemô Exhibition Space.
- July 5: Attended an artists’ talk by Don Kwan and Alejandro Salgado Cendales: “Weaving the Web, the Chinese Experience in Canada,” at Gallery 112, City of Ottawa Central Archives.
- July 19: Attended the Galerie SAW Gallery reopening.

Participants in the Ottawa Artist-Run Culture Survey

Shahla Bahrami — Director, Le Centre d'artistes Voix Visuelle

Lisa Cruickshank — President, Arts Network Ottawa

Kie Delgaty — President, Kanata Art Club

Diane Genier — President, Nepean Fine Arts League

Petra Halkes — Research in Art (RIA)

Lindy Nadarajah — President, Arteast

Elizabeth Raymer Griffin and Sarah Jane Estabrooks — 44.4 mothers/artists collective

Véronique Guitard for Stephan St-Laurent — Artistic Director, AXENÉO7

Deidre Hierlihy — Ottawa-Gatineau Printmakers Connective

Laura Margit — Director/Curator, Gallery 101

Jenny McMaster — Administrator, Enriched Bread Artists

Remco Volmer — Managing Director, Artengine

Carmel Whittle — Indigenous Artists Coalition