

# TORONTO PUBLIC ART STRATEGY 2020/2030

**Creativity  
and  
Community**  
—  
**Everywhere**

December 2019

Dereck Revington  
*Luminous Veil, 2015*





EILEEN ANTONE

HASHTAG: #Simcoemural

# Foreward

The Toronto Public Art Strategy (2020–2030) is built on the understanding and recognition that the City of Toronto is situated on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Everyone has a role to play in advancing truth and reconciliation. Public art can be an evocative entry point into this conversation—helping to restore visibility to Toronto’s Indigenous communities, creating a greater sense of place and belonging, and sparking dialogue about the legacy of colonialism, and a shared path forward.

Recognizing the symbolic significance of public art, the City, through this new strategy, commits to **embedding truth and reconciliation as foundational principles for public art**. In practice, this means several things.

First, regardless of the nature of a particular project, the City has a **responsibility to acknowledge the Indigenous history, present and future of the land** as part of all of its public art projects.

Secondly, Indigenous projects should continue to be characterized by **self-determination** and **decolonization of practices**. This means that Indigenous communities and creators must be at the centre of the decision-making process for any Indigenous-focused project initiated by the City of Toronto.

Third, **public art juries and advisory committees should have appropriate Indigenous representation**. Indigenous art projects should continue to be chosen by Indigenous selection panels, while juries and committees for non-Indigenous projects should endeavour to include Indigenous representation wherever possible.

Current and upcoming projects—including Tannis Nielsen’s powerful murals along Lower Simcoe Street; the work of Kenneth Lavalée, thoughtfully integrated into the design of Dr. Lillian McGregor Park; and a planned landmark sculpture honouring Indian Residential School Survivors at Nathan Phillips Square—are examples of how public art is being used to share Indigenous stories. With continued action, public art can build on the community, cultural and educational impact of these and other projects, and create opportunities for meaningful collaboration between the City and Indigenous creators and communities, as equal partners.



Dean Drever, *Eagle V.1*, 2017,  
commissioned by Ferncastle  
(The Esplanade Inc.)

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## Summary of Actions

**The City will deliver on the Toronto Public Art Strategy's vision of creativity and community, everywhere through 21 actions, underpinned by a commitment to advancing truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities through public art.**



## **CREATIVITY**

- 1.1 Issue open calls to artists and curators for project ideas
- 1.2 Animate Toronto with temporary public art
- 1.3 Identify public art opportunities and engage artists as early as possible in all projects
- 1.4 Champion career-launching platforms for the next generation of public artists
- 1.5 Create new skills development and leadership opportunities for Indigenous artists, curators and art consultants in the field of public art
- 1.6 Deliver a range of competition types and opportunities
- 1.7 Encourage new methods of community-engaged public art works in a variety of media

## **COMMUNITY**

- 2.1 Enable the public to discover and interact with public art through creative online resources
- 2.2 Activate public art through community-focused educational and interpretive programming
- 2.3 Create more public art opportunities for artists from equity-seeking communities
- 2.4 Engage Indigenous communities to identify sites of significance across Toronto for Indigenous public art projects
- 2.5 Ensure that juries and advisory committees are reflective of the diversity of the arts sector, and the population of the City of Toronto
- 2.6 Engage artists and communities city-wide in decision-making related to public art through meaningful consultation processes
- 2.7 Establish an artist-in-residence program in City divisions
- 2.8 Pursue new opportunities for destination public art

## **EVERYWHERE**

- 3.1 Develop City-wide standards to consistently apply the “Percent for Public Art” policy to municipal capital projects
- 3.2 Produce public art master plans on a city-wide basis to provide strategic direction on future project plans
- 3.3 Pool public art funds to produce new works in underserved areas of the city
- 3.4 Advance Indigenous place-making city-wide through public art
- 3.5 Integrate public art in a variety of media into a broader range of public realm improvements
- 3.6 Protect public art works city-wide through proactive maintenance and conservation



Henry Moore, *Three Way Disk  
No. 2 (The Archer)*, 1967



## Introduction

# **The Toronto Public Art Strategy (2020-2030) sets out a ten-year plan to strengthen the City's commitment to public art. The strategy presents a vision to advance public art across Toronto, and enhance the impact of the City's public art programs for the benefit of residents and visitors.**

Following decades of sustained commitment and leadership by the City, artists, private developers, arts organizations, and community partners, Toronto is animated by more than 1,500 works of public art that engage residents and visitors with the history, diversity, creativity and aspirations of our city. Public art has been leveraged as a tool for community development, civic engagement, and urban design, and has created countless opportunities for artists to advance their professional practice through high-profile public commissions.

The growth of public art in Toronto has been driven by the guiding vision of the City of Toronto's Official Plan, and the strategic objectives of Council-endorsed policies such as the Graffiti Management Plan and the Culture Plan for the Creative City. To achieve the goals of these policies and plans, the City delivers three core public art programs—including the **City of Toronto Public Art and Monuments Collection**, the **Percent for Public Art Program**, and **StreetARToronto (StART)**.

Together, these programs have had a transformative impact on the city's urban fabric, assembling a collection of public art that, in its scale and diversity, is of international significance. At the same time, the collection's impact has been restrained by under investment in public engagement and education, geographic imbalances in the distribution of public art, and a lack of resources for maintenance and conservation. There is more to be done to ensure that the benefits of public art are felt city-wide, and to harness the potential of public art to advance broader city-building priorities, such as equity and inclusion, environmental resiliency, reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and placemaking, among others. With a deliberate, ambitious vision, facilitated by greater interdivisional collaboration, Toronto can be a global leader in public art.

Looking ahead, the City can build on its strong foundations to enhance the impact of public art for the benefit of all of Toronto. The Toronto Public Art Strategy seizes this opportunity by putting forward a vision to empower **creativity and community, everywhere**. This is a vision for a city committed to public art, accessible to all, that reinforces neighbourhood character, embraces excellence in design, and advances the careers of local artists. And, it is grounded in a commitment to advancing truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and championing the work of Indigenous artists and curators. To deliver on this vision, the Toronto Public Art Strategy includes 21 actions that will strengthen the core services that the City provides, and identify directions for the future.

## **YEAR OF PUBLIC ART 2021**

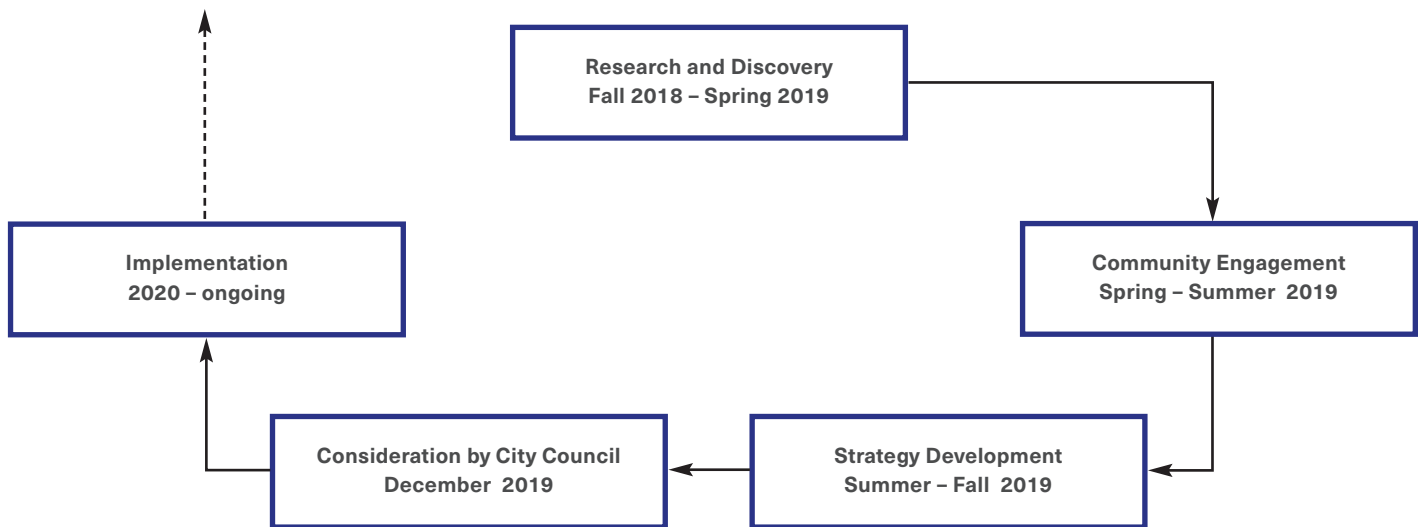
The **Year of Public Art** will be a major year-long celebration of art and community taking place in 2021. It will be the first Toronto-wide programming initiative arising from the new strategy, and signal the City's renewed vision for and commitment to public art.

The Year of Public Art will animate all corners of Toronto with innovative public art projects throughout the year. Planned highlights of the Year of Public Art include an expansion of Nuit Blanche to North York and Etobicoke, new funding for artists to produce public art works city-wide in 2021, to be delivered by the Toronto Arts Council, and partnerships with leading cultural institutions. To drive public engagement, the City will be extensively promoting the Year of Public Art through online public art tools, and partnerships with media to highlight special programming initiatives.

The Year of Public Art will leave an enduring legacy through significant new commissions, and by greatly diversifying the opportunities for meaningful engagement and interaction between artists, art and the public. Central to the legacy is a commitment to increased support to artists working in the public realm, recognizing the collective contributions of artists whose significant public works have made Toronto a global leader in public art.

## **STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

The City embarked on the development of this strategy in 2018, following direction from the Economic Development Committee to consider the recommendations of *Redefining Public Art in Toronto*, a study led by OCAD University and the University of Toronto. In reviewing the study's recommendations, City staff identified the need for a shared vision and strategy to advance public art in Toronto, and formed both an external project advisory committee and an internal working group to contribute to its development (see Appendix A for list of committee members).



**FIGURE 1: OVERVIEW OF STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

The strategy’s vision and actions were developed through extensive research on best practices in the field, along with an inclusive, robust community and stakeholder consultation process that reached over 400 Torontonians. As part of the initial discovery phase of the project, staff took stock of the strengths, opportunities and challenges facing public art in Toronto, and conducted a review of leading public art programs in Canada and around the world. To reach a broad range of artistic and community voices, the City engaged PROCESS, a third-party facilitator, to design and lead a consultation process that put artists and communities at the heart of the conversation.

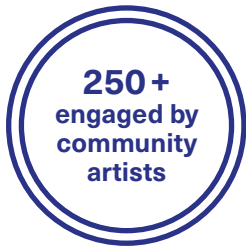
### **Artist-led Public Engagement**

PROCESS selected six community-engaged artists to facilitate conversations in their neighbourhoods across the city about public art. Collectively, the six artists reached approximately 250 people through a variety arts-based activities.

- **Daniel Rotsztain** facilitated an activity at an annual Korean Bazaar at the Salvation Army Community Church in North York.
- **Hiba Abdallah** hosted a workshop and conversation about public art at Lakeshore Arts in Etobicoke.
- **Melanie Fernandez-Alvarez** worked in partnership with MABELLEarts to explore experiences of public art at an Iftar Night celebration in Mabelle Park, and through two workshops in Etobicoke.
- **Sari Zon** sought feedback through a creative activity station at the Art Starts Street Art Festival, and at the Art Gallery of Ontario’s Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration.



Jason Bruges Studio, *Back to Front*, 2014, commissioned by Tridel Corporation



- **Tamla Matthews**, with her organization Roots and Branches, engaged with Scarborough residents at the Berner Trail Community Centre and the Malvern Library.
- **Vanessa Dion Fletcher** connected with the housing co-operative community that she lives in located at Sherbourne and Carlton Streets in the downtown core.

### Stakeholder Focus Groups

PROCESS facilitated in-depth policy conversations with 56 subject matter experts across eight stakeholder focus groups, all with previous experience in public art policies and practices.



Focus groups included meetings with **1)** professional artists working within the existing policy frameworks for major capital projects; **2)** street and graffiti artists; **3)** producers, curators, and institutions in the visual arts community; **4)** communicators and critics; **5)** property developers; **6)** architects, urban designers and landscape architects; **7)** public art consultants; and **8)** the Indigenous arts community.

### Community Conversation

In July 2019, over 125 people attended a community conversation about the public art strategy at St. Paul's on Bloor. Participants first took part in a public art walk to consider how public art can and has reimagined the public realm along Bloor Street. Afterwards, guests learned more about the public art strategy through a presentation by City staff, and heard from a panel of artists and art consultants about their experiences working in public art in Toronto. Lastly, participants provided feedback on the strategy and their thoughts on public art in Toronto at facilitated activity stations.



### Report on Consultations

In August 2019, the City released a report summarizing feedback received by PROCESS during the consultation process. Members of the public were invited to provide written comments on PROCESS' report and/or respond to a short online survey. City staff have considered PROCESS' findings, along with the comments from members of the public on PROCESS' report, as part of the development of the strategy's vision and actions.

## What is Public Art?

# Public art is work in any medium that has been produced by an artist, installed in a publicly-accessible space.

The City's definition of public art recognizes the need for a broad framework that is inclusive of a range of artistic practices and goals, while capturing several fundamental elements:

**Public art can take on many forms.** It encompasses a broad range of artistic practices rooted in the tradition of visual arts, including but not limited to sculpture, murals, street and graffiti art, video, and digital media. It can also include aspects of performance, theatre, music, culturally-significant ceremony, or other more ephemeral artistic experiences. The artistic medium will depend on the nature and objectives of a particular program or commission.

**Public art can be permanent or temporary.** Public art can be produced as a long-term or “permanent” installation, built to last for the foreseeable future, or as a shorter-term, “temporary” work, designed to be experienced over a period of days, weeks, months, or several years.

**Public art is a platform for artists.** Through its public art programs, the City strives to create valuable opportunities for both emerging and established professional artists.<sup>1</sup> As such, artists should play a leading role in the creative process for public art, whether they are working independently or as part of a team that could include curators, public art consultants, designers, architects, landscape architects, community members, or others.

**Public art is designed for publicly-accessible spaces, and is intended to engage the public.** Public art is created for and installed in inclusive, barrier-free sites that are publicly-accessible, such as parks, community centres, bridges, underpasses, laneways, or privately-owned public spaces (POPs). It is intended to be site-specific, integrated into its environment and enhancing its surroundings, making it distinct from art exhibited in public places, or one-time performances. Public art creates and shapes a sense of place — a function that

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<sup>1</sup> Professional artists are defined by the Toronto Arts Council as someone who has developed their skills through training and/or practice; is recognized as such by artists working in the same artistic tradition; actively practices their art; seeks payment for their work; and has a history of public presentation.



Jason Bruges Studio, *Back to Front*, 2014, commissioned by Tridel Corporation

takes on particular significance in Toronto by advancing Indigenous placemaking, reflecting the ancient continuity of Indigenous peoples on the lands where Toronto now sits.

Beyond these foundational elements, public art can mean many different things to many different people. Over 400+ Torontonians were consulted in the development of this strategy, and they spoke to a range of deeply personal experiences evoked through public art. At the Malvern Library, residents spoke to the transformative potential of commissioning a new work of public art for a neighbourhood. At the North York Korean Bazaar, newcomer Torontonians recalled how public art brought back memories of their homeland. Many others were excited by the spontaneity and joy of stumbling across a work of art in an unexpected place. The depth and significance of the impact of public art on Toronto's diverse communities highlights how public art helps individual Torontonians navigate their place within and strengthen their connection to their city. As such, public art plays a critical role in making public space welcoming and inclusive for all—an important consideration in view of Toronto's role as a global immigration centre and the rapid development of its newcomer gateway neighbourhoods.



Derek Besant, *Flatiron Building*, 1980



## The City of Toronto's Public Art Programs

# The City of Toronto's Official Plan recognizes the value of public art in contributing to the city's identity and character, and celebrating the cultural diversity and creativity of our communities.

Its policies call for public art initiatives to enhance City-owned spaces, and the inclusion of public art in all significant private sector developments across Toronto. Supported by the vision of the Official Plan, the City currently delivers three major public art programs that make a significant contribution to animating public spaces in Toronto—including the **City of Toronto Public Art and Monuments Collection**; the **Percent for Public Art Program**; and **StreetARToronto**. An overview of each is included below.

Together, these programs have created more than 1,500 works of public art located across each of Toronto's wards, and implement the policy directions contained in the City's Official Plan, and other Council-approved strategies such as the Graffiti Management Plan. The Toronto Public Art Strategy seeks to build on the strong foundation and successes of these programs by establishing a shared vision to enhance their collective public impact, and strengthen collaboration between them.

These core City-led programs are just one of the ways to experience public art in Toronto. Independent public art projects led by arts institutions, community organizations, Business Improvement Areas, and others are fundamental to shaping our everyday experience of the city. For one night each year, Toronto comes alive with a celebration of ephemeral public art during Nuit Blanche. In addition, City agencies lead acclaimed public art programs that enliven spaces and infrastructure across the city. Waterfront Toronto is building a contemporary collection of public art across the city's waterfront, funded by pooling developer contributions and informed by public art strategies and master plans, which upon completion become part of the City's Public Art and Monuments Collection. And, the Toronto Transit Commission has enriched transit facilities city-wide with innovative works of public art, guided by its Art in Public Transit Facilities Policy. Looking ahead, greater synergies between the City, its agencies, independent projects and special events will strengthen Toronto's position as a public art capital.

**300**  
works

## **CITY OF TORONTO PUBLIC ART AND MONUMENTS COLLECTION**

*Administered by the Economic Development and Culture Division*

The City of Toronto has a legacy of public art that dates from the middle of the 19th century. Building on this historical legacy, today the City of Toronto's Public Art and Monuments Collection contains close to 300 works that are managed and maintained by the Economic Development and Culture (EDC) Division. The City's collection primarily grows through commissions and donations.

EDC's Public Art Officers work collaboratively with various City divisions to identify opportunities to commission new public art works, projects that span across divisions, agencies, boards, and commissions. The process for commissioning, acquiring and managing public art works is based on principles of openness, equity and fairness. This not only supports the innovative quality and integrity of the City's selection of artists and projects, but also provides a range of opportunities to artists at various stages of their careers through a program that allows for innovation and is respectful of the creative rights of artists.

Many of the works of art in Toronto's public spaces have been donated to the City by individuals, groups or commemorative foundations. The acceptance of artistic gifts and commemorations is governed by the Public Art and Monuments Donations Policy, adopted by City Council in January 2017. The Public Art and Monuments Donations Policy aims to ensure that all donated artworks accepted and installed in Toronto's public realm demonstrate outstanding aesthetic values, meet technical safety and sustainability criteria, demonstrate clear relationships to the City, Ontario and/or Canada, and are appropriate to the surroundings where the work will be located.

EDC's public art program builds upon existing relationships between the City, artists, arts organisations and community members in order to create opportunities for citizens to participate in the arts in the course of their daily lives; encourage civic discussion about public art and make possible the expression of a variety of cultural voices; and enhance community sense of ownership and value by commissioning works which are site-specific and encourage awareness of collective heritages and neighbourhood identities.



Robert Reid, *Canadian Volunteers War Memorial*, 1870



## **PERCENT FOR PUBLIC ART PROGRAM**

### **Administered by the City Planning Division**

The Percent for Public Art Program is administered by City Planning's Urban Design section and is an embedded feature of the development review process. City Planning secures public art opportunities in the public realm—on private lands, on public lands for future development, and infrastructure and civic capital projects as part of the review and approvals of development proposals. The overall objective is to create public art that adds character and distinction to a site, neighbourhood or major destination.

The name of the program is derived from the principle that one percent of a project's gross construction costs is dedicated to public art. This guiding principle has been used for decades in hundreds of programs across North America and Europe. The success of City Planning's Percent for Public Art Program is due to the ongoing commitment by private developers, working within the City's development review process, the Planning division, partners in other divisions, City Council and the community.

The first policies to promote and implement public art were adopted by the former City of Toronto in 1985, resulting in a strong link between public realm initiatives in new, major (over 10,000 square feet) commercial and residential developments.

Legislative tools of the Planning Act and Toronto's Official Plan provide the authority and tools to encourage the inclusion of public art in all significant private sector developments and the endorsement of the "Percent for Public Art" funding principle. To determine leadership and commitment, there are Official Plan, City Planning and Urban Design policies encouraging the City to include a public art component in major, municipal capital projects and on properties under the City's jurisdiction.

From a planning perspective, public art supports the Official Plan policies to create a more livable city by adding richness and variety to the urban environment. City Planning ensures inclusion of public art on various plan through the identification of opportunities in the early development and review stages. The Official Plan states that "public art installations, both publicly and privately owned, make walking through the City's streets, open spaces and parks a delight for residents and visitors alike".



Public Studio, *We Are All Animals*, 2015, commissioned by the Daniels Corporation

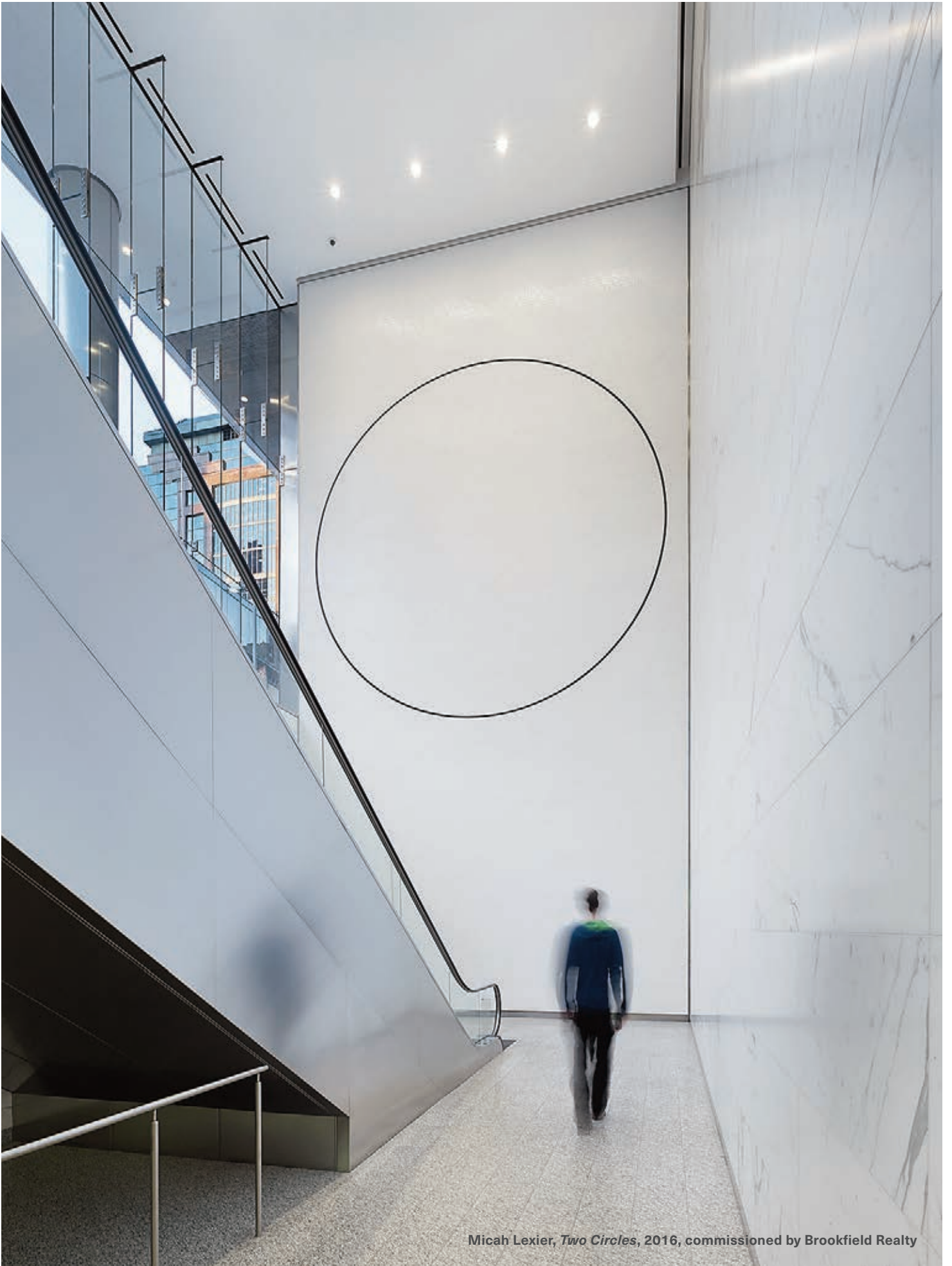
In 2010, City Council approved City Planning's "Percent for Public Art Guidelines." Funds secured from large developments are typically used to provide on-site works of public art on publically accessible areas of private lands. Contributions from smaller developments are more often pooled as donations towards the creation of public art located on public lands or in civic infrastructure projects. On occasion, hybrid on-site/off-site agreements for public art installations are reached.

A key feature of City Planning's approval process is the role played by the Toronto Public Art Commission (TPAC). The commission functions as an eleven-member panel of informed citizens that coordinates with City Planning on the review of Public Art Plans proposed by private developers. TPAC provides peer group review and advice on public art plans and ensures that the commissioning of public art by private development is conducted in a fair and balanced manner.

The development industry has embraced the Percent for Public Art Program, recognizing that public art can add significantly to the attractiveness, profile and value of a development. With approximately 200 projects completed and another 100 underway, private developers have contributed 300 projects over the past 30 years.



Micah Lexier, *Two Circles*, 2016, commissioned by Brookfield Realty



Micah Lexier, *Two Circles*, 2016, commissioned by Brookfield Realty



**1000+**  
works

## **StreetARToronto**

**Administered by the Transportation Services Division**

StreetARToronto (StART) has its origins in the Graffiti Management Plan adopted by Toronto City Council in 2011, which set out four key action areas: deter graffiti vandalism, support victims of graffiti vandalism, support street art and artists, and provide a central point of contact with expertise in all graffiti and street art related matters. StART and the Graffiti Management Plan received a national Institute of Public Administration (IPAC) award for public sector excellence for its ability to effectively turn around the considerable graffiti vandalism problem in Toronto through its engagement and its approach.

Since its inception, StART has evolved to a collection of programs which focus on advancing Council's Strategic Actions and achieving Transportation Services Divisional objectives. By reducing and replacing graffiti vandalism with colourful and vibrant artwork, street art installations make Toronto's streets more inviting and safe, encourage active transportation like walking and cycling and help maintain infrastructure in a state-of-good-repair thereby reducing maintenance costs.

The StART suite of programs ranges from installations on small scale traffic signal controller cabinets and cycle track barriers to 20+ storey buildings and also includes workshops on artist mental health, community engagement and working at heights. This approach provides a skills development ladder that, together with StART's online platforms and activities, showcases local artists, mentors emerging talent and seeks to support Toronto artists in developing their careers locally, nationally and internationally.

StART's commitment to inclusion and diversity of artists and art styles as well as strong community engagement are key to its success. The effort has produced upwards of 1,000 mural installations geographically distributed in all Toronto wards and has provided StART staff a deep knowledge base in the street art community as well as neighbourhoods in all areas of Toronto. Murals uplift everyone's daily commute and have become local focal points, symbols of community pride, and inspiring reminders of the cooperation and dedication that made their creation possible.





birdO, in partnership with Slate Asset Management, StART Monumental Program Photo: Riley Snelling

To be effective, StART works collaboratively with other City Divisions and corporations as well as external stakeholders including schools, transit and rail partners, and a long list of arts organizations, community and business organizations, and residents' associations on initiatives to effectively address neighbourhood needs. The diversity of artists, artistic styles and themes deliberately reflect the diversity of Toronto, including many large-scale murals by artists that identify as members of equity-seeking groups. Individually and collectively, StART murals are designed to celebrate the City of Toronto motto "Diversity Our Strength" and foster a greater sense of belonging among all.

**A Vision for Creativity and Community — Everywhere**

**Building on the foundational policies of the City's Official Plan, and the passion and wisdom expressed by the more than 400 community members engaged through our consultation process, the Toronto Public Art Strategy envisions public art empowering *creativity and community — everywhere.***



Hadley + Maxwell, *Garden of Future Follies*, 2016, commissioned by Waterfront Toronto

This is a vision for public art that puts artists and communities at the heart of what this strategy is trying to achieve. It is a vision for artistic creativity and experimentation, exploring new and greater opportunities for artists to use Toronto as their canvas to build challenging, ground-breaking works of public art that affirm the city's position as a global cultural capital. It is vision that prioritizes the public experience of public art, mobilizing communities to engage with public art. And it is a vision that seeks to animate and active all corners of Toronto.

This vision is underpinned by a commitment to **embed truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities as foundational principles for public art**. Not only is this commitment fundamental to addressing the deficit of Indigenous cultural representation in the public realm, but it also positions Toronto to build a collection of public art unlike any other in the world—one that is deeply connected to the cultural expression of Indigenous communities, and reflective of an aesthetic that is unique to our city.

The City will turn this vision into action by delivering on a series of strategic actions connected to each of the vision's three pillars:

**Creativity:** Public art transforms the City's urban fabric, telling stories about who we are and where we live. It engages residents and visitors in creative and cultural discovery through art, and challenges artists to experiment with new concepts to produce engaging public projects. Looking ahead, this strategy envisions a realm of possibilities for public art in Toronto, and seeks to encourage creativity, risk-taking, and artistic experimentation.

**Community:** Through creative, savvy digital tools, and engaging educational and interpretive programming, the strategy charts a course to better connect the public to public art. The actions in this section are guided by a desire to strengthen the everyday experience of public art, and a continued commitment to public art that is inclusive of Toronto's deep diversity, through both the local stories told through public art, and the artists commissioned for public projects.

**Everywhere:** Public art can provide opportunities for residents to engage with the city's diversity and creativity on an everyday basis, no matter where they live. Recognizing the need to increase city-wide access to public art, the strategy sets out a path to improve the geographic distribution of public art across the city. There is more that the City can do to ensure that the benefits of public art are felt city-wide, particularly in areas outside of the downtown core and major development hubs.

## Strategic Actions



StreetARToronto Outside The Box Program Photos: Jocelyn Reynolds

# 1 CREATIVITY

**The Toronto Public Art Strategy will create new platforms for artists and community partners to create and experiment with public art.** Creative, original public art works stand out on a scale that is out of the ordinary, sparking conversation and challenging perceptions. Toronto is already home to a globally-significant collection of such works by both local and international artists, and a continued emphasis on supporting artistic experimentation will reinforce the city's global creative leadership.

Building on Toronto's creative strengths, the actions outlined below endeavour to support a broader range of public art projects, including media art, temporary and ephemeral art, and performance art, among others, and using a wide variety of commissioning practices, including community-engaged art practices and co-creation. This new emphasis on creativity and experimentation will lead to a diversification of the public art found across Toronto, complementing permanent, sculptural works with other challenging, unexpected pieces.

The strategy further prioritizes advancing the work of artists and developing creative talent, by championing the next generation of public artists, and building new skills development opportunities for Indigenous artists, curators and art consultants. Through this strategy, the City will partner with artists to push the boundaries of public art, and produce high-quality projects of all sizes and types that reimagine the experience of the public realm.

## **ACTIONS**

### **1.1 Issue open calls to artists and curators for project ideas**

An open call for project ideas would invite artists to use Toronto as their canvas, and craft a concept for an innovative public art work in any scale, scope or medium. In an open call, artists are free to experiment with different concepts and media, and consider any and all options for creative place-making. Typically, artists would be provided with guidelines to propose project sites—either on City-owned land, or on private property with permission from the land owner—and would confirm the feasibility of the site in consultation with City staff prior to developing a detailed concept. Open call projects are selected through a competitive process, with one or more winning ideas being chosen for commission, with all shortlisted artists receiving a fee for concepts developed as part of the competition process..

### **1.2 Animate Toronto with temporary public art**

Public spaces across Toronto are brought to life with temporary public art. Street and graffiti artists supported by StreetARToronto have transformed countless laneways, walls, underpasses, utility boxes and more with their imaginative and inspirational works. And, since its inception in 2005, Nuit Blanche has grown to become North America's largest celebration of art in public space, reaching an audience of tens of thousands each year. Building on this success, there is an opportunity to do more to encourage the continued creation of temporary and ephemeral art in Toronto, in a broad range of media and locations. This could include commissioning more temporary projects in the public realm, continuing and expanding the extension of Nuit Blanche projects, deploying public art to enhance long-term construction sites, and by partnering on artist- and community-led projects. There is also an opportunity for additional temporary public art programming in City parks, to further animate these spaces and bring in new visitors while reducing long-term maintenance costs of permanent capital works.

There is also an opportunity to create and maintain dedicated exhibition spaces within the city for temporary public art. One example of this is the Toronto Sculpture Garden, which is frequently cited as a successful model for temporary public

art commissions. Since 1981, the Sculpture Garden has exhibited more than 80 works of public art. It has provided artists with the opportunity to work experimentally in public space, explore issues of scale and materials, and has served as a career platform for many artists receiving their first public commission. This model could be replicated elsewhere in Toronto. In such an arrangement, the City would identify and maintain dedicated exhibition spaces for rotating public art projects, and leverage them as a platform for discovery and innovation, and as a lasting benefit for the community.

### **1.3 Identify public art opportunities and engage artists as early as possible in all projects**

Throughout our consultations, we asked participants to describe successful public art projects. There was one common factor that almost all participants pointed to as a marker of success — namely, identifying opportunities for public art and engaging artists early in capital project development.

Too often, public art opportunities are identified late in project development, at a point when the design for a site is already largely confirmed. This is a common issue among all public art programs, and is not unique to Toronto. Engaging artists early allows for artists to be embedded within the design team, and helps to enable greater collaboration and dialogue with project architects, landscape architects, and other partners in the development process. This early-stage collaboration can result in an art work that feels more connected and integrated with its site. Moreover, it can allow for increased consultation and engagement with the local community in the development of the project concept.

This action calls for the City to proactively identify public art opportunities in municipal capital works as early as possible in the project planning process. City-led commissions should be timed to allow for artists to leverage their creativity to contribute to the overall vision for a site, and help to shape its functional design. Proactive, early engagement of artists will be emphasized as part of any new guidelines for applying the percent for public art policy to municipal capital projects. In addition, private developers will continue to be encouraged to begin planning for public art early in their planning process.

### **1.4 Champion career-launching platforms for the next generation of public artists**

There are many artists who are poised and qualified to enter into the field of public art, but struggle to secure their first public commission. The City has taken a leadership role in championing public art and knowledge-building opportunities for emerging artists through the StreetARToronto program and the deliberate mentoring efforts of Nuit Blanche, and can build on these foundations to support other early career public artists.



Mary-Anne Barkhouse and Michael Belmore, *Echo*, 2014



Ilan Sander, *The Vessel*, 2011

For instance, the City could provide a career platform for emerging artists by issuing competition calls for smaller-scale, smaller-budget or temporary projects beyond murals, that may not require the same level of technical experience as larger capital projects. Such “incubator” projects would provide early-career artists with the experience needed to successfully compete for and deliver more significant commissions elsewhere in Toronto or in other cities.

The City and private developers can also continue to provide mentorship opportunities, where appropriate, on public art projects through StART, the Percent for Public Art Program, Nuit Blanche, and as part of other City-commissioned projects, and consider expanding these successful approaches. As part of a mentorship arrangement, an emerging artist is paired with a more experienced artist to work on a public art project. Mentees benefit by gaining valuable transferable technical and project management skills, and by taking part in hands-on training and learning opportunities. As a best practice, mentorship opportunities should be paid, and funded through a portion of a project’s public art budget.

In addition, the City should continue to partner with cultural incubators and artist-led organizations to advance skills development and capacity-building among emerging Toronto artists.

### **1.5 Create new skills development and leadership opportunities for Indigenous artists, curators and art consultants in the field of public art**

Creating new skills development and leadership opportunities for Indigenous artists, curators and art consultants in the field of public art is one step towards the greater inclusion of Indigenous presence and values within the city-building process. This could include introducing targeted public art mentorship programs — pairing emerging Indigenous artists, curators or art consultants with established professionals to gain the technical experience needed to secure their own future commissions—and dedicated competition calls, providing aspiring Indigenous artists and arts professionals with opportunities to lead temporary or permanent projects.

### **1.6 Deliver a range of competition types and opportunities**

To encourage creativity and innovation, the City’s Economic Development and Culture Division should endeavour to deliver a range of different public art competition types and opportunities to grow the City of Toronto Public Art and Monuments Collection. This could include open calls (currently the standard), developing an artist and curator roster, by-invitation competitions, community-engaged projects, or others. Delivering a wider variety of competition types



through the City's established transparent and accountable municipal procurement processes can help the Division to attract a broader range of artists and project concepts, and create new pathways for original projects.

### **1.7 Encourage new methods of community-engaged public art works in a variety of media**

A community-engaged public art work is a project that is developed in close collaboration with its intended community. Community-engaged public art works often stand as catalysts for community development and revitalization, and are developed through participatory processes engaging local residents and partners. Community-engaged artists devote considerable time to working with a community to develop their project concept, and come away with a project that is deeply connected to and relevant for its local audience.

Encouraging more community-engaged public art works will require rethinking the commissioning processes for the City's Public Art and Monuments Collection. For example, Economic Development and Culture typically commissions an artist with a fully-developed project concept. By contrast, for a community-engaged project, EDC could commission an artist first, and allow them to develop their project concept with the community afterwards. Partnering with Toronto's arts organizations, such as the network of Local Arts Service Organizations, could also enhance the commissioning process for community-engaged works.





Tadashi Kawamata, *Untitled (Toronto Lamp Posts)*, 2015

## 2 COMMUNITY

**Connecting the public with public art is fundamental to amplifying the impact of Toronto's collection.** The actions in this section put a renewed focus on the public's experience of public art, exploring new methods of engaging residents and visitors through innovative digital tools, creative, community-focused educational programming, and active consultation. This enhanced emphasis on engagement and discovery will celebrate the art that exists across the city and increase the value and impact of the City's collection.

Moreover, while equity and inclusion have long been held as core values for the City's public art programs, there is more work to be done to ensure that public art is inclusive of the diverse communities it is intended to serve. Many consultation participants were in agreement that there is a need for greater diversity among artists commissioned for public works in Toronto, including artists of different abilities, genders, ethnicities, ages and socio-economic backgrounds. Similarly, there were calls for the City to tackle barriers to entry into the field of public art for emerging artists and artists from equity-seeking communities.<sup>2</sup> The Toronto Public Art Strategy affirms the City's ongoing commitment to ensuring that Toronto's public art programs champion equity and inclusion, among both artists and audiences.

### ACTIONS

#### 2.1 Enable the public to discover and interact with public art through creative online resources

Developing and maintaining a creative suite of online resources— including searchable maps, image databases, mobile apps, and more— will help to make the City's 1,000+ public art works more accessible to a wide audience of residents, tourists, and researchers. Currently, users can explore StART's extensive collection of street art and murals through an interactive online map, produced in partnership with Civic Hall Toronto, and launched in beta in 2018. The City is also upgrading its public art web page to include a refreshed, user-friendly map of all works commissioned through the Percent for Public Art Program, and the full inventory of the City's Public Art and Monuments Collection. Each of these resources can be updated and expanded as the collection grows, and as new technologies become available.

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<sup>2</sup> The City of Toronto defines equity-seeking groups as persons with disabilities; women; racialized group(s); lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two-spirit communities (LGBTQ2S); undocumented workers; immigrants and refugees; persons with low income; and youth.

## 2.2 Activate public art through community-focused educational and interpretive programming

Throughout the consultation process, we heard from Torontonians who were curious to learn more about the City's public art collection. There is strong community interest in educational and interpretive programming—such as artist or curator talks; self-guided and artist-led tours or walks; digital QR codes on art works; and didactic plaques and panels—to help uncover the story behind the public art works that are found across the city. Educational and interpretive programming can be developed in partnership with artists, cultural organizations, school boards, private sector partners, tourism operators, and other community partners.

There are also opportunities for public programming at sites marked for permanent public art projects in the future. From commissioning to installation, permanent public art projects can often take years, with few opportunities to engage with the surrounding community during this long process. A variety of programs, such as short term art projects, workshops, artist talks or other programming on or around the site could keep the community informed and engaged.

## 2.3 Create more public art opportunities for artists from equity-seeking communities

Creating visibility for artists from equity-seeking groups is fundamental to building a collection of public art that is inclusive of Toronto's deep diversity. The City should actively pursue program development strategies to improve diversity and representation among artists selected for public commissions, building on past work. Tactics could include:

- **Dedicated competition calls** for artists from equity-seeking groups;
- **Targeted outreach strategies** to effectively promote public art competition calls to artists who identify as being part of equity-seeking communities, and to arts organizations that serve equity-seeking groups; or
- **“Blind” competitions** in which juries view only the artist's concept, not biographical information.

## 2.4 Engage Indigenous communities to identify sites of significance across Toronto for Indigenous public art projects

To plan for future Indigenous public art projects, the City should invite and support Indigenous communities to identify locations for major public art commissions across Toronto, and prioritize these projects for future investment. These locations could consist of sites of cultural significance, including



Elicser, Sight, Mediah, StART Support Program Photo: Elicser



Nick Sweetman, StART Underpass (UP) Program Photo: Kathy Toth

natural spaces such as ravines or waterways, and urban sites of historical and contemporary importance. There is also an opportunity to link future Indigenous projects together through art walks, digital tools, and other interpretive programming, supporting efforts to boost Indigenous-led cultural tourism.

## **2.5 Ensure that juries and advisory committees are reflective of the diversity of the arts sector, and the population of the City of Toronto**

To achieve greater diversity and inclusion within the City's public art programs, it is important that the decision-making process be inclusive of a broad range of diverse voices. This action confirms the City's ongoing commitment to consistently apply an "equity lens" when forming juries and advisory commissions related to public art. Decision-making bodies should have broad, appropriate representation that is reflective of the diversity of the arts sector, as well as the City population in general. This involves continuing to have representation from people of different ages, backgrounds, and abilities, as well as a range of professional expertise related to the arts.

## **2.6 Engage artists and communities city-wide in decision-making related to public art through meaningful consultation processes**

Engaging the public in decision-making related to public art can be a key factor influencing the success of a project. The City recognizes that many projects are best served by meaningful public engagement, and deploys a variety of strategies to seek feedback from residents.

Looking ahead, the City should continue to deliver a broad range of meaningful consultation processes to engage communities in decision-making related to public art where appropriate. This could include using more than one method of consultation—such as complementing a public open house with an online consultation platform. Artists or arts educators with experience in community facilitation could also be engaged to lead project consultations. Consultations should also continue to be designed with the demographics of a particular neighbourhood in mind, and be held early enough in the project process that public feedback can be used most effectively.

## **2.7 Establish an artist-in-residence program in City divisions**

Public art can be used to create community dialogue around complex city-building issues. One method for doing so is to establish an artist-in-residence program, which would see artists embedded in City divisions to engage residents through public art projects that relate to City Council's strategic priorities. The City of

Calgary, for example, achieved this through its long-term WATERSHED+ program, which saw four artists working within the Utilities and Environmental Protection department to create original art works that spoke to issues of water conservation and management, developed through community dialogue and engagement. Closer to home, the City of Toronto's Solid Waste Management Services Division has previously piloted an artist-in-residence program with great success, generating public conversation and awareness about waste management.

## 2.8 Pursue new opportunities for destination public art

A destination art work is a major commission that functions as a landmark and gathering space. In addition to being a focal point for a community, it can serve as a tourist attraction and result in spin-off economic benefits for its host city. In Canada and around the world, prominent destination artworks have put cities on the map as international public art destinations, including Anish Kapoor's *Cloud Gate* in Chicago, the iconic murals of San Francisco's Mission District, and Louise Bourgeois' *Maman* sculpture marking the entry to the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. Closer to home, new destination artwork is contemplated for Toronto as part of the East Bayfront Public Art Master Plan, and as a potential legacy project for the Year of Public Art. Supporting this and other new destination art projects will showcase Toronto as a public art city, and create more opportunities to engage residents and visitors in creative and cultural discovery through public art.



Stephanie Bellefleur, StART Concrete Barrier Program Photo: Harry Choi



Linda Covit, *Light Containers*, 2013,  
commissioned by Malibu Investments



# 3 EVERYWHERE

**Public art should provide opportunities for residents to engage with the city’s diversity and creativity on an everyday basis, no matter where they live.** The Toronto Public Art Strategy sets out a plan to activate communities across Toronto with a range of creative public art projects over the next ten years, with a focus on increasing access to public art in underserved areas.

Permanent public art in Toronto tends to follow the pattern of development, and as such is most concentrated in the downtown core, and other major hubs of development activity. As development intensity spreads beyond these areas, deliberate efforts will be required to activate public art opportunities city-wide. Many secondary and other plans exist that will guide future public art project development outside the core — but the City can also explore creative solutions to activate public art in underserved areas in the near term.

There is also an opportunity to broaden the range and types of public art work that are installed outside of major development hubs. StreetARToronto has maintained a focus on producing murals and graffiti art both within and outside the core, and was widely praised in the consultation process for its success in animating neighbourhoods within and beyond downtown. The City can build on this success to expand other public art programs on a city-wide basis.

## ACTIONS

### 3.1 Develop City-wide standards to consistently apply the “Percent for Public Art” policy to municipal capital projects

The City’s Official Plan (Section 3.1.4, Public Art) calls for “dedicating one percent of the capital budget of all major and municipal buildings and structures to public art”. While considerable success has been achieved to date in securing public art work as part of private developments, there remains a gap in the application of this policy for municipal capital projects.

Currently, the City identifies public art opportunities for municipal capital works on a project-by-project basis. Developing clear, City-wide guidelines to consistently apply this Official Plan policy will unlock new resources for public art, allowing for more municipally-commissioned projects in all corners of Toronto. This represents the City’s best opportunity to improve the geographic distribution of public art.

Such guidelines will need to be created by an interdivisional working group with representation from City divisions and agencies that contribute to major, public-

facing capital infrastructure projects. The working group will need to consider criteria for identifying public art opportunities on municipal projects; the needs, objectives and potential benefits for individual City divisions; and how to balance existing capital budget pressures with this Official Plan direction.

### **3.2 Produce public art master plans on a city-wide basis to provide strategic direction on future project plans**

Existing public art master plans — such as the East Bayfront Public Art Master Plan, the Scarborough Centre Public Art Master Plan, and the West Don Lands Public Art Master Plan — stand as best practices for creating a shared vision and plan for public art in a particular district. A public art master plan assesses the current and future needs of a defined area, and uses that information to guide how its public art will be conceptualized and commissioned. They also assist in identifying opportunities for public art at the earliest possible stages of project planning. Public art master plans are developed when required by City Planning as part of the development approval process, or when initiated by City Planning in response to development opportunities.

New public art master plans can set out a roadmap to improve the geographic distribution of public art works on a city-wide basis. As a first focus, new master plans should be targeted to areas of the city with less access to public art, and where development trends suggest there is a future opportunity. To be developed in consultation with the community and other partners, these new public art master plans will articulate a vision for public art in areas across Toronto, and set out an effective framework for resources planning, site selection, and potential projects. At the same time, the City should continue to pursue public art opportunities articulated in existing plans and studies, in line with planned public realm and urban revitalization improvements.

### **3.3 Pool public art funds to produce new works in underserved areas of the city**

“Pooling” of public art funding is one tool that can be used by the City to strategically direct resources to support public art projects in underserved areas of Toronto. This involves collecting contributions from multiple project sources and combining them to produce a work(s) of public art. Pooling is a particularly effective option for capital projects that are not conducive to having public art on-site, such as the many city infrastructure projects that are, for logistical reasons, not immediately adjacent to densely populated or highly-trafficked areas. Such projects represent a significant opportunity to direct resources to underserved neighbourhoods of Toronto, and ultimately improve the distribution of public art.

The City can be most flexible with the pooling of funds derived from municipal capital projects. Funds from private developments already designated for public art can be pooled and directed to a Council-endorsed public initiative, though the use of such funds is restricted to projects occurring in close proximity to the development to ensure a benefit to the surrounding neighbourhood, as per the Percent for Public Art Program Guidelines. By contrast, the City can exercise greater discretion to use municipal funds across Toronto, and should consider using this tool to benefit underserved areas and to pursue those projects as part of public art master plans. Where possible and appropriate, City funds could be supplemented by contributions from philanthropic partners.

### **3.4 Advance Indigenous place-making city-wide through public art**

The legacy of colonialism has left a deficit of visible markers of Indigenous presence in Toronto's urban landscape. Indigenous place-making sets out to restore this presence by creating public places that celebrate Indigenous cultures, and that are designed with Indigenous communities based on their values and knowledge. In Toronto, Indigenous place-making is underpinning the design of new City parks, community centres, and other public realm improvements— with much more to come in the future.

Public art is an important tool for improving the visibility of Indigenous cultural representation city-wide. Combined with other place-making strategies such as wayfinding and naming, public art is an evocative way of reaffirming Indigenous cultural presence in a city, and should be leveraged to advance City-wide efforts towards Indigenous place-making.

### **3.5 Integrate public art in a variety of media into a broader range of public realm improvements**

Typically, most permanent public art projects in Toronto have been connected to major capital projects such as new large development sites, community centres, or parks. More recently, StreetARToronto has seen considerable success in integrating mural, street and graffiti art into smaller scale public realm improvements. New interactive design installations along the King Street Transit Priority Corridor, and public art projects led by Business Improvement Areas are also examples of animating the broader public realm through creative art.

There is an opportunity to build on this success to continue to integrate a wider variety of types of public art beyond mural, street and graffiti art into a broad range of public realm improvements, such as cycling infrastructure, pedestrian projects, playgrounds, and pools, among others. With such public realm improve-



ments taking place city-wide, this is one strategy for improving the geographic distribution of public art.

### **3.6 Protect public art works city-wide through proactive maintenance and conservation**

Toronto has built a globally-significant body of public art work, but its durability and impact are limited by a lack of resources dedicated to maintenance and conservation. Maintenance and conservation are cornerstones of the collections management program of any professional museum or collecting institution. This same principle is recognized as a best practice for public art programs. Ongoing care and stewardship of public art collections is respectful of the work of artists, and helps to ensure that works continue to make a positive impact on the public realm over their lifespan.

This action calls for the City to develop a proactive maintenance and conservation program for the City's Public Art and Monuments Collection. To achieve the best results, EDC should count a professional art conservator among its staff. A conservator is best positioned to oversee regular preventative treatments to keep the City of Toronto Public Art and Monuments Collection in good condition, and respond to vandalism and perform repairs in a timely manner, and oversee the deaccessioning of works in a way that is respectful of the moral rights of artists. This position will play an important role as a liaison between the collection and operational divisions with the City, such as Parks, Forestry and Recreation, to help maintain works in a state of good repair. The conservator can also develop and share tools and guidelines with other City divisions and external partners to support their efforts to maintain works that fall under their care.

# Appendix

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The development of Toronto’s new public art strategy was guided by an Advisory Committee of community and cultural leaders. The Committee met three times in 2019 to provide advice and feedback on the strategy and public and stakeholder consultations.

| Committee Member  | Title  |
|-------------------|--|
| Amir Akbari       | Founder, Behind the Line   |
| David Anselmi     | Senior Director, Real Estate, Canada Lands Company<br>Chair, Toronto Public Art Commission |
| Edward Birnbaum   | Director of Legislative Affairs, Office of the Mayor,<br>City of Toronto                   |
| Rebecca Carbin    | Principal, Art + Public UnLtd  |
| Kari Cwynar       | Curator, Evergreen Brick Works   |
| Bonnie Devine     | Artist and Founding Chair, Indigenous Visual Culture<br>Program, OCAD University (Emerita) |
| Sara Diamond      | President, OCAD University   |
| Dean Drever       | Artist   |
| Helena Grdadolnik | Director, Workshop Architecture Member,<br>Toronto Public Art Commission                   |
| Adrian Hayles     | Artist and Curator, Hashtag Gallery  |
| Layne Hinton      | Co-Curator, Art Spin   |
| Leah Houston      | Artistic Director, MABELLEarts   |
| Luis Jacob        | Artist   |
| Alexis Kane Speer | Executive Director, STEPS Initiative   |
| Lila Karim        | Executive Director, North York Arts  |
| Gabriel Leung     | Vice President, Development, Concord Adex  |
| Mimi Joh-Carnella | Chair, Board of Directors, Partners in Art   |
| Rui Pimenta       | Co-Curator, Art Spin   |
| Asad Raza         | Producer and Curator   |
| Tamira Sawatsky   | Architect, Public Studio   |
| Anjuli Solanki    | Director of Community Programs, STEPS Initiative   |
| Dan Silver        | Associate Professor, University of Toronto   |

The Strategy was also being informed by an internal working group of City staff led by the Economic Development and Culture Division, with representation from City Planning, CreateTO, Environment and Energy, the Indigenous Affairs Office, Long Term Care Homes and Services, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Solid Waste Management Services, Toronto Public Library, Toronto Transit Commission, Toronto Water, Transportation Services, and Waterfront Toronto.