



ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON

Strategic Plan
2023-2027



Biography
Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) artist Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007) was born on Sand Point Reserve, near Lake Nipigon in northwestern Ontario. At the age of six he was sent to a residential school where he remained for four years before escaping back to his home community. After that Morrisseau began painting in 1956. His artistic imagination ignited by Anishinaabe oral traditions, pictographic birch bark scrolls, of the Medicine Wheel, Shamanic society, and the ancient rock paintings.

Morrisseau moved to Toronto in 1962 at the increasing title of Toronto's Wooden Boat School—brought him painting to his career. Morrisseau exhibited numerous times and received prestigious honours including the Order of Canada (1978). In 2000 he organized a major retrospective of his work.

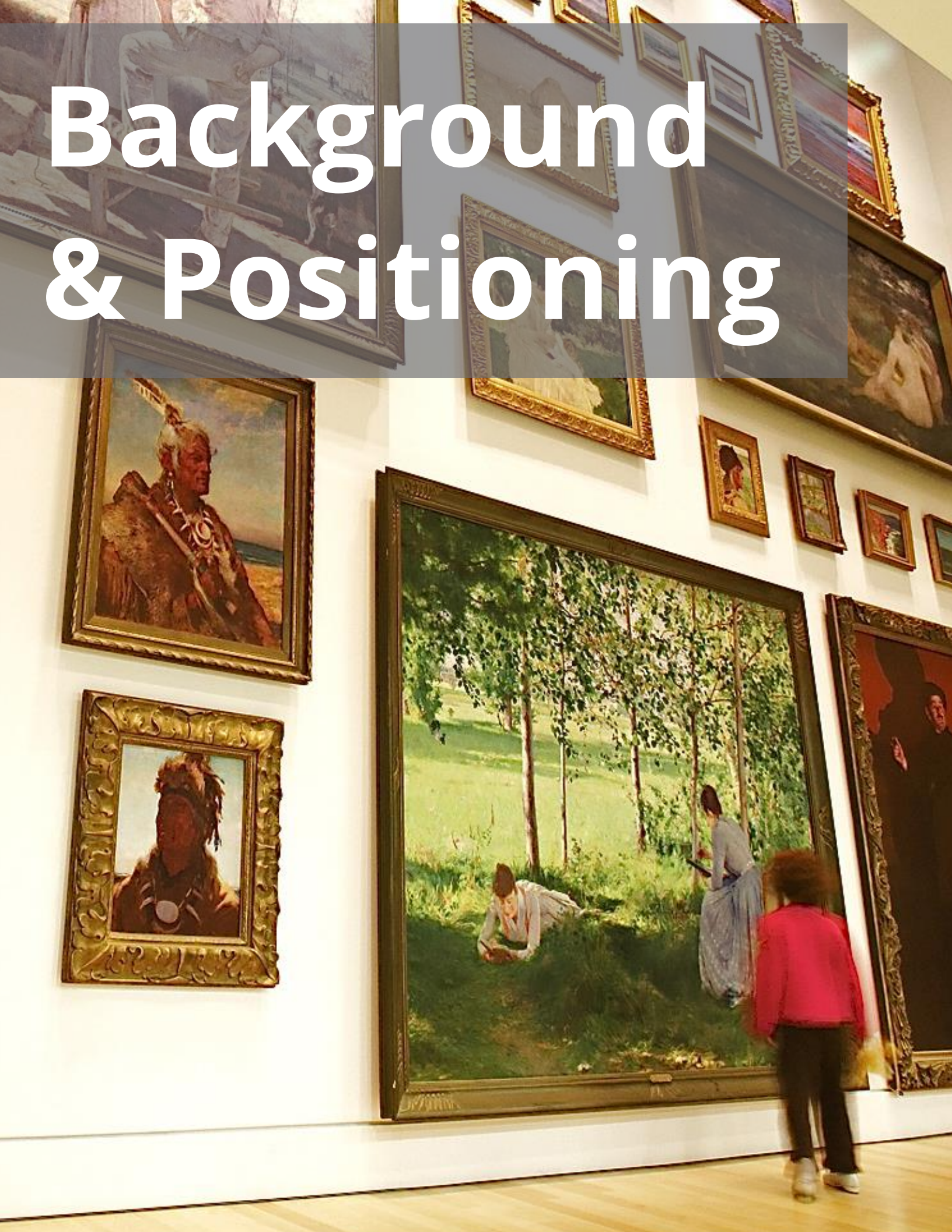
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Background & Positioning



A large, dark, three-dimensional sign spelling 'AGH' is mounted on a long, dark metal beam that extends diagonally across the upper portion of the image. The background is a clear, light blue sky. The lower-left corner of the image shows the dark silhouette of a building's roof and wall.

AGH

Background and Positioning

History

Founded in 1914, the Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) has been an anchor in the cultural ecosystem of the Southwestern Ontario region for generations. Its contributions have been invaluable, both to the cultural and economic vitality of the province.

Over the past century, the AGH has become an important resource and cultural hub within the city of Hamilton. It serves as a gathering place for artists, art enthusiasts, and the local community, fostering creativity, inspiration, and dialogue. Its contributions to the arts and culture of Ontario have been recognized and celebrated by both the local community and the broader arts community.

Background and Positioning

The Collection

The AGH has developed a diverse and important art collection of more than 10,500 works of art spanning 700 years of history and several continents. The collection encompasses a wide range of artistic styles and periods, including Canadian historical and contemporary art, international art, and Indigenous art. It features paintings, sculptures, prints, photographs, and other art forms, providing visitors with a comprehensive view of artistic expression. It is the third largest public art collection in the province, with only the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario holding larger collections.

Defining collections include:

1. **The Chedoke Collection of Inuit Art** – A collection of Inuit sculptures created at the Hamilton Sanatorium in the 1950s and 1960s during the tuberculosis crisis in Canada's North.
2. **Norval Morriseau Collection** – Consisting of 117 works, this significant collection represents the impact and legacy of Anishinaabek painter Norval Morriseau.
3. **The Burtynsky Collection** – A collection of 78 works showcasing climate change through the lens of internationally renowned Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky, representing one of the largest collections of Burtynsky photographs.
4. **Canadian Impressionism** – Representing the birth of Canadian Impressionism (led by Canada's first Impressionist painter, Hamilton-born William Blair Bruce).
5. **Tom Thomson and The Group of Seven** – A collection consisting of works by Tom Thomson, Lawren Harris, the Group of Seven, and others.
6. **Immigration** – Immigrant stories are represented in works by artists such as William Kurelek.
7. **Women Artists** – Great women artists from Emily Carr and the Beaver Hall Group to Kenojuak Ashevak and Shelley Niro.
8. **Canadian Realism and Abstraction** – Alex Colville, Hortense Gordon, Christopher Pratt, Jean-Paul Riopelle, and the Painters Eleven.
9. **Social Realism** – A collection of the American Ash Can School and British Camden Town Group, together with a Canadian social realist collection.
10. **European Art** – The Tanenbaum Collection of nineteenth-century European art.
11. **African and Oceanic collections** – A collection of art exploring the African diaspora.



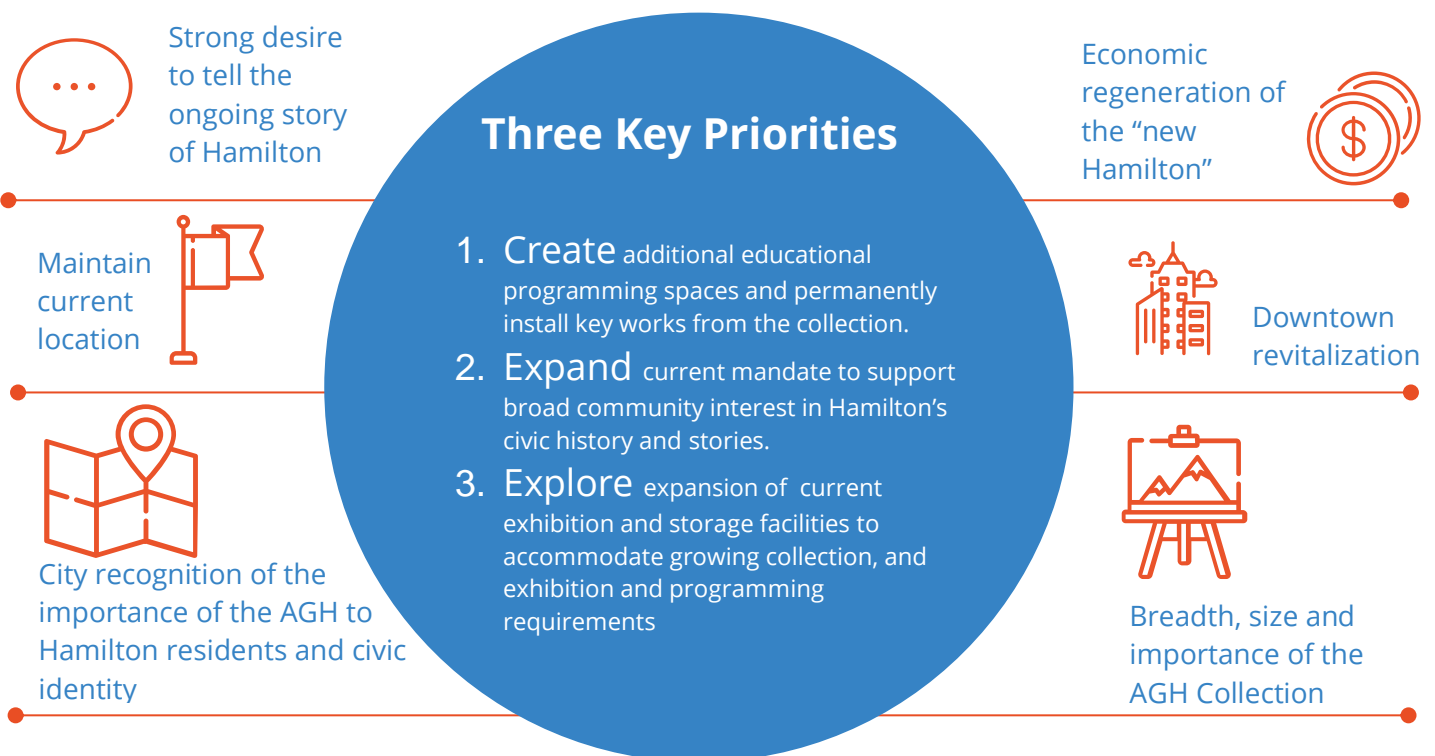
Background and Positioning **Strategy for Success**

To ensure that the Art Gallery of Hamilton remains relevant and vital, the Gallery engaged the services of renowned international consultants, Lord Cultural Resource Management in 2019, and conducted extensive community and stakeholder consultations to discuss the future of the Gallery.

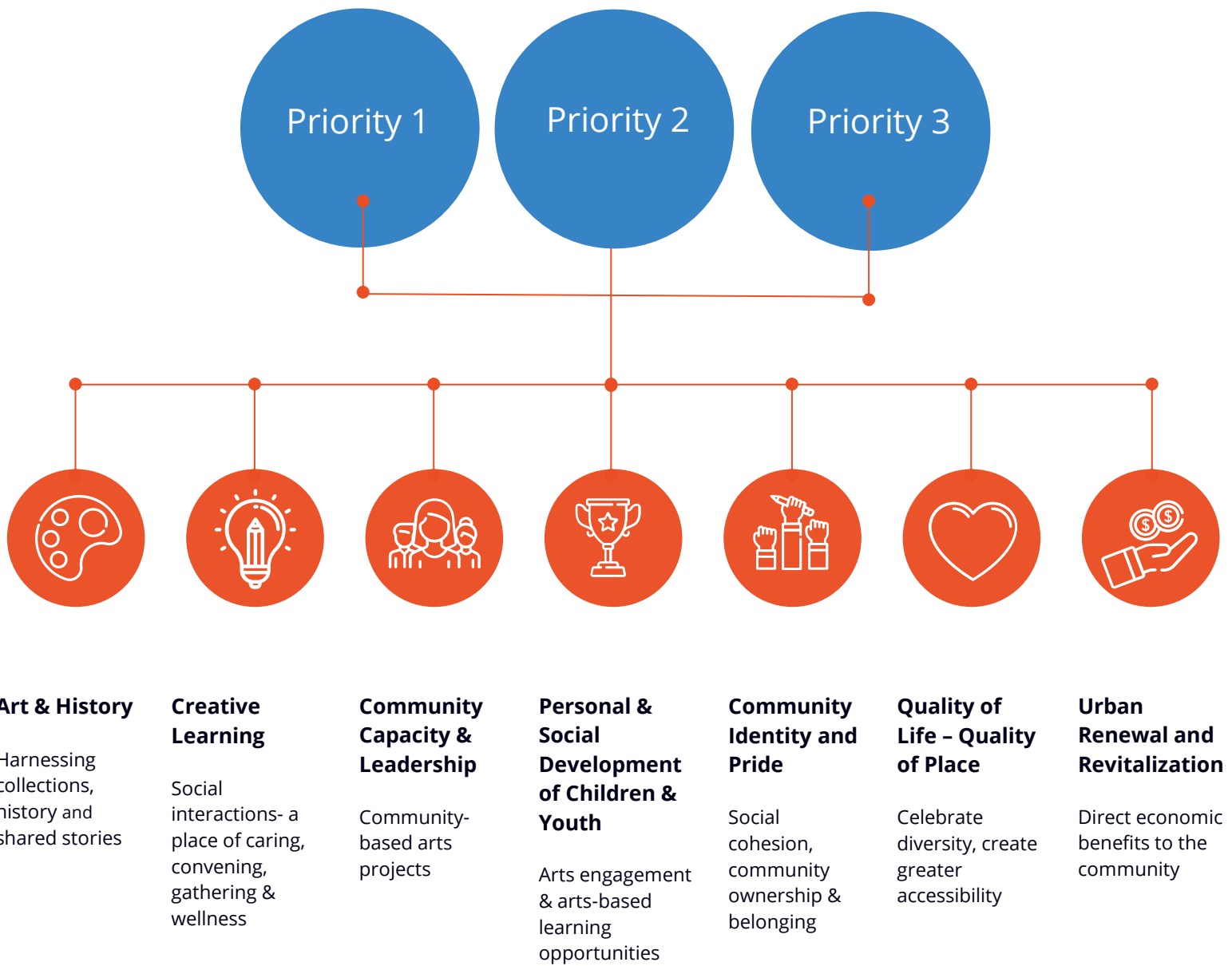
After engaging in extensive discussions and receiving support from the Gallery's diverse group of donors, as well as conducting a thorough analysis of the impact of social and economic factors, three key priorities have been identified. These priorities serve as the Strategy for Success.

Strategy for Success: Three Key Priorities

The social and economic drivers that informed the three key priorities are as follows:



Strategy for Success: Impact





Strategy for Success to Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan builds on the Strategy for Success and the three key priorities with the establishment of strategic goals and objectives that will guide Gallery operations from 2023 to 2027.

The goals and objectives of this plan were developed through stakeholder and community consultation which informed the Strategy for Success and further engagement with Gallery staff, leadership, and the Board.

Strategic Planning Process

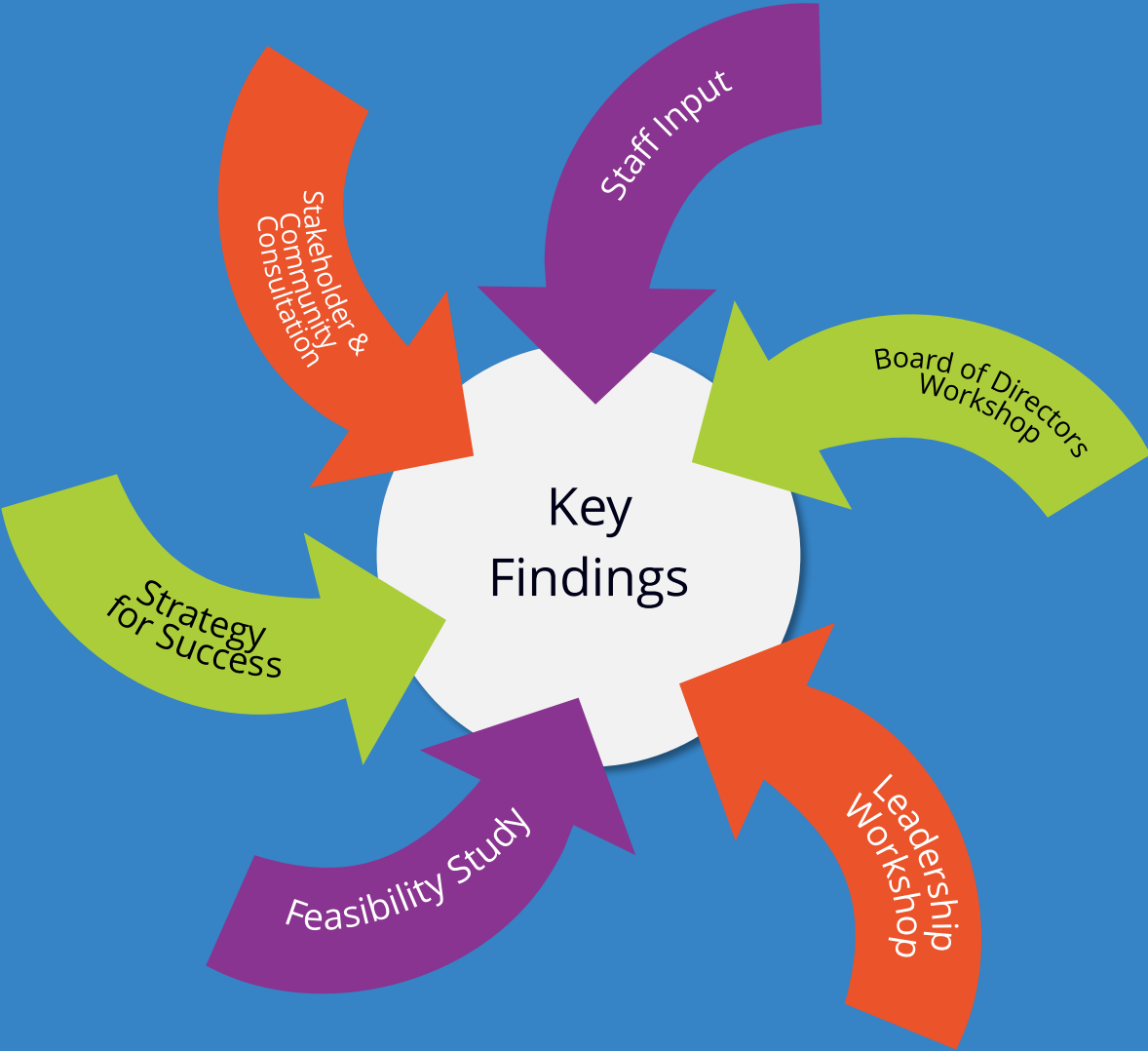
The strategic planning process began with stakeholder and community consultation which resulted in the Strategy for Success and the three key priorities. Building on these three key priorities, a series of strengths, challenges and opportunities (Key Findings) were then developed through consultation with AGH leadership, staff and the Board. From these key findings, seven key issues were identified and brought forward to the Board to develop a strategic direction – goals and objectives - to move the Gallery forward through to 2027. Additionally, the AGH’s vision statement was revised to align with the Gallery’s new strategic direction.





Strengths, Challenges & Opportunities

Through the inputs illustrated below, a series of strengths, challenges, and opportunities were developed collectively referred to as key findings. The list of strengths, challenges, and opportunities are outlined in the next section.



ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON

Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Key Findings: Strengths

1. The collection is one of the Gallery's greatest strengths with local, national and international stature. It is the third-largest public art collection in the province.
2. There is a strong connection to place – a connection to the city of Hamilton. Local relevance is an existing strength – the Gallery is entangled in the community.
3. Committed and engaged Staff and Volunteers, a mix of long-serving staff who bring institutional history and context to the table, and new staff who bring new ideas and viewpoints.

Key Findings: Challenges

4. There is generally low awareness of the Gallery.
5. Resources – both human and financial. Long-term sustainability and funding model continues to be a challenge.
6. The size of the community and the diversity is growing quickly – Hamilton is many different cities now. Figuring out who those different cities are and how to reach them and engage with them is a challenge.
7. The need to balance digital and in-person experiences. Physical connections and human interactions remain important.
8. The galleries and museums sector has not effectively educated the government as to their value. That extends to the general public. It is both a challenge and an opportunity to educate governments about museums.
9. The AGH needs to continue to learn and understand its role in responding to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Key Findings: Opportunities

10. The scope, breadth, history, and importance of the collection and programming is an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the growth, education, empowerment, discourse, and health of our communities.
11. The AGH has the opportunity as a significant urban landmark to meet the growing need for accessible and public spaces, ensuring safe, social, and stable community gathering spaces.
12. The increasing diversification of the city and region's economic ecosystem is an opportunity for the AGH to drive economic regeneration through tourism, employment, and downtown revitalization.
13. The city and region's significant history to the development and growth of Canada's industrial, social, and cultural landscape, and the lack of centralized location sharing Hamilton's metanarrative.
14. The AGH has significant potential for audience growth and engagement. The Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula (Economic Region) population has climbed to 1.5 million with growth driven by international migration and internal movement from within Ontario to the area. The city is increasingly diverse demographically and culturally. There is an unprecedented high-rise building boom in the downtown core, with 19 major building developments completed or under construction adding more than 3,482 residential units near the AGH, and 6 more in the planning approval stage.



Key Issues

The strengths, challenges, and opportunities – the key findings – were distilled into seven key issues. These issues were brought forward to the AGH Board where strategic goals were developed addressing each of the issues. The process of transitioning from Key Issues to Goals and Objectives is illustrated on the following page.

Key Issues/Challenges → Goals → Objectives



Key Issues - “The What” -
A distillation of the Key Findings

Goals - “The How”
Targets to address the challenges

Objectives - Achievable
outcomes for each goal

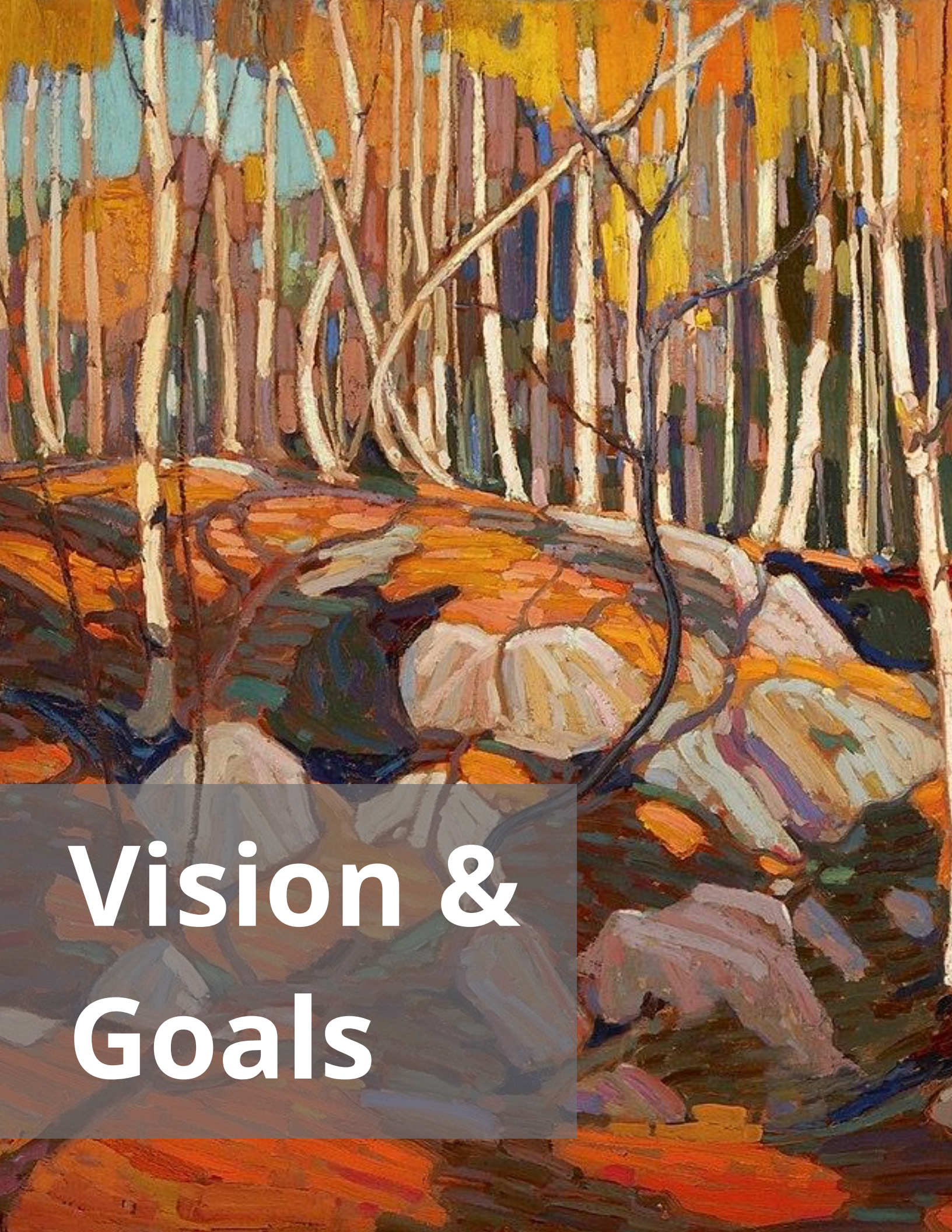
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The following are the Key Issues, the most salient of findings, distilled from the list of strengths, challenges, and opportunities outlined in the previous section. These Key Issues were brought forward to the AGH Board for review and discussion. A series of strategic goals were then developed addressing each of the Key Issues.

To continue to grow, develop, and address the strengths, challenges, and opportunities of the Gallery, the AGH must:

1. Demonstrate the national significance of the AGH as a leading Canadian art gallery.
2. Incorporate the significance of art and history in the evolution of the region with industry and entrepreneurship integral to the positioning of the AGH.
3. Deepen relationships in Hamilton's communities (Indigenous, Francophones, newcomers, and others).
4. Examine and understand our responsibilities regarding Truth and Reconciliation.
5. Address the lack of public awareness about the AGH.
6. Ensure long-term financial and operational sustainability.
7. Re-invigorate the private-public partnership with the City of Hamilton.



Vision & Goals

A new vision for the AGH has been created – one that aligns with the strategic direction of the Gallery. This new vision statement succinctly describes what the AGH wants to be, where it wants to go, and what it wants to achieve over a five-year planning horizon – 2023-2027.

AGH Vision Statement

**Inspire, connect
and strengthen
communities
through ART.**



An impressionistic painting of a forest scene. The foreground is dominated by thick, textured brushstrokes in shades of yellow, orange, and brown, suggesting a path or a clearing. The middle ground shows a dense forest of trees with dark green and blue foliage. The background is a mix of dark blues and purples, creating a sense of depth and atmosphere. The overall style is expressive and painterly.

Strategic Goals & Objectives

The following strategic goals, developed in concert with the AGH Board, address the key issues developed through extensive stakeholder and community consultation and input from Gallery staff, leadership, and the Board. Each of the goals is accompanied by objectives – initiatives required to achieve the goals.



Goal 1:

**Broaden the study of,
and access to, the collections.**

Objectives:

1. Refine and diversify the collection to better reflect the AGH communities.
2. Explore diverse and inclusive art histories by prioritizing multiple perspectives on the collections.
3. Increase physical and digital access to collections.
4. Prioritize the physical care and management of the collection.



Goal 2:

Deepen access to, and understanding of, art and history.

Objectives:

1. Develop thoughtful exhibitions, programs, and educational initiatives through a collaborative approach.
2. Support opportunities for all to participate, prioritizing understanding, connections, enjoyment, and well-being.
3. Explore multiple social and historical narratives.



Goal 3:

Build and deepen community relationships.

Objectives:

1. Build a strategy for broader outreach and engagement which prioritizes diverse community needs.
2. Prioritize diversity, inclusion, and accessibility by reviewing and challenging established practices.
3. Better reflect the diversity of the AGH communities in staff, board, and volunteers.



Goal 4:

Commit to the work of Truth and Reconciliation.

Objectives:

1. Implement the recommendations and Calls to Action for the arts, museums, and archives as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Report.
2. Build the foundation for long-term relationships with local Indigenous communities and partners.
3. Commit to ongoing learning, knowledge sharing, and advocacy of traditional Indigenous practices.



Goal 5:

**Broaden public awareness
through a strong identity and
narrative.**

Objectives:

1. Build and amplify a succinct and relatable identity for the Gallery's permanent collection.
2. Create a compelling brand strategy and platform.
3. Develop regional and national marketing campaigns.

Goal 6:

Develop long-term sustainability models.

Objectives:

1. Actively foster relationships with local and broader corporate, cultural and governmental stakeholders to increase awareness and support.
2. Foster a diverse, cohesive and agile staff.
3. Incorporate environmental sustainability into operations.
4. Continue to be accountable and transparent through prudent and strategic financial/operational management.

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Conservation Centre Parking

Goal 7:

Anchor the AGH as an integral partner in the revitalization of Hamilton's downtown core.

Objectives:

1. Deepen relationships with the City of Hamilton's downtown community.
2. Broaden the AGH's impact to support capacity and infrastructure within the downtown core through knowledge and resource sharing.
3. Work with the City and community to realize the recommendations of the AGH's Expansion Feasibility Study to expand and more fully showcase the AGH permanent collection and civic history, and reorient to Main Street.

AGH**Art Gallery
of Hamilton****123 King Street West
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
L8P 4S8
905-527-6610****www.artgalleryofhamilton.com****Image credits:**

Cover – Installation view of Norval Morriseau, *Thunderbird Evolution*, c. 1980, acrylic on canvas. Gift of Mr. Nicholas John Pustina, Mr. Robert Edward Zelinski, and Mr. Kenny Alwyn Whent, 1985. Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2022.

Page 1 - Installation view of The William Blair Bruce Memorial

Page 2 – Installation view of Michèle Pearson Clarke, *Quantum Choir*, Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2022. Photo by Yuula Benivolski.

Page 7 - Hortense Mattice Gordon, *Composition* (detail), c. 1948, oil on canvas. Gift of the Zonta Club of Hamilton II, 1951. Photo by Robert McNair, 2010.

Page 10 – Esmaa Mohamoud, *One of the Boys (White)*, 2019, satin ballgowns, sports jerseys, Courtesy of Georgia Scherman. © Esmaa Mohamoud

Page 13 – Tom Thomson, *The Birch Grove, Autumn* (detail), 1915-1916, oil on canvas. Gift of Roy G. Cole in memory of his parents, Matthew and Annie Bell Gilmore Cole, 1967. Photo by Mike Lalich, 2008.

Page 15 – Philippe Rousseau, *Le bocal d'apricots* (detail), 1887, oil on canvas. The Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Collection, 2002. Photo by Wavelength photography, 2004.

Page 16 – J.E.H. MacDonald, *Morning, Lake O'Hara from Wapta Trail* (detail), 1924, oil on board. Gift of Roy G. Cole, 1993. Photo by Mike Lalich, 2022.

Page 19 - Yulia Biriukova, *Prospector (Peter Swanson)* (detail), 1934, oil on canvas. Gift of Thoreau MacDonald, Esq., 1973. Photo by Mike Lalich, 2017.

Page 23 - Joanesie, *Testing One's Strength, Pulling Game (nusurautijuuq)*, c. 1958, steatite, The Chedoke Collection of Inuit Art, Anonymous Gift, 2016. Photo by Mike Lalich, 2016.

Page 27 - Kim Adams, *Bruegel-Bosch Bus*, 1966-ongoing, mixed media, 1960s Volkswagen, figurines. Acquired with the Assistance of the York Wilson Endowment Award at the Canada Council for the Arts, The Muriel Baker Fund, The Russell Nelson Eden Fund and The Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, 2001. Photo by Toni Kafkensheid, 2021.

Page 31 – Installation view *Breaking The Vault*, Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2021, Photo by Robert McNair.