

Managerial Commentary – Q3 2023

Introduction

Programming in our Q3 term focused in two areas, summer camps and outreach, with our gallery programming responding to connections to the earth and to self.

Summer camps were held in the Aurora Town Square program rooms adjacent to the library. The camps were almost fully subscribed. The community continues to look for effective solutions to pick up and drop off at the location, and parking solutions. The students achieved great success and joined us for a Culture Days exhibit of their work to show their results.

The gallery exhibit, *Letters to the Earth* was the launch of a multi-year, international project curated by Carmel Brennan. This exhibit continues to grow as Carmel asks artists to respond to the environmental crisis in various ways. We were proud to host the inaugural exhibit of this project with 44 artists from around the world. Vicky Talwar joined us for a solo exhibit *A Path to Totality*, a reflective and mesmerizing exhibit that encouraged peace and harmony with self. This exhibit shone in the temporary gallery at Town Hall which supported the pieces Vicky built for the show.

During this period, the Board of Directors and staff continued relationship building with Town Council and staff to come together in understanding on roles and responsibilities in Aurora Town Square. This culminated in a joint presentation to Town Council on September 25, 2023 to bring our 3 years of work to the community. We are proud to be able to build a joint mission, vision and core values for the project that will guide decision making as we collaborate to bring these wonderful services to the community. We have such optimism for the opportunities for the Aurora Cultural Centre in this next phase of our programming and services to the residents of Aurora and surrounding communities.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS



A SNAPSHOT OF AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE Q3 OPERATIONS **July - September 2023**

SPECIAL EVENTS

Canada Day with Town of Aurora

July 1, 2023

Community Zone at Lambert Willson Park

Summer camp staff were on-site at Lambert Willson Park within the Town of Aurora Canada Day festivities. They connected with the community about our summer camp programming while providing fun art activities for the kids, including face painting!

Aurora Farmers Market

July 1, 8 and 15th, 2023

Aurora Town Park

Our volunteer coordinator, Claire Acott, was representing the Aurora Cultural Centre in our local farmer's market. These community hubs are great opportunities to tell the public about our upcoming concerts, classes and volunteer opportunities in their own backyard.

Recognition Event – Ontario Trillium Foundation

July 5, 2023

Park Place Manor Retirement Residence

The Aurora Cultural Centre was honoured to recognize funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation through their Resilient Communities Fund to support livestream access. With these funds, the Centre was able to purchase of a mobile audio/video hub to livestream concerts programmed by the Centre. This has created wider access to live music and events to communities beyond the concert hall, including seniors' residences in our community who will receive links to concerts and events.

Market Brewing Bingo

July 6, 13, 20 and 27th, 2023

Market Brewing Company

We teamed up with Market Brewing Company every Thursday in July from 7-9 PM. Each bingo book bought contributes to support the Aurora Cultural Centre. Market Brewing Company collaborates with different organizations each month, offering to host the bingo events with the proceeds going to support that organization. There was fun all around for staff and bingo enthusiasts with the bonus of giving back to a local charities!

Gallery Visit with Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell

August 2, 2023

Temporary Gallery Location: Aurora Town Hall,
Second Floor

It was a wonderful day in the Gallery as we welcomed The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to view Letters to the Earth! Mayor Tom Mrakas welcomed Her Honour along with Carmel Brennan, exhibition curator, and members of our team, including Jane Taylor and Samantha Jones. This was followed by a curator's tour of the exhibit, and an opportunity for Her Honour to speak with several participating artists.



Pictured left to right: Samantha Jones (ACC Gallery Manager), Carmel Brennan, Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Mayor Tom Mrakas, Jane Taylor (ACC Communications Manager)

Seniors Active Living Fair

September 9, 2023

Aurora Seniors Centre

The Town of Aurora hosted a free Seniors' Information and Active Living Fair for adults aged 55+. This event provided seniors with the opportunity to gather information about health services and support in the community. The Aurora Cultural Centre was represented by Claire Acott, our Volunteer and FOH coordinator, with over 50 other exhibitors at the event. Attendance was estimated at 300 adults.

Aurora Multicultural Festival

September 23, 2023 Aurora Town Park

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/multicultural-festival-2023/>

As part of Culture Days 2023, we were back at the Aurora Multicultural Festival for another year of fun and immersive programming, for all ages! Visitors joined us in our booth in the Community Zone for a variety of drop-in activities led by a curated selection of arts professionals.

9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Bead Art Painting: Exploring Métis Floral Traditions - Artist Marissa Magneson introduced traditional Métis floral beadwork characteristics and then invited people to create their own painting where each dot represents a bead. Bead Art Painting is a contemporary Métis artform founded by Christi Belcourt in the 1990's. The style pulls from Traditional Métis Floral beadwork.

12:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Gold-Sheet Calligraphy and Contemporary Expression Workshop - Artist Elsa Hashemi familiarized people with 'Gold-sheet Calligraphy Writing' and how to use gold adhesives and gold sheets to create a beautifully designed calligraphy-painting art inspired by Iranian calligraphy (Khoshnevisi). She motivated them to create their own background on cardboard and design an abstract use of alphabets and poems in a contemporary way. Students created what they really feel about written words, literature and the alphabet; not technically, but emotionally.



Family partaking in the gold-sheet calligraphy workshop.

9:30 am – 2:30 pm

Artist-in-booth: Andrew Cheddie Sookrah -

A raw colourist with bright and confident brushwork, Sookrah's compositions express his adoration for the Canadian landscape and the natural, unified elements within. He has travelled as far North as the Arctic / Yukon, as West as Haida Gwaii, and East as Newfoundland. Too the booth, Sookrah brought creations from his latest Canadian backcountry excursions to Nahanni National Park Reserve and Gros Morne National Park and demonstrate on some works in-progress throughout the day.

Culture Days 2023

Camp Retrospective: A Journey Through Young Artistry

September 25 – October 14, 2023

Temporary Gallery Location: Aurora Town Hall, Third Floor

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/camp-retrospective/>

The *Camp Retrospective: A Journey Through Young Artistry* was a pop-up exhibition as part of Culture Days 2023! This exhibition featured artwork by the talented young artists of our 2023 Summer Camps. It was located on the 3rd floor of Aurora Town Hall (our temporary home) and ran from September 25 – October 14.

Aurora Town Square Outreach at Metrolinx GO

September 27, 2023

Aurora GO Transit Station

In partnership with Aurora Town Square's (ATS) marketing team, communications manager Jane Taylor provided outreach to the morning commuters about the ACC in town square and our current programming. With giveaways and event flyers, we informed commuters that we have quality events and activities right at their doorstep.

Newcomer Community Event

September 28, 2023

Dr. G. W. Williams Secondary School

Our communications and education staff took part in a community event based at Dr. G. W. Williams Secondary School. The Aurora Cultural Centre was one of several community organizations providing outreach and programming information on free services and resources for newcomer families looking for support, strengthening our community together.

PERFORMING ARTS EVENTS

The 2023-24 Performing Arts Season begins in October; there were no live performances scheduled in July - September.

GALLERY PROGRAM

In-person gallery visits are in the temporary gallery space on 2nd floor of Aurora Town Hall. Gallery hours are now Monday - Saturday from 8:30am-4:30pm during exhibitions. Exhibitions are also accessible through our online gallery and a virtual 3D map.

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/gallery-exhibitions/>

Letters to the Earth: Between Despair and Hope

Group exhibition curated by Carmel Brennan

In person: June 3 – August 23, 2023

Virtual: June 3 – September 8

Temporary Gallery Location: Aurora Town Hall, Second Floor
<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/letters-to-the-earth/>

Letters to the Earth: Between Despair and Hope was a conversation about the environmental crisis happening around the world and affecting Canadians directly. Prompted by curator Carmel Brennan, participating artists wrote a “letter to the earth” as part of their commitment to this exhibition; one exhibition of several occurring across Canada and abroad throughout 2023-2024.

“Letters to the Earth was a campaign begun in 2019 in the UK with a book of that title, in response to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Scotland. The campaign called for a response to the awareness of climate change and an ecological emergency. “Letters to the Earth”, and a phrase spoken by Australian artist, Janet Laurence about being “between despair and hope’, struck me as significant. Letters to the Earth is an ongoing campaign. It is spreading around the world. To take a quote from the book of the same name, ‘we need to rethink and re-imagine what was previously deemed impossible. The stakes couldn’t be greater the time for action is now.’ I am on board with this action: Letters to the Earth – Between Despair and Hope.”

– Carmel Brennan, Curator of Letters to the Earth: Between Despair and Hope

Mid-Exhibition Harvest

July 19 at 7pm

Temporary Gallery Location: Aurora Town Hall, Second Floor

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/letters-to-the-earth-harvest/>

Visitors came to the gallery to help harvest the produce grown in Phil Fung’s vertical garden; an installation exhibited as part of our summer art exhibition *Letters to the Earth: Between Despair and Hope* (June 3 – August 23). Phil Fung’s method of vertical gardening includes a combination of aquaponics, hydroponics, and natural soil production. Grown completely indoors, it uses natural solutions to turn waste into useful output that can produce fresh vegetables all year round. In this informative event, Phil Fung led a presentation about his work, followed by an interactive harvest activity.

A Path to Totality

Solo Exhibition by Vicky Talwar

Opening Reception: September 14, 2023 at 7pm

In person: September 9 – November 18, 2023

Online: September 11 – December 1, 2023

Temporary Gallery Location: Aurora Town Hall, Second Floor

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/a-path-to-totality/>



Transcendence (2023). Vicky Talwar. Acrylic and mixed media on canvas. 30 x 70 in (triptych).

A Path to Totality brings together the multi-media manifestations of Talwar's research to form an immersive space for meditation and self-reflection, while encouraging others to contemplate on their own journey through life.

Talwar's paintings are recognizable by their vibrant, evocative colours and dream-like, tactile surfaces. Layers of translucent media atop each canvas brings forth an illusory visual effect, with painted mala, abstract shapes, flowers, and other elements of nature dancing to the surface. Himalayan pink salt is utilized in the process for textural effects and symbolic meanings. Bordering somewhere between imagination and reality, works are unplanned and painted directly from the artist's intuition. Accompanying Talwar's paintings are three immersive installations, which each use Himalayan pink salt rocks as one of their main mediums. Mandalas, depicted in *Opening into Transcendence*, and *A Return to Wholeness*, are an essential symbol in Talwar's practice. The bright colours of the salt within each mandala obtain their hue from dyes within her paintings.

Vicky Talwar is an interdisciplinary artist who draws upon her personal experience as a Hindu Canadian to produce painting, mixed media, performance, and installation artworks. Talwar holds a BFA and MFA in Art, Media, & design from the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCADU), as well as a Bachelor of Education from York University. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally, including Toronto, Canmore, Los Angeles, New York, the United

Kingdom, and more. In completing MFA at OCADU, Talwar exhibited her solo thesis exhibition, *Inward Identities*, at Latcham Arts Centre. Recently, she exhibited her solo exhibition, *Enlightened Mind* at Station Gallery. She has also participated in multiple group and solo exhibitions, including Hashtag Gallery (Toronto), Elevation Gallery (Canmore, AB), and The Elaine Fleck Gallery (Toronto). In 2017, she was awarded the Juror's Award for the Annual Juried Exhibition by Latcham Art Centre. Her work has been acquired in a permanent collection for international display by the Global Affairs Canada Visual Art Collection.

Gallery Art Bytes

Art Bytes are an ongoing online series that accompanies our exhibitions and give viewers an opportunity to deepen their understanding about the art and artists. Art Bytes are available for viewing through our YouTube channel during and after gallery exhibitions. Art Bytes can be found here: [Gallery Art Bytes link](#)

Art Byte Topic	Related Exhibition	Date Posted
Mid-Exhibition Harvest	Letters to the Earth: Between Despair and Hope	September 2, 2023
Installation Part 1	A Path to Totality	September 15, 2023
Installation Part 2	A Path to Totality	September 19, 2023
Opening Reception	A Path to Totality	September 19, 2023

EDUCATION PROGRAM

Summer Art Camps

The summer camps achieved impressive success, with an enrollment rate of 93.5%, accommodating 355 out of 380 available registrations. Our classrooms could accommodate 20 campers per program week. The camps were held at the Aurora Public Library and offered diverse programs tailored to both 4-6 and 7-12-year-olds, including both half-day and full-day options. The summer camps were enriched by the participation of five guest artists who contributed their expertise to the experience.

- Vicky Talwar, exhibiting gallery artist practiced creating mandalas.
- Andrew Cheddie Sookrah, a returning artist, featured Canadian landscape artworks.
- Marissa Magneson, another returning artist focused on bead painting inspired by Cree-Metis beading traditions.
- Mohammad Tabesh, a Harbourfront Centre ceramist resident conducted a workshop during the "Sculpt It!" week. Raha Fard, an award winning Media artist worked on the theme of "Future Artists" during the last week.

All played integral roles in enhancing the camp experience for participants. The campers also made a 4-minute video at the end of the camp. There was an exhibition called *Camp Retrospective: A Journey Through Young Artistry*, featuring artwork by our summer camp little artists as part of our 2023 Culture Days. Approximately 21 participants collaborated with our Education and Gallery teams to install their artwork in the Town Hall pop-up gallery on the 3rd floor. This exhibit was open from September 25 - October 14th and concluded with a closing reception as a celebration of our young artists' creative journeys.

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/summer-camps/>

Fall Term Education Classes

The fall term education programs run from September into mid-December, including workshops and PA Day programs. For the classes that started in September, we offered seven programs for adults and four programs for youth (4 – 15 years). Our commitment to providing a vibrant and inclusive learning environment was evident in the range of classes offered and the positive feedback received from participants. Below is a listing of those programs and their target age group. To see current educational offerings please visit: <https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/adult-classes/> or <https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/childrens-classes/>

Class/Workshop	Dates	Adult/Youth
PA Day	September 22	4 - 12
Wood Carving	September 25 – November 6	16+
Expand Your Horizons in Acrylics Level 2	September 26 – November 14	16+
Start Painting Now with Acrylics	September 26 – November 14	16+
Exploring Watercolours (Intermediate/ Advanced)	September 27 – November 15	16+
Ukulele for Beginners	September 27 – November 15	16+
Beginning Guitar	September 27 – November 15	16+
Watercolours: Basics and Beyond	September 28 – November 16	16+
[After School] Comic Drawing	September 25 – November 20	7 - 10
Around the World with Art	September 30 – November 25	7 - 10
Famous Artists & Their Styles	September 30 – November 25	11 - 15

Kaleidoscope in the Schools (KITS)

Our KITS 2023-2024 program was launched to the schools at the beginning of July 2023. The KITS 2023-2024 season will be available to 52 elementary schools including all Aurora schools, low-capacity schools across York Region, and the reserve school on Georgina Island. Each production has its own voice and vision for performing arts excellence with young audiences within the overall programming ethos of voices from Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, with French and English offerings across several performing arts disciplines. The production tour begins in November 2023 with Carnival of Animals. School principals make their show selections through our website. You can view the landing page for KITS programming and school booking information for 2023-2024 here: <https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/kaleidoscope-in-the-schools/>

KITS 2023-24 Season Productions

Artists / Production Company	Production Title	Language	Arts Discipline	Theme/Voice
Trevor Copp of Tottering Biped Theatre	Carnival of Animals/ Le Carnaval des Animaux	E/F	Theatre/Mime with Music	Classical music/storytelling
Little Pear Garden Dance	Tales of Goddesses and a Painter	E	Dance Theatre	Asian Heritage
Carousel Players	Lig & Bittle	E	Theatre	Storytelling
Chris McKoohl	Earth, Seas and Air	E	Music	Armenian
Lua Sheyenne Dance Company	Yassama and the Beaded Calabash	E/F	Dance Theatre	African Storytelling
Qiu Xia He and Andre Thibault	China Speaks Your Language/ JouTou	E/F	Music	Asian Heritage
Mimi O'Bonsawin	(title TBD)	E/F	Music	Indigenous
Kesha Christie	Talkin' Tales	E	Theatre	Black History

ACTIVITY STATS YTD Q3 2023

	2023	Q1	Q2	Q3
1	Educational Programs	36	40	14
2	Volunteer hours donated	836	558	551
3	Art Exhibitions	2	3	2
4	Art Bytes	4	4	4
5	Art Bytes Online Views	345	516	200
6	Artists Exhibited	32	65	64
7	Virtual Gallery Views	6, 754	5, 570	3, 249
8	Performing Arts Events	9	7	0
9	Free Community Events	2	2	1
10	Outreach Events	2	3	12
11	Public Meeting	0	2	1
12	Visitors	12, 660	10, 393	7129

Organizational Information

CENTRE HOURS

Business Hours

In-person temporarily closed; available by phone and webchat

Staff Office Hours

Monday to Friday

8:30 AM – 4:30 PM plus in-person programming needs

Gallery Hours	In person Monday – Saturday 8:30am – 4:30pm
	Online 24/7
Events	As programmed
Classes	In-person in Q3

AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE STAFF (as of September 30, 2023)

Executive Director	Suzanne Haines
Program & Administrative Assistant	Jordana Polito
Finance Associate	Melanie Ryan
Communications Manager	Jane Taylor
Audience & Digital Services Supervisor	Matthew Knox
Marketing Assistant	Shikha Chowhan
Development Officer	Glenn Coulson
Gallery Manager	Samantha Jones
Gallery Assistant	Adora Lau
Education & Outreach Manager	Aitak Sorahitalab
Education Coordinator	Jessica Falcioni
Performing Arts Programmer	Derek Andrews
Production Coordinator	Robert Hess
Volunteer & Front of House Coordinator	Claire Acott
Artistic Outreach Coordinator	Asleysha Ramasamy (to July)
Facility Supervisor (part time)	Laura Beaton, Nazia Munar
Administrative Assistant (on leave)	Jennifer Marrocco

BOARD OF DIRECTORS – Q3 at end of September 2023

EXECUTIVE

President	John De Faveri
Vice President	Damien Chan
Treasurer	Michelle Lockie
Secretary	Parisa Sabet

DIRECTORS

Edlene Antonio
Mandana Gholami Mobarakabadi
Sharon Kelly
Alician Lauzon
Morry Patoka
Anita Townsend
Councillor Harold Kim* Councillor
Michael Thompson*

**Ex officio Town of Aurora Directors. Ex-officio Directors have the full rights & responsibilities of Directors of a corporation under the Ontario Corporations Act.*

COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee
Finance & Audit Committee
Development Committee
Governance & Nominating Committee
Outreach Committee
Facility Task Force

MEETINGS

The Board of Directors meet approximately 10 times per year and committees meet monthly as required.

COMPLIANCE & REPORTING CONTROLS

The Centre has strict compliance, oversight, and reporting procedures in place; third party bookkeeping, a Finance & Audit Committee, several specialized Board committees, the day-to-day oversight of the Executive Director and the monthly review by the Board of Directors who each have personal and collective fiduciary responsibilities related to the governance and financial health of the Centre.

MONTHLY

Financial

- Third Party bookkeeper processes bi-weekly AP/AR and payroll, reconciles financial activity each month and creates financial statements that are reviewed by Treasurer, Finance & Audit Committee and Executive Director (ED).
- Statement of Account for Current Source Deductions (and payment) made to CRA.

Operational

- ED creates monthly activity report and presents to Board of Directors; once approved this is posted to the public website.

QUARTERLY

Financial

- Accountant creates GAAP quarterly financial report based on bookkeeper's financial statements. This is reviewed by the Treasurer and Finance & Audit Committee and presented to the Board. Opportunity for questions from Directors. Once approved, ED provides this report to the Director, Community Services at the Town of Aurora as per our Agreement (and to the Mayor, Town Council, and Town CAO as a courtesy).

Operational

- ED creates a Managerial Commentary reporting on activities during the quarter in question.
- This is presented to the Board. Once approved, ED provides this report along with the Quarterly financial Report to the Director of Community Services (and Mayor, Council, and CAO). This report is posted on public website.

Oversight

- ED provides a compliance statement to the Board stating that all payments have been made and all areas of the Centre's compliance responsibilities have been met.

ANNUALLY

Town of Aurora

- As per Agreement

Canada Revenue Agency (Federal Government)

- Registered Charity Information Return
- Ontario Corporations Information Act Annual Return

Imagine Canada

- Annual report on compliance of the Standards identified by IC as a requirement of our accreditation.

- Board reviews Compliance report and IC comments

Current Funders (this is variable)

Young Canada Works via Canadian Heritage, (Federal Government)

Canada Summer Jobs via (Federal Government)

Canadian Heritage (Federal Government)

Ontario Arts Council

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Financial Review

Third Party Audit undertaken annually.

Financial standing publicly posted annually on the websites of the CRA, Imagine Canada, and our website.

ONGOING COMPLIANCE

- Town of Aurora
- Imagine Canada
- Banks
- Insurance
- Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL)
- Service Ontario (Provincial Government)
- Canadian Code of Practice for Consumer Protection in Electronic Commerce
- SOCAN/Entandem

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Suzanne Haines', followed by a horizontal line.

Suzanne Haines, Executive Director