

# AGNES ETHERINGTON ART CENTRE AT QUEEN'S

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2019–2024

### ABOUT AGNES

Agnes Etherington Art Centre is a globally networked art museum holding significant collections. Situated in the heart of Queen's University's historic campus, it has been a beacon for display, study, creation, innovation and exchange in the visual and media arts since 1957. Programs are staged across eight beautiful galleries, the Biéler Studio and other spaces, including the gracious period rooms of the historic Etherington House. Among its holdings of contemporary and historical art, with concentrations in Canadian, Indigenous, African and European art, Agnes is distinguished by the renowned Bader Collection of European Art, including four paintings by Rembrandt van Rijn.

### EMBRACING TRANSFORMATION

The visionary support of key philanthropists and significant public support has enabled Agnes Etherington Art Centre to provide meaningful contributions to our specialist and wider public communities. Thanks to a major financial commitment from a private source for improvement to Agnes infrastructure, Agnes's impact on its communities is poised to reach a new level. A new facility worthy of the Agnes collections will extend our contributions to our communities and extend the global reach and presence of our programs. This will achieve an unprecedented impact among Canadian university art museums through the powerful synergies of research, learning, deep aesthetic appreciation and social benefit.

### MANDATE

Agnes Etherington Art Centre is a research-intensive professional art museum that proudly serves a dual mandate as an active educational resource at Queen's University and as a public gallery for the Kingston community and beyond. By researching, collecting and preserving works of art, and through exhibiting and interpreting visual culture spanning the great artistic traditions of the past and the innovations of the present, Agnes creates opportunities for participation and exchange within and across communities. In doing so, we aim to make leading contributions in the field of visual and media art and to nurture the dignity and well-being of all peoples.

### MISSION

- To steward the physical integrity—and imaginatively extend the intellectual and cultural value—of significant art collections.
- To showcase high artistic achievement in a considered program that reflects the multiple contexts of our immediate and global locales, including the research and learning environment

of Queen's University and our presence on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek.

- To provide welcoming access to programs and collections for diverse audiences, from academic and public communities alike, to experience the transformative power of art.
- Through our work with art and artists, to deepen knowledge of and relationship with Indigenous peoples and racialized persons, and to advance social justice and the work of decolonization.

## VALUES

- Our work is driven by the belief that encounters with original works of art contribute to understanding the world, ourselves and others.
- We strive for excellence in all we do, and work creatively to nurture opportunities for expression and exchange of cultural perspectives.
- We work to protect, express and enhance the artistic integrity of the artists with whom we work and of the artworks in our care.
- We cultivate a stimulating, healthy, equitable and caring environment, in which staff, volunteers, program contributors and participants are valued and supported in meeting their potential.

## GOALS

### 1. **Develop expanded physical infrastructure**

We will create outstanding sustainable new spaces for art and its enjoyment and study, through enhanced and expanded physical facilities.

#### ACTIONS

Articulate a powerful program vision for the creation of a new Agnes building.

- a. Plan and implement physical plant renewal to create a welcoming, distinctive world-class facility with enhanced spaces for exhibitions, collections storage and care, art education programs, and work-flow efficiencies, and to fully meet accessibility standards.
- b. Solicit a range of resources to support the new building.
- c. Build an expanded sustaining endowment to support operating costs and programs.

### 2. **Sustain program excellence**

We will uphold the highest standards of artistic merit, relevance and progressive innovation in our research, exhibitions and interpretive programs.

#### ACTIONS

- a. Grow support for specialist research and network-building.
- b. Refine creative project development processes, and administrative and communications frameworks.

- c. Develop interdisciplinary collaborations that offer inventive opportunities for artists and new forms of learning and participation for our publics.
- d. Explore artistic research residencies and creative partnerships (with both art-focused and non-art partners) that extend engagement.
- e. Introduce new tools for shaping, assessing and tracking program impacts and achievements in the academic and wider contexts.

### **3. Build creative community**

We aim to build community through art as an active locus of learning, exchange and diverse cultural expression, with particular attention to advancing social justice and creating space for decolonization through collaborations with Indigenous and racialized peoples.

#### **ACTIONS**

- a. Shape programs to deepen our local, national and international affiliations and create a sense of belonging that extends beyond our physical boundaries.
- b. Build the content and profile of regular program features that showcase and strengthen regional artists.
- c. Take steps to demonstrate our commitment to decolonization in our work with Indigenous and racialized artists: (i) Seek resources to hire an Indigenous curator and/or researcher to inform our work with collections, exhibitions and programs. (ii) Continue outreach conversations with Indigenous communities in our region to develop meaningful access and participation. (iii) Create opportunities for expanding the networks of Indigenous and racialized visual and media artists through touring exhibitions.
- d. Deepen relationships with academic and non-academic units at Queen's and cultivate meaningful relationships with students and graduates through continued program development.
- e. Revitalize our elementary-school programs through updated recruitment and volunteer training.
- f. Complement these initiatives by building capacity for touring and exchange of artistic projects through strategic national and international partnerships.

### **4. Refine and mobilize collections**

We will continue to improve stewardship and renewal of, and access to, our superb art collections.

#### **ACTIONS**

- a. Build on the 2019 Acquisition Policy to refine our work with collections through astute acquisitions and selective deaccessions.
- b. Increase access to collections online and in-gallery through new digital tools and website upgrades.
- c. Deepen collection research and documentation.
- d. Expand and improve storage conditions, as resources permit.

- e. Seek resources to ensure the collection reflects and speaks to the cultural diversity of Canada.
- f. Develop ethical policies to address use and handling of culturally-sensitive materials, prioritizing Indigenous heritage materials.

## **5. Extend digital capacity**

Develop and integrate updated and extended digital platforms to create inviting, accessible avenues of participation, to inform our programs and to achieve functional efficiencies.

- a. Complete Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan for Digital Agnes.
- b. Implement digital renewal through an updated website with enriched content, improved navigation and searchability, and mobile-first formats.
- c. Create digital program platforms for exhibitions, residencies and collaborations.
- d. Develop and deploy in-gallery program tools to improve capacity, access, profile, safety and security.
- e. Drawing on new technologies, update administrative and communication processes, improve data analysis, and continue to implement staff development and cross-training.

## **6. Secure financial well-being**

While maintaining the healthy balance of revenue streams that has sustained the gallery through its history, we will secure significant new financial resources.

### **ACTIONS**

- a. Continue to grow revenue sources for operational funding, with focus on identified areas of need in: art conservation, Indigenous art, Canadian Historical art, academic and community outreach, and wellness programs.
- b. Target the creation and enhancement of endowed funds for sustainable revenue streams.

## **THE PLANNING PROCESS AND REVIEW CYCLE**

A Strategic Plan Steering Committee, comprising members of Agnes’s Advisory Board, spearheaded development of The Strategic Plan 2019–2024. This body gathered input from diverse groups of stakeholders including gallery members, donors, volunteers, peer galleries, staff, students, diverse community groups and academic partners. Feedback was collected through an anonymous online survey, in-person interviews, staff consultation, and a facilitated invitational forum. In addition to soliciting input from specific groups and individuals, the online survey was available to the general public through Agnes’s website and social media streams.

The Director will develop a work plan in the form of an Actions and Indicators Framework document to guide their pursuit of Strategic Plan goals.

At year-end, normally in April, a committee of Advisory Board champions will assess progress in achieving the goals of the Strategic Plan and identify changing environmental realities. They may recommend Plan adjustments to the Director at that time.