

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Monday, 15 September

## **KWAG Exhibition Reveals How Vehicles Drive Human Connection**

Kitchener, ON. — The Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (KWAG) invites visitors to the opening celebration of [\*Auto-Biography: Vehicles of identity, community, and globalization\*](#) on Friday, 19 September 2025, running until 4 January 2026.

[\*Auto-Biography: Vehicles of identity, community, and globalization\*](#) features Greg Curnoe, Jason Lujan, Lauren Fournier, Melanie Smith, Yan Wen Chang, and objects from the Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum.

Curated by Darryn Doull, the exhibition is set in relation to contemporary car culture and commuter life along the corridor with the busiest stretch of highway in North America. From Waterloo Region's own Soap Box Derby to Amazon rubber plantations, *Auto-Biography* looks to the road as a connective infrastructure that grounds so much of modern life.

"These artists examine aspects of self, community, and the complex relationships between animal, machine, and human. Historical objects create compelling regional touchstones—from the beloved Kitchener-Waterloo Soap Box Derby of the 1950s to

our own institutional history, housed in a converted bicycle shed that once stood beside KCI. Together, they reveal how vehicles become woven into our collective memory and individual identity.” – Darryn Doull, Curator: Exhibitions and Programs.

Visitors will be able to view UK filmmaker Melanie Smith’s *Fordlandia* (2014), based on the rubber industry project Henry Ford spearheaded on the River Tapajos in the Brazilian part of the Amazon in the 1920s. Primarily due to the resistance of nature, the project ultimately failed and was abandoned approximately 20 years later. The film is a voyage of (de)colonization whereby the drifts and detours of modernity in uncertain places are highlighted, turning away from whatever their historical imaginaries were.

Jason Lujan’s *Medicine Seller* was the central figure of the artist’s 2025 exhibition, *Reconstructing Something Already There*, at MKG127 (Toronto). Lujan’s artwork is both a travelling merchant and mendicant (a figure of both medicinal and spiritual guidance). By wearing the artist’s own clothes and material goods, and “riding” a very particular model of scooter associated with food delivery workers outside of the artist’s downtown Toronto studio, *The Medicine Seller* is a parallel imagination of identity, fractured along traditional and modern demands, tools, and transports.

“The bicycle has been a central tool and source for many artists over the years, notably Greg Curnoe whose work is also displayed in this space. Further, cycling is receiving much more attention and participation in Waterloo Region. After the completion of the downtown cycling grid, city officials noted a 164 percent increase in ridership in 2023<sup>1</sup>.”

Touching upon the region’s cycling infrastructure, the exhibition features artist and activist Greg Curnoe’s paintings and sculptures of bicycles: “It is hard to appreciate the influence and importance of Curnoe’s work and legacy to generations of artists in London, Ontario, and beyond.” Curnoe’s life was tragically cut short on 14 November 1992. On a regular outing with the London Centennial Wheelers, riding his favourite yellow Mariposa bike, Curnoe was killed when he was hit from behind by a pick-up truck.

Finally, Yan Wen Chang’s work can be found throughout the exhibition. Her paintings stem from the experience of migrating to Canada, alone at the age of 17, and the creation of her ever-changing self-portrait. In her images, Chang is frequently caught in the reflection of the rear-view mirror of cars, along for the ride but without the agency of being the driver. The Gallery’s free exhibition programming features an artist talk with Guelph-based Chang, providing visitors with a deeper understanding of the themes and concepts in her work (more info below). Chang is featured in CBC Art’s most recent episode of *In Process*, exploring the journey of her solo exhibition currently at Susan Hobbs Gallery in Toronto (September 2025).

In a perfect complement to the exhibition’s exploration of transportation and community, KWAG is offering a distinctive cycling tour that combines art appreciation

with the region's gold-standard bike infrastructure. This guided cultural adventure visits four exceptional galleries in the region, including The Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Grebel Gallery, and the University of Waterloo Art Gallery, in one memorable day, supported by CycleWR.

### **Related Programming:**

#### [Opening Celebration with Artists and Special Guest DJ Charlie Star](#)

Friday, 19 September

6:00 - 7:00 p.m. Members-only preview

7:00 - 10:00 p.m.

#### [Galleries and Gears](#)

Saturday, 4 October, 11:00 am - 3:00 p.m. | Free

Departure/return: Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery

### **Artist Talk with Yan Wen Chang**

Thursday, 9 October, 7:00 p.m. | Free

We invite you to join us for an Artist Talk by Yan Wen Chang. Chang is one of the featured artists in the group exhibition [Auto-Biography: Vehicles of identity, community, and globalization](#). This exhibition considers a wide range of social, economic, and intercultural distillations of identity in a globalized society. The vehicle is held as a common link between each artist, though it is used in very different ways. In this talk, Chang will situate her work within her larger artistic practice and will share personal links and connections that intersect with these overarching themes.

### **About Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery**

As Waterloo Region's leading public art gallery, the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (KWAG) connects people and ideas through art. Its nationally acclaimed exhibitions and programs welcome all to be inspired and challenged through a deepened understanding of ourselves, our cultures, and our communities. For the benefit of current and future generations, the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery collects, preserves, researches, interprets, and exhibits the visual arts. It offers dynamic public programs that inspire creativity and an appreciation of the visual arts in the Region and beyond. Established in 1956 and incorporated in 1968, KWAG is a non-profit organization open to the public and administered in the public trust. Admission is free.

KWAG respectfully acknowledges that we are located in Block 2 on the Haldimand Tract: land promised to Six Nations, which includes ten kilometers on each side of the Grand River. This is the traditional home of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee Peoples, whose resilience we honor by offering this Gallery as a space to reflect and learn from one another.

We are committed to reconciliation and ensuring that our Gallery's programs and Permanent Collection demonstrate more diverse, culturally relevant Canadian art and artists.

Accessibility: KWAG is an accessible venue. [Visit kwag.ca/accessibility](https://www.kwag.ca/accessibility) for more information.

## Visit Us

Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, 101 Queen Street North, Kitchener, ON N2H 6P7  
[www.kwag.ca](https://www.kwag.ca)

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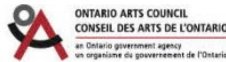


Image credits and citations:

1. (left) Jason Lujan, *The Medicine Seller*, 2024/25. Mixed media, dimensions variable. Courtesy of MKG127 and the Artist.

2. (right) Yan Wen Chang, *Resolution Blue* (detail), 2022. Oil on canvas, 106.68 x 127 cm. Image by LF Documentation. Work courtesy of Susan Hobbs Gallery.

1. City of Kitchener. (2025, 1 September). *Bike Infrastructure*. Retrieved from Kitchener.ca: <https://www.kitchener.ca/en/roads-and-cycling/bike-infrastructure.aspx>