

KITCHENER-WATERLOO  
ART GALLERY

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2022-2024



# FOREWORD

In the spring of 2021, KWAG launched a planning process to guide our work for the next three years. This new Strategic Plan continues the trajectory of the previous one, expanding the Gallery's goal to be a centre for the intersection of contemporary art and civic life. It builds on our past and what we have learned and unlearned. As an art museum, we stand proudly on the shoulders of our founders, pioneering artists, and visionary benefactors. Our identity as an institution has been shaped by them and it continues to be enhanced by the people who so generously support our efforts today.

The goals in the previous Strategic Plan (2015-2020) articulated the Gallery's vision of leadership in contemporary art together with a commitment to local community development and engagement, as well as building the financial, human, and physical resources needed to accomplish this with integrity, enthusiasm, and excellence. By 2020, the Gallery's achievements were exemplary: we had created award-winning exhibitions, contributed new scholarship to the field, expanded public programs and art education, built new partnerships and collaborations, and acquired works of art that shape and tell individual and collective histories. We worked with the leading artistic voices of our age and connected artists and audiences in new and bold ways. We reduced the accumulated deficit, and improved the physical facility with updated security systems, a vault reconfiguration, and a transformative lobby renovation. We worked towards increasing staff development and support.

In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the Gallery's activities. Emergency stay-at-home orders closed the Gallery from March to June 2020, late December to February 2021 and again from April to mid-July 2021. The Gallery quickly pivoted to online programming, and followed a hybrid format of on-site, off-site and online offerings. In the wake of George Floyd's murder in the United States in 2020 and subsequent protests, KWAG aligned with colleagues across the country to initiate change within our walls to counter systemic racism.

Through this new Strategic Plan, the Gallery will incorporate what it has learned from the crises of 2020, and continue to develop and advance its standards of excellence in exhibitions, collecting and learning. This plan outlines new initiatives to deepen our impact on individual lives, improve the health and wellbeing of our community, and ensure equity and vitality through the diversity of our programming, staff, and Board. We continue to steer the Gallery on a stronger financial and operational course, increase our base of support, and strengthen our staff and governance. Like all effective strategic plans, ours aligns ambitions and resources by balancing aspirational programming with financial sustainability, and prioritizes experimentation with new models of engagement and growth. We have detailed the implementation of each priority in the plan in a series of measurable objectives and tactics.

# THE PLANNING PROCESS

KWAG's Board and senior management committed to a participatory process to envision KWAG's future. To guide us through this process, we engaged Catherine Motz as a consultant who facilitated this work with senior staff and the Board of Directors. To inform the planning, we gathered and compiled input from stakeholders including members, artists, cultural workers, colleagues, partners and peers through surveys and one-on-one interviews that focused on institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and high-level goals.

Catherine Motz led staff and Board members in a series of group discussions and breakout sessions to identify and establish themes. The group agreed on six overarching thematic pillars for the future:

1. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
2. Artistic Leadership
3. Engaging Communities
4. Financial Sustainability
5. Our People
6. Our Places

The conclusion of this process is a new Strategic Plan from which, under the leadership of the Executive Director, Senior Management will develop annual business plans that identify actions aligned with these pillars.

▼ Susan Coolen (Canadian, b. 1955). *Parochial Views No. 6: Parlance #4*, 2008. Giclée print, 76.2cm x 157.4cm (framed diptych). Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery Collection. Purchased with the assistance of the City of Kitchener and the City of Waterloo, 2010. © KWAG. Photo: Susan Coolen.



# KITCHENER-WATERLOO ART GALLERY

## MANDATE

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, the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery is a non-profit organization open to the public and administered in the public trust.

## MISSION

The Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery 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.

## VISION

KWAG will enrich lives across our community and nation through the creation and experience of contemporary art. It will flourish as a recognized leader and exceptional cultural presence at the intersection of contemporary art and civic life by:

- Amplifying the voices of diverse artists
- Expanding access to art's transformative impact
- Securing and strengthening its distinctive legacy for future generations



## VALUES

### Creativity

We inspire originality, curiosity and discovery through the experience of art.

### Public Engagement

We are a public art gallery, actively drawing our community together into a shared experience of art that moves us from sight to insight.

### Artistic Leadership

We are recognized for our expertise, professionalism, and integrity. We are the standard-bearer for the visual arts in our region, seeking excellence and having the courage to lead.

### Collaboration

We actively develop meaningful relationships with our partners, building synergies and mutually enhancing diversity and strength



# PILLARS

## Pillar 1: Equity, Diversity And Inclusion

We are a non-discriminatory organization that upholds the fundamental principles of inclusivity, accessibility, freedom of expression and open engagement.

We promote the participation of our culturally diverse population within the Gallery and community, and strive to provide an equitable environment for all by valuing and respecting individual differences for our enrichment and that of the community we serve.

### Goal:

KWAG will adopt an inclusive, equity-seeking, and anti-racist lens in all of the Gallery's activities to affect transformational change.

### Actions:

- a. Commit to enacting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action as they apply to museums in exhibitions, collecting, programming, and policy development.
- b. Revisit the Permanent Collection and revise the Collection Policy through the lens of decolonization. Seek resources to ensure the Collection reflects and speaks to the cultural diversity of Turtle Island.
- c. Seek resources to hire an Indigenous curator and/or researcher to inform our work with collections, exhibitions and programs.
- d. Recruit and retain staff and Board members from Black, Indigenous, racialized, francophone, 2SLGBTQ+, and disability-identified communities and annually conduct equity and anti-racism training.
- e. Commit to partnership development, collaboration, and on-going engagement with members of the IBPOC, francophone, disability-identified and 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

## Pillar 2: Artistic Leadership

The Gallery provides audiences with the highest calibre of contemporary and historical visual art exhibitions and maintains associated programs that are consistent with a leading public art gallery. We support the best practices of professionals in the visual arts including artists, educators, critics, curators, conservators, and students. The Gallery produces scholarly publications associated with exhibitions.

### Goal:

KWAG will enhance the cultural life of our region and beyond by presenting artworks that are sources of wonder, enlightenment, and inspiration for generations to come. Contemporary art will remain at the core of our exhibitions to actively engage audiences in the creative expression of our time. The Permanent Collection will be impeccably preserved for future generations, prioritizing the conservation of artworks in keeping with the highest standards in the museum field.

### Actions:

- a. Feature the work of local, national and international artists whose works reflect our commitment to anti-racism, anti-discrimination and decolonization.
- b. Continue to work in partnership with colleagues and sister art institutions across Canada through collaborative ventures in exhibitions and publications.
- c. Support regional artists and cultural workers through professional development workshops and programs.
- d. Increase access to our Permanent Collection online and in the Gallery through new digital tools and website upgrades that enable students, scholars, and the general public to engage in and benefit from research around our Collection.
- e. Diversify the use of works from the Permanent Collection by organizing exhibitions that highlight important themes and trends in contemporary art and the bold collecting decisions that position the Gallery to serve as a haven for pathbreaking artwork.
- f. Offer the Collection as a resource for art programs in secondary and post-secondary education institutions.



◀ Installation view of Deanna Bowen: *Black Drones in the Hive*, 2020-2021. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

### Pillar 3: Engaging Communities

KWAG thrives as a vibrant cultural centre and committed contributor to Waterloo Region’s educational, social, and economic life. As the radial and centred leader of contemporary art in the region, we forge and strengthen community relationships through transformative art experiences that connect exceptional artworks and ground-breaking ideas. We connect with diverse constituencies that are reflective of our changing community.

**Goal:**

We strive to create an empowering experience for our visitors that is welcoming, relevant and accessible to people of all backgrounds, abilities, and interests: to be a centre of experimentation and discovery, embracing and responding to the needs of changing demographics. By inspiring audiences and artists in their pursuit of learning and growth, we act as a committed leader in art education with a particular focus on demystifying art and dispelling the elitism often associated with galleries.

**Actions:**

- a. Work with local governments, community and business interests to promote the Region’s active cultural life as a key asset that makes Waterloo Region a vibrant, attractive place to live, work and visit.
- b. Cultivate interdisciplinary collaborations including theatre, music, dance, and other art forms.
- c. Expand opportunities for in-gallery experiences that are accessible across linguistic barriers.
- d. Building on efforts during the COVID pandemic, invest and commit to the use of new technologies to fuel accessibility and meaning-making in our programs by offering artistic experiences on-site, off-site and online, allowing for engagement beyond the building.

### Pillar 4: Our People

KWAG operates with a team of talented, qualified staff and has an institutional commitment to diversity in all respects, including at the staff and Board levels. A climate of respect, fairness, open communication and empowerment results in the collaboration needed to sustain effective operations, making KWAG a great place to work.

**Goal:**

The Gallery intends to strengthen its institutional infrastructure through empowering, supporting and building a diverse and collaborative team that reflects the values of the Gallery and our changing society.

**Actions:**

- a. Align recruitment processes with the goal of increasing the diversity of staff and volunteers, including members of the Board of Directors, so that the Gallery as an assembly of people reflects the diversity of communities it serves.
- b. Annually conduct professional development training for staff and provide support for attainment of professional goals with professional development opportunities.
- c. Implement a succession planning strategy.





## Pillar 5: Financial Sustainability

KWAG operates with a budget of approximately \$1.2 million, of which 53% is raised via the private sector through membership, sponsorships, project support from foundations and granting agencies, as well as fundraising events and public programs. The Gallery's public funders constitute 47% of the entire budget and include the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, and the municipalities of Kitchener and Waterloo. Over the past decade the Gallery has exercised due diligence in reducing the accumulated deficit and maintaining a balanced budget annually. The Gallery carefully nurtures a small but growing endowment.

### Goal:

A healthy operating budget and adequate capital funds are critical to ensuring that the art and ideas of our time are available for generations to come. KWAG seeks to achieve long-term financial resilience and sustainability through increasing and maximizing earned revenue necessary to ensure public access to contemporary art and education for the future.

### Actions:

- a. Organize a new annual fundraising event directed towards a younger demographic and/or refresh the Black and Gold Gala.
- b. Leverage the Board's connections to develop and maintain external relationships.
- c. Activate and inspire a broader base of community support through increasing depth and breadth of membership, and expanding current programs for younger generations of patrons.
- d. Seek new sponsorships and collaborations that strengthen the role of KWAG as an inclusive hub of creative activities that engage broad and diverse audiences.
- e. Pursue increased financial commitments to the Gallery's operating budget from area municipalities.
- f. Develop focused funding areas in the Case for Support.

## Pillar 6: Our Places

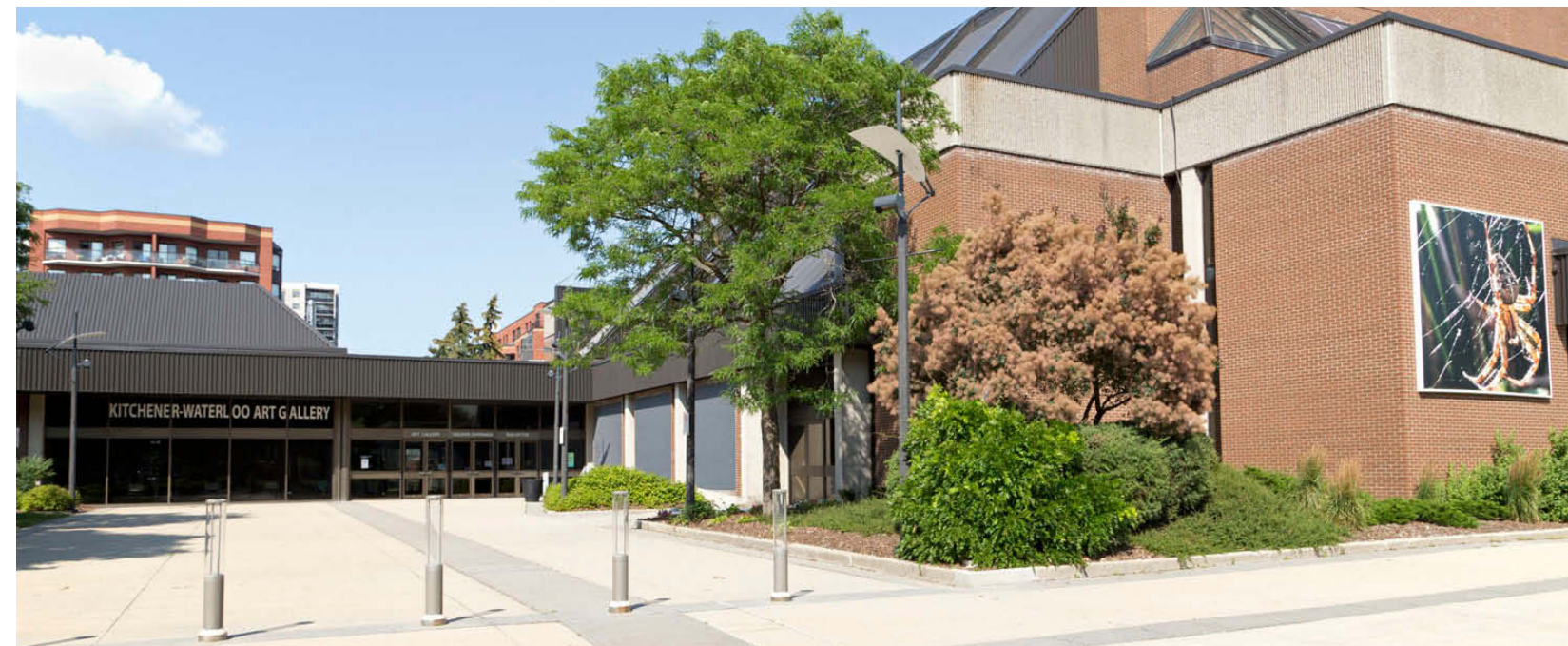
KWAG provides the community with a welcoming visitor-friendly visual arts facility that enhances the quality of life in the Region. Housed within the Centre In The Square, the Gallery provides a place for gathering and dialogue, and a unique platform for engagement in a pluralistic society.

### Goal:

We seek to embrace the unique role that a 21st century art gallery can play in the growing vibrancy of the City of Kitchener by serving as a vibrant visitor-centred community hub where people from all walks of life connect with ideas and with one another.

### Actions:

- a. Address current realities of the building to enhance existing spaces.
- b. Work strategically with the Centre In The Square to enhance audience attraction, visibility and accessibility for both the performing and visual arts.
- c. Collaborate with urban planning division at the City of Kitchener on the beautification of Queen Street North and the development of the Civic District Master Plan.
- d. Take a proactive approach in connecting with our neighbourhoods and Waterloo Region through collaborative ventures and placemaking projects.
- e. Strengthen our technological infrastructure and leverage opportunities to prepare for the future.
- f. Ensure sustainability within the facility through reuse and recycling, thereby contributing to climate change action.



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