

2024 Annual Report

MACLAREN | **ART**
CENTRE

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Message from the Chair



The MacLaren Art Centre had a remarkable year of growth, creativity, and community in 2024. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers, committee members, donors, and sponsors, whose passion and commitment continue to make all our achievements possible. Every year, there are many moments that make us realize that we simply couldn't do what we do without you, and this year was no exception.

2024 saw over 14,000 visitors to the MacLaren and 13 dynamic exhibitions in our galleries, showcasing a range of regional, national, and emerging artists. I'm continually inspired by the imagination of the next generation of artists in the region, and that spirit was especially visible in *Portfolio 2024*, our annual juried exhibition of Grade 12 artists. Our educational programs continued to thrive. The *VanGo* program brought curriculum-tied art experiences to over 8,500 students in 78 schools across Simcoe County. Our *Family Sundays* program included affordable, hands-on workshops for more than 1,200 children and their families. These programs are at the heart of our mission to make art accessible to all.

With input from the community, we crafted our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. Extensive interviews with community groups and partners helped inform our refreshed mission, vision, and goals. This roadmap sets a clear direction for the MacLaren's future, where we focus on program excellence, organizational sustainability, our collection, and deeper community impact.

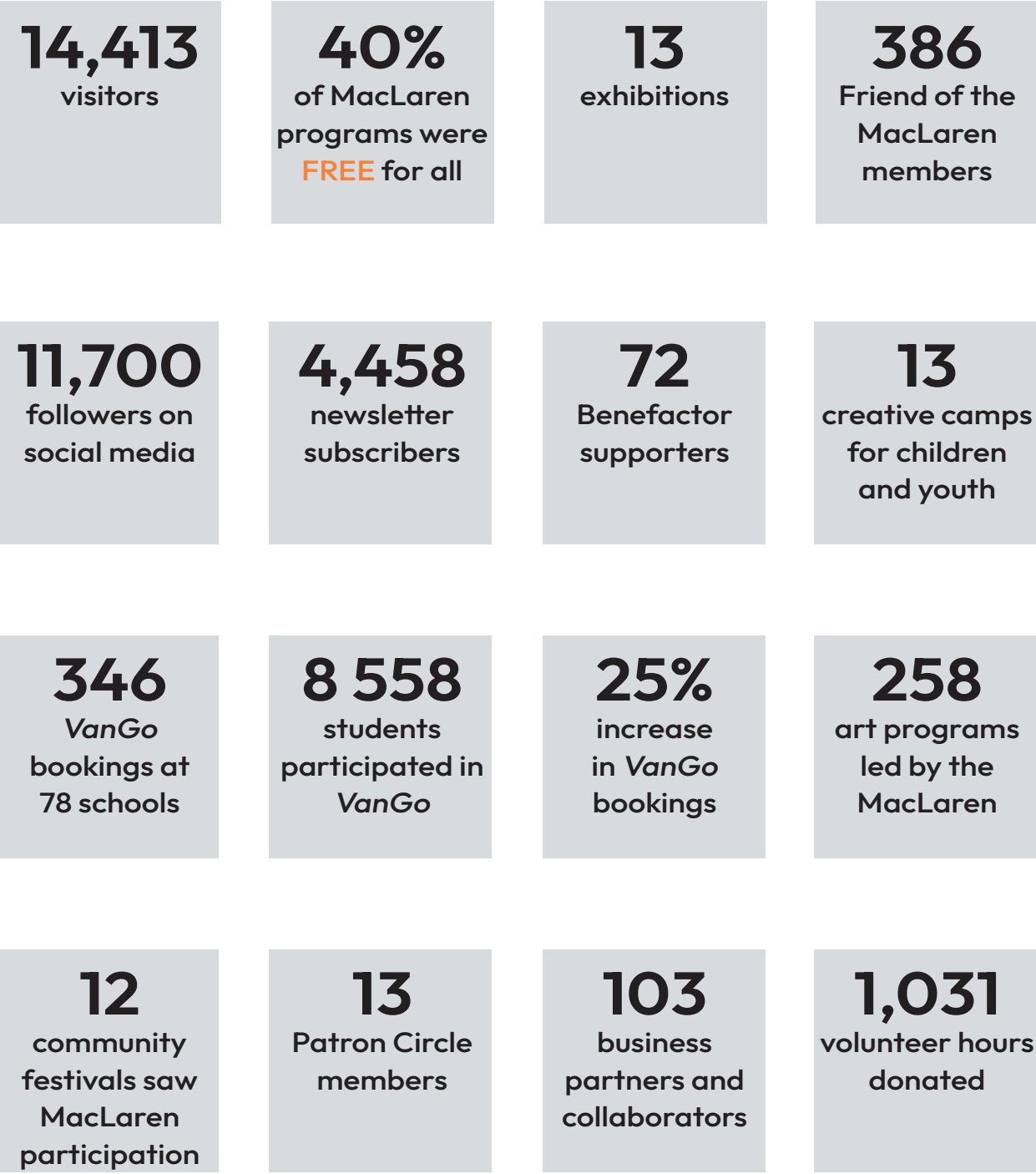
Thank you for being a part of our journey with support and encouragement. Whether you're a long-time Friend of the MacLaren or a first-time visitor, we invite you to explore our exhibitions, programs and events. Our door is always open to all.

Warm regards,

Dr. Matthew Follwell
Chair and President, Board of Directors
MacLaren Art Centre

2024 by the Numbers

A look back at our engagement, reach, and community impact throughout the past year.



Opposite: Photography by Taylor Grigg Co.

About the MacLaren Art Centre

The MacLaren Art Centre is a free public art gallery located in downtown Barrie, Ontario. Our Permanent Collection is a major asset for the immediate and larger community. It comprises over 4,300 works of contemporary art, a substantial study collection, and an archive of vintage documentary photographs, most of which are designated as Cultural Property through the Department of Canadian Heritage. The Gallery serves an immediate community of 450,000 people across Simcoe County and central Ontario.

The Gallery receives funding from private donors, corporate sponsors, and ongoing public funding from the Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the City of Barrie, as well as occasional project-based funding from the Government of Canada, Ontario Trillium Foundation, and the Ontario Attractions Fund. Other revenue is generated through events, memberships, and art programs.

Land Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek, which include the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Pottawatomi Nations, collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy. The local bands consist of the Chippewa Tri-Council, who are made up of Beausoleil First Nation, Georgina Island First Nation and Rama First Nation. We would also like to acknowledge the Wendat Nation (Huron) who occupied these lands prior to the middle of the 17th century. We also recognize the enduring presence of all First Nations, Métis and the Inuit peoples.



Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Building on the strengths of the institution, the MacLaren Art Centre's new Strategic Plan sets out an ambitious path for the next five years, guided by a community consultation process in 2024.

With support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation in late 2023, the MacLaren Art Centre engaged the Osborne Group to lead a comprehensive strategic planning process. This initiative was guided by the leadership of a dedicated Steering Committee, with additional consultation from Workshop Architects and meaningful input from community members and individuals with deep knowledge of the MacLaren's history. The resulting plan is rooted in community engagement, institutional assessment, and regional context.

Vision:

To spark creativity and reflect community

Mission:

Design and deliver contemporary visual art and educational experiences to connect our diverse communities and partners

Values:

**Artistic Excellence
Innovation
Fostering Belonging
Curiosity
Creativity**

Opposite: Photography by Max Power

Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Colour-coded timeline:

- 2025: Signal change via brand awareness, enhance facilities, invest in outreach, fundraising, and stabilize leadership
- 2026: Launch a refreshed artistic vision, advocate for increased public funding and modernize HR practices
- 2027: Focus on preparing for Category A designation and developing the Barrie Cultural District
- 2028: Execute capital infrastructure projects
- 2029: Achieve Category A designation and celebrate the growth of Barrie’s creative economy in collaboration with partners and the City of Barrie

Strategic Directions & Goals

I. Achieve artistic excellence and Category A designation

- Curate high-quality contemporary art exhibitions
- Modernize the collection policies and mandate
- Implement infrastructure upgrades and facility improvements
- Achieve Category A designation

II. Expand community outreach and foster a sense of belonging

- Advance reconciliation with Indigenous communities
- Engage diverse and growing communities with inclusive programs
- Modify operating hours to increase access and attendance

III. Build organizational capacity and enhance community investment

- Stabilize leadership
- Implement progressive HR policies
- Increase visibility and market share
- Build fundraising capacity and donor engagement
- Revitalize the volunteer program
- Secure grants and operational funding

IV. Strengthen Barrie’s creative economy and anchor the new Cultural District

- Strengthen initiatives with the cultural sector/BIA organizations
- Collaborate on a new cultural district in downtown Barrie
- Partner to grow the creative economy in Barrie and Simcoe Region

Opposite: Photography by Taylor Grigg Co.



Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Exhibition Matrix:

The exhibition matrix is a structured curatorial framework that ensures a balanced, inclusive, and strategic approach to selecting and presenting exhibitions across a range of themes, media, and artist demographics over a set period of time. This framework ensures that the Gallery’s exhibitions are representative, relevant, and resonant with both the local community and the broader cultural landscape.

Local Importance, National Interest

Artworks that explore timely and topical subject matter, relevant locally and nationally.

Regional, Provincial, and National Excellence

Artists based within the region, province, and nation, who are producing and exhibiting work of excellent quality.

Established and Emerging

Artist at different stages of their careers, from emerging to established.

Gender and Age Parity

Artists belonging to varied gender identities and age groups.

Reflecting our Unique Community

Artworks that reflect the makeup and experiences of our unique community (with special consideration to diverse nationalities, cultures, abilities, neurodivergences, sexual orientations, and other modes of identity).

Indigenous Voices

Artists that belong to Indigenous communities, including First Nations, Metis, and Inuit artists.

Diverse Media

Artwork across a diverse range of traditional and new media.

Collection

Artworks from the MacLaren Art Centre’s various collections.

Opposite: Photography by Taylor Grigg Co.





Exhibitions Overview

In 2024, the MacLaren Art Centre’s exhibition schedule focused on building relationships with sister organizations in the province and beyond, to present a suite of exhibitions that foregrounded Indigenous voices, strengthened partnerships, and radically transformed the Gallery with new and exciting artworks.

Winter

Andrew Trudeau

Drawing Georgian Bay

December 8, 2023 – March 31, 2024

Drawing Georgian Bay included works on paper by Andrew Trudeau (1924-2013) of handmade boats and scoots. The exhibition revealed his unique perspective on the world, informed by the knowledge of his Métis ancestors and 83-years of living off the land on the remote islands of Georgian Bay.

House for Sale

Dmitry Gretskey and Eugenia Kats

October 13, 2023 – January 14, 2024

House for Sale featured immersive work by the Innisfil-based artistic duo, who focus on the housing crisis in Ontario and related questions about migration, belonging, and concepts of home.

Labours of Love

Barry Ace, Catherine Blackburn and Justine Woods

February 16 – May 19, 2024

Indigenous artists Barry Ace, Catherine Blackburn and Justine Woods showcased their unique approaches to beadwork, with each stitch containing a gesture of love and rich histories shared across generations.

Jason Lujan

Utopian Aesthetic

February 16 – May 19, 2024

Curated by Daryn Doull

Traveling to the MacLaren from the Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery, *Utopian Aesthetic* addressed the process by which different cultures approach each other as a result of travel and communication.

Opposite: Photography by Tony Hafkenscheid
Previous: Photography by Taylor Grigg Co.



Spring & Summer

Ron Shuebrook & Frances Thomas: In Conversation

June 14 - September 15, 2024

In Conversation celebrated two incredible artists' serious engagement with abstraction, finding commonalities and celebrating differences through practices that span decades. The exhibition and accompanying publication were co-produced with the Woodstock Art Gallery, where the exhibition began in 2023. It toured to the Art Gallery of Northumberland in 2024, and the Art Gallery of Algoma in 2025.

Joel Richardson and Nyle Miigizi Johnston

Gaganoonidiwag: They Talk To Each Other

June 14 - September 15, 2024

Curated by Virginia Eichhorn

This exhibition showcased a decade-long collaboration between artists Joel Richardson and Nyle Johnston, uniting Indigenous and settler perspectives through art, technology, and storytelling. Through their alter egos, Captain Jimmy Swann and Commander George Nadjiwon, the artists intertwined history and imagination in a multimedia exploration of reconciliation.



Fall

Derek Liddington

Their horizon was mountain, their distance reveals

September 27 - November 8, 2024

Curated by Katie Lawson

Their horizon was mountain, their distance reveals transformed the MacLaren's Carnegie Room into an immersive environment through Derek Liddington's sweeping mural work and layered canvases. The exhibition explored ideas of fragmentation, embodiment, and the perceptual residue of art history. The artist invited viewers to move slowly, to attune themselves to shifts in perspective and to uncover the layered stories hidden beneath the painted surfaces.

This exhibition was a satellite presentation of **Seeds to Sow**, a temporary public art initiative organized by the City of Barrie and supported by the Barrie Public Art Committee, featuring six site-specific installations drawing on local ecologies, histories, and stories as acts of cultural planting and renewal. As part of this broader project, Liddington's exhibition brought these ideas indoors, offering a meditative, painterly counterpoint to the outward-facing works across Barrie's landscape.

Structural Integrity

Christine Howard Sandoval, Erdem Taşdelen, and Caroline Monnet

September 27 - December 29, 2024

Curated by Noa Bronstein

Co-produced by the MacLaren and the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, *Structural Integrity* brought together works to examine architecture as a contested field of social meaning, where dominant narratives about space and value could be questioned or reimagined. The artists challenged the colonial underpinnings of the built environment while proposing more inclusive, multi-vocal understandings of place. A publication accompanied the exhibition, deepening its critical inquiry into how structures and materials shape, and are shaped by, the people that use them.

Jon Sasaki

Homage

September 27, 2024 - January 12, 2025

Curated by Sarah Milroy

Touring from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, *Homage* presented recent photographs by Jon Sasaki depicting bacterial cultures grown from swabs of artist tools once used by the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson. These enlarged images, displayed with the historical tools themselves, offered a darkly humorous and conceptually rich meditation on legacy and the Canadian landscape.



ARTIST'S STATEMENT
This work is a continuation of my interest in geometric patterns and their relationship to architecture and interior design. It is a square piece, 100cm x 100cm, made of paper and ink. The pattern is a complex, repeating geometric design, inspired by traditional quilts and textile patterns. I have been working on this piece for several months, and it has been a challenging but rewarding process. I am pleased to be able to share it with you in this exhibition.



Collection

Grace Note by Lyn Carter and Carl Taçon

The MacLaren’s newest permanent sculpture by artists Lyn Carter and Carl Taçon, was unveiled in September 2024 in the Art Centre’s main lobby, accompanied by a short documentary from LoveJoy Productions. Conceived before the pandemic and realized through years of collaboration and technical precision, *Grace Note* takes shape as a sweeping line of hand-bent, painted steel. Visible through the second-storey window, it draws the eye upward, enlivening the space with colour, motion, and optimism. Supported generously by Pratt Homes, *Grace Note* brings lift and delight to all who enter.

The companion exhibition, *Grace Note: a work in progress*, offered an intimate look at the sculpture’s evolution from idea to installation. Featuring maquettes, schematics, material studies, and studio photographs, it revealed the craftsmanship and problem-solving behind the work. A full-scale scaffolding echoed the sculpture’s ambition, inviting viewers to appreciate the unseen collaboration and ingenuity that shape public art.



Above: Photographs by LoveJoy Productions; Opposite: Photograph by Peter Legris



Education Highlights

The MacLaren Education team offered a number of exceptional programming throughout 2024, many of which showcase our incredible community, connections, and innovation in educational programming.



Creative Spark In collaboration with the Alzheimer Society of Simcoe County

Designed to nurture connection, creativity, and well-being, *Creative Spark* offers free art workshops for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. Participants explore current exhibitions, then create together through painting, collage, printmaking, and sculpture.

“When I heard this program was available, we wait-listed for it because we really wanted to be able to attend. It’s a program like no other.”
-Sherra M, *Creative Spark* participant

ELEVATE! Lillian Place In collaboration with Redwood Park Communities

A collaborative project where twelve youth from the region created uplifting paintings with artist-mentor Leandra Almeida. Using colour and positive themes, their works bring warmth and hope to the great room at Lillian Place, a new housing development for families in crisis.

“..creating art makes me want to smile. Coming to the MacLaren is one of the things that makes me happiest.”
-Nigel, *Art Explorers* participant

Photography by Kimberly Vincent

Culture Days 2024

As part of the annual nationwide Culture Days celebration, the MacLaren invites our community to engage with art through free programs, tours, and talks. Each year, we open our doors to celebrate creativity, connection, and the vital role of arts and culture in our region.

Grace Note Celebrations

To celebrate *Grace Note*, the MacLaren offered a suite of programming, including *All in Line*, a series of free community workshops that culminated in an exhibition of over 50 artworks. The celebration also featured *Animations*, a dance performance by Simcoe Contemporary Dancers and a three-part video series.

Mini-Drum Making and Knowledge Sharing In collaboration with the Barrie Native Friendship Centre

Indigenous artist Petranella Brisco led an engaging mini-drum making workshop to sixty participants. While Grey Cloud (James Carpenter) shared knowledge of drum making to the participants.





VanGo

VanGo is the MacLaren's flagship arts education program, employing regional artists to bring high-quality visual art experiences to classrooms across Simcoe County, reaching over 7,000 students each year. Offered both virtually and in person, VanGo connects professional artists with students through hands-on workshops that spark creativity, build visual literacy, and integrate with Ontario's Arts Curriculum, as well as Geography, Science, and Social Studies.

Tailored for all grade levels, VanGo nurtures creative expression and critical thinking, from playful experimentation in Primary programs, to design principles and social context in Junior, to deeper conceptual engagement and reflection in Intermediate. Each workshop includes teacher resources and curriculum connections to ensure meaningful, cross-disciplinary learning.

“Having actual artists teach and speak about art was super. Being able to be in the actual art gallery was also fantastic. I wish we could visit every week!”

-St. Monica's Elementary School



“The instructors were fantastic! They were well organized and super engaging for the students. They thoroughly explained the process of creating a painting and the process behind choosing your colours.”

- Banting Memorial High School





Fundraising Highlights

Black Tie Gala Saturday, April 20

- 140 attendees
- 14 sponsors
- 3 live art demonstrations
- \$166,000 grossed
- 20-minute performance by The Trews

Black Tie Gala is the MacLaren’s premier annual fundraising event, supporting children’s programs and exhibitions. This year’s sold-out celebration brought together community leaders, art lovers, and sponsors, to raise crucial funds for MacLaren educational initiatives.

2024 Black Tie Committee:
Michael Kuluva (Chair), Kathy Chen-Hammond, Dr. Matthew Follwell, Hilary Goodman, Sarah Ingram, Nicole Murphy, Gary Pearson, and Mira Ray.

Benefactor Art Exchange Thursday, May 23

- 115 artworks
- 72 Benefactors

The Benefactor Art Exchange is a long-running program connecting regional artists with collectors and gallery members. Each year, over 100 works are showcased. Benefactor and Junior Benefactor members in good standing can borrow a piece for a year on loan from the artists. Participants can choose to purchase their loaned artwork or exchange it for a new selection when their year term is complete, fostering lasting relationships between artists, collectors, and the MacLaren community.

32nd Annual OFF THE HOOK Silent Art Auction Friday, November 22

- 250 attendees
- 11 sponsors
- \$92,000 grossed
- 120 artworks

The 32nd annual Off the Hook Silent Art Auction returned in person after a four-year hiatus, drawing art-lovers and guests in support of the Gallery’s programs and regional artists. Featuring over 120 artworks donated by 100 artists, the event showcased the strength and generosity of our creative community while raising crucial funds for Gallery programs.

2024 Art Auction Committee:
Ruth Anderson, Nadine Carr, Sheila Delaney, Patti Gwin, and Barb Robillard.

Previous, and opposite above: Photographs by Max Power. Opposite, lower: Photography by Taylor Grigg Co.





MACLAREN ART AUCTION



2024 Financial Overview

Revenue Breakdown

Total Revenue: \$1,733,338

Source Amount

- City of Barrie \$165,000
- Ontario Arts Council \$153,901
- Ontario Trillium Foundation \$114,800
- Canada Council \$69,000
- Community Service Recovery Fund \$18,000
- Department of Heritage Canada \$17,333
- Young Canada Works \$9,842
- Simcoe County District School Board \$3,390
- Donations & Fundraising \$805,712
- Retail Operations \$179,725
- Education Program Fees \$196,635

Note: Donations & Fundraising make up nearly 47% of total revenue

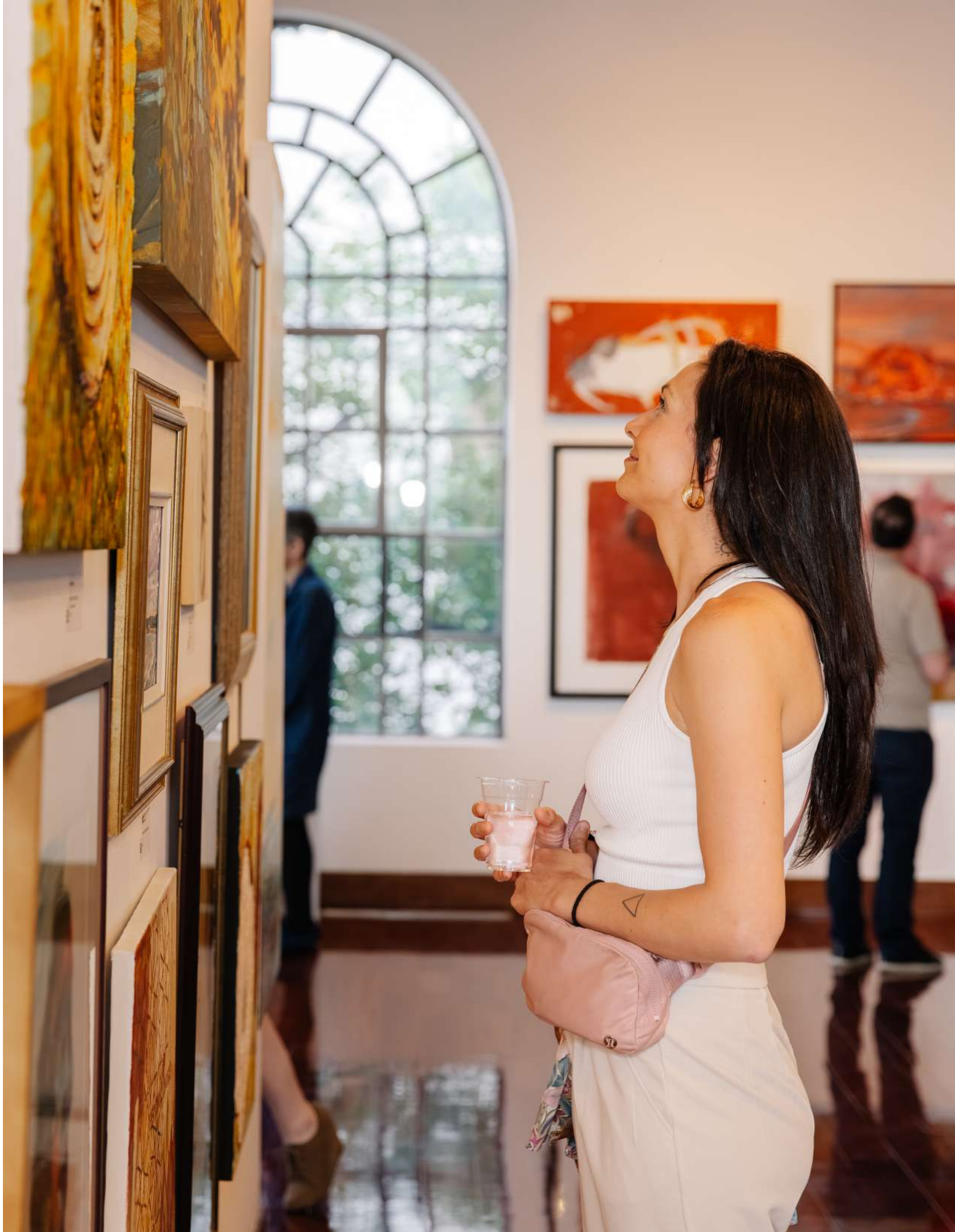
Expense Breakdown

Total Expenses: \$1,815,237

Category Amount

- Collection \$59,926
- Communications & Public Relations \$61,256
- Education \$40,990
- Exhibition \$139,146
- Fundraising \$361,664
- General \$97,835
- Professional Fees \$120,227
- Retail Operations \$22,643
- Wages & Strategic Plan Contract \$911,550

Opposite, and previous: Photography by Kimberly Vincent



Thanks to our Supporters

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