

# 2025 Annual Report

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# Message from the Chair



The past year at the MacLaren Art Centre was defined by connection, curiosity, and the shared belief that art has the power to bring people together. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to extend sincere thanks to our volunteers, donors, sponsors, members, and community partners for making 2025 exceptional. Your generosity and enthusiasm continue to shape the MacLaren in meaningful ways, and your support is felt in every exhibition, program, and conversation we share together.

In 2025, the MacLaren welcomed more than 18,000 visitors to the Gallery, and presented 21 contemporary curated and community exhibitions, which reflected a wide range of artistic voices and perspectives. From emerging talent to established artists and artists from our collection, our galleries and community spaces offered opportunities for discovery, reflection, and dialogue. It is especially encouraging to see how strongly the arts continue to resonate throughout our region and how deeply our community values creative expression.

Education and accessibility remain central to everything we do. This year the MacLaren's flagship art education program, VanGo, provided art experiences to 7,624 students across 316 classes throughout Simcoe County. In-gallery programs for all ages saw hundreds more community members learning through making art in the PIE Education Centre. Family Sundays also continued to make opportunities for children and families to experience art together, welcoming more than 890 participants to free, hands-on workshops and activities. These programs are often a first introduction to the arts for many young people, and their impact reaches far beyond the Gallery.

Thank you for continuing to be part of the MacLaren's story. Whether you have supported the gallery for many years or visited for the first time this season, your presence matters. We look forward to welcoming you through our doors again in the year ahead.

Warm regards,

Dr. Matthew Follwell

# 2025 by the Numbers

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

**18,333**  
visitors

**56%**  
of the days  
we were open  
included  
programming

**21**  
exhibitions

**303**  
Friend of the  
MacLaren  
members

**12,248**  
followers on  
social media

**4,306**  
newsletter  
subscribers

**74**  
Benefactor  
supporters

**910**  
participants in  
**74**  
Family Sunday  
sessions

**313**  
*VanGo*  
bookings at  
60 schools

**7,600**  
students  
participated in  
*VanGo*

**250**  
fundraising  
BINGO games  
through  
RogersTV

**242**  
art programs  
led in the PIE  
Education  
Centre

**3,039**  
participants  
across **12**  
community  
festivals

**745**  
participants  
across **48** free  
programs

**61**  
business  
partners and  
collaborators

**1,778**  
volunteer hours  
donated



# 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

## 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





Was it  
something  
I did?

# 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.



ited to renew its partnership with the MacLaren Art Centre  
for Change Black Youth Art Celebration. This exhibition  
ated in the Canvas for Change program, geared to high  
n across Simcoe County who recognize themselves as Black  
Black Canadian, African American, or of mixed-race descent.

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MACLAREN



# Exhibitions Overview

In 2025, the MacLaren Art Centre's exhibition schedule focused on local and regional artists, drawing greater focus towards our collection to present a suite of exhibitions that foregrounded Indigenous voices, strengthened partnerships, and reflected our diverse communities.

## Winter

### Will Gorlitz

#### *No Easy Distances*

January 17 - March 16, 2025

*No Easy Distances* featured paintings from the MacLaren's Permanent Collection, made by senior Canadian artist Will Gorlitz between 1984 and 1987. Addressing environmental conversations that strated decades ago, these works remain strikingly relevant today. Through poignant imagery, Gorlitz explores humanity's complex relationship with nature.

### Harold Klunder:

#### *In Fluid Motion*

February 7 - June 29, 2025

*In Fluid Motion* celebrated Harold Klunder's evocative exploration of watercolour, featuring 25 works from the MacLaren's Permanent Collection, weaving fluid gestures and vibrant hues into shifting symbols and hidden forms. Klunder's works transformed abstraction into a shared space of discovery and reflection.

#### *Grace Note: A Work in Progress*

November 20, 2024 - March 2, 2025

This exhibition offered an intimate view of the years-long creative processes behind *Grace Note*, the MacLaren Art Centre's newest permanent sculpture on view in the main lobby.

#### *Canvas for Change: Black Youth Art Celebration*

January 20 - February 23, 2025

This exhibition included artwork created in the Canvas for Change program, geared to high school students in Simcoe County who recognize themselves as Black, Carribbean, African, Black Canadian, African American, or of mixed-race descent. Under the guidance of Toronto-based mentor Ashante Blackwood, three workshops were hosted on the process of conceptualizing, communicating, and presenting one's own stories and perspectives.





# Spring

## *Subjective Illuminations*

March 21 - June 8, 2025

*Subjective Illuminations* offered a focused glimpse into the MacLaren Art Centre's Permanent Collection of diverse print artworks, showcasing acquisitions to the Permanent Collection from 1998 to 2017 of over 50 vibrant prints by artists, including Carl Beam, Jane Buyers, and Alex Colville.

## *Lost and Found: The Inner Child*

March 8 - April 10, 2025

Curated by students of the Museum and Gallery Studies Program at Georgian College

This exhibition reflected on childhood experiences and memories, through nostalgic artifacts from Simcoe County Museum's collection and varied artworks from the MacLaren Art Centre's

## Katie Green

### *Translations in Vision*

April 19 - June 29, 2025

In *Translations in Vision*, Barrie-based multidisciplinary artist Katie Green explored ideas of transformation, process, and perception. Green reimaged textiles through unpredictable risograph printing, which revealed evolving texture, colour, and shifts in opacity.



# Summer & Fall

## Suzanne Morrissette

### *The Shape of Transference*

July 10 - November 2, 2025

In *The Shape of Transference*, Suzanne Morrissette presented an intimate meditation on how different forms of knowledge are passed along. Using reclaimed clay, animation, layered sound, and drawing, she brings together recent and ongoing artworks that map personal, entangled ways of knowing: embodied, inherited, experienced, and studied. These artworks trace knowledge as something fluid and relational, rooted in connection rather than siloed or purely intellectual. Taken together, they form a constellation of practices through which understanding slowly takes shape.

## Vicky Talwar

### *A Shift in Consciousness*

June 28 - October 26, 2025

In *A Shift in Consciousness*, Stouffville-based artist Vicky Talwar offered a meditation on hybridity, memory, and spiritual continuity. Rooted in her experience as a Hindu-Canadian artist, Talwar interlaces South Asian ritual and aesthetic traditions with the layered realities of diasporic life in Canada. Through vibrant colours, textured surfaces, and recurring motifs such as flower garlands, mala beads and sacred threads, her paintings become spaces of reflection and transformation. In October, the exhibition expanded to include a luminous salt crystal mandala installation in collaboration with Buddhist monk Lama Jam, who presented a Sound Energy Healing Mandala Performance.

## Jill Price

### *From There to Here: Walking for Tomorrow*

June 28 - October 26, 2025

Barrie-based artist Jill Price anchored *From There to Here: Walking for Tomorrow* in her concept of *UN/making*, drawing on histories of maintenance art and walking as creative practice. The exhibition built on her ongoing project called *Wht-trSH* to visualize the slow violence of plastics and other materials that colonize human bodies and more-than-human bodies of land and water.

### *Where Are You?*

A collaboration with the Barrie Native Friendship Centre

July 10, 2024 - November 2, 2025

In the Spring of 2025, the MacLaren opened the PIE Education Centre to community members of all ages from the Barrie Native Friendship Centre. Through bi-monthly artist talks, this small group of emerging artists learned from professionals and worked together to bring their creations to life while creating an exhibition that honors the land we live on, celebrates ceremony, and acknowledges the survivance of our Urban Indigenous Community.

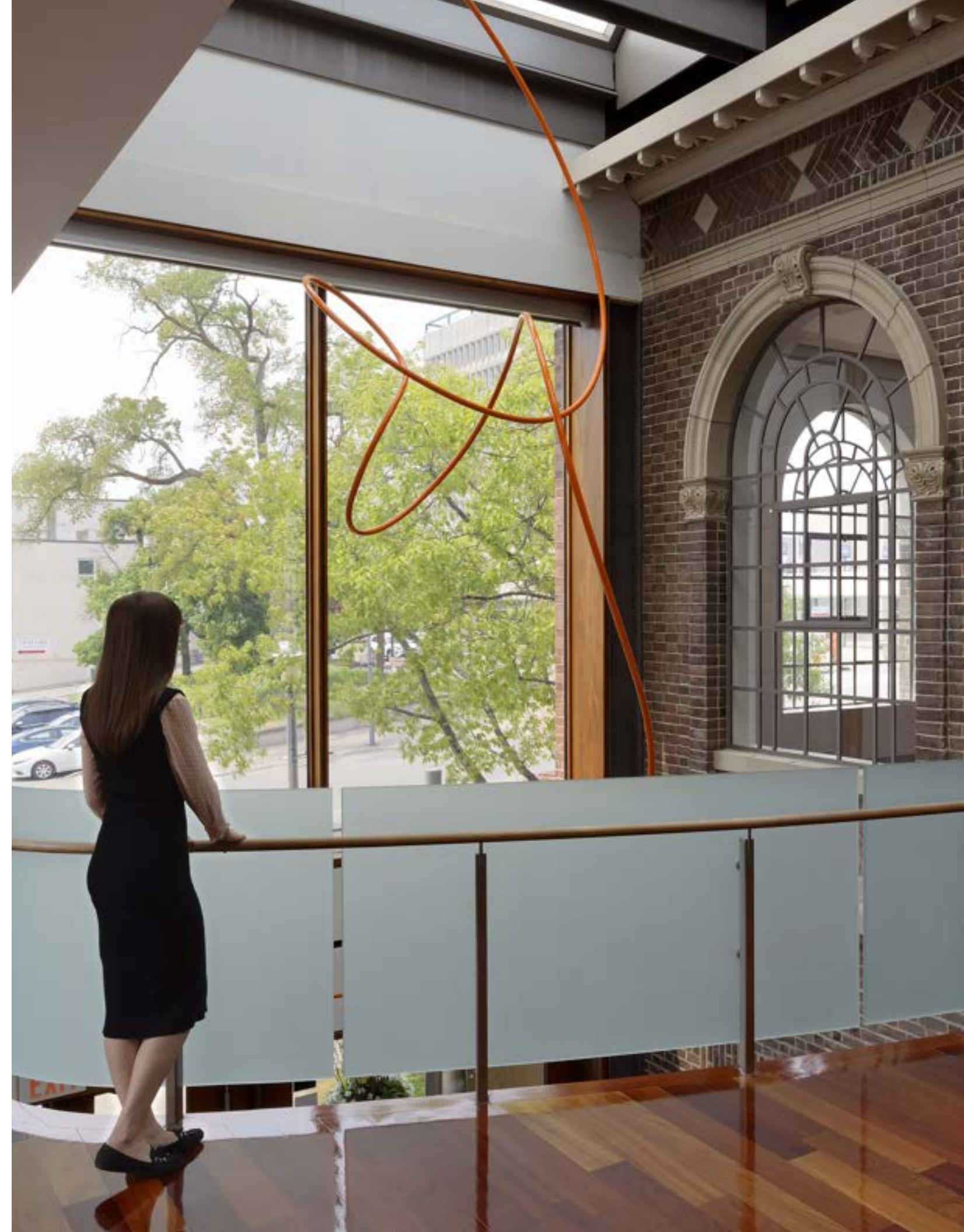


# Online Collection Portal

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.

In 2025, the collection was made available online. The portal allows the public to have access to the artworks we hold in the public's trust, including over 500 artworks designated as Cultural Property. As well, it provides a tool for researchers, archivists, and students. This project was made possible in part by the Government of Canada.

Other initiatives focused on enhancing public access to and engagement with the collection included several tours of collection spaces, facilitating student research, and highlighting collection artworks through timely social media posts, while continuing to host exhibitions and programs which animate artworks from the collection, ensuring the collection remains a meaningful resource while building intellectual content.



Opposite: A view of *Grace Note*. Photography by Peter Legris

Previous: Artist Vicky Talwar presents Mandala Making and a Healing Sound Booth with Lama Jam. Photography by Juicebox Studios

Above: Installation shot of *Subjective Illuminations*. Photography by Juicebox Studios

# Education Highlights

The MacLaren Education team offered a number of exceptional programming throughout 2025, 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.

**“The most valuable part of this program was getting out and being with people, and the creative aspect.” -Participant**



## **BRIGHT 2: Brightening Barriers**

In collaboration with  
The City of Barrie & Creative Barrie

A collaborative project where four youth from the region worked alongside artist-mentor Neda Mazhab Jafari to create the colourful public artwork *Whispers of Green*. Inspired by themes of positivity, growth, and community, the piece brought vibrant colour and creativity to downtown Barrie throughout the summer.



## **SOUND CANVAS**

In collaboration with UPLift Black and  
The Community Creative

In two events in February and July, SOUNDCANVAS transformed the MacLaren into a social lounge where artists and creatives could come together to connect and enjoy the space. From familiar faces to first-time visitors, SOUNDCANVAS created an inviting environment that celebrated creativity, connection, and shared experience within the Gallery.



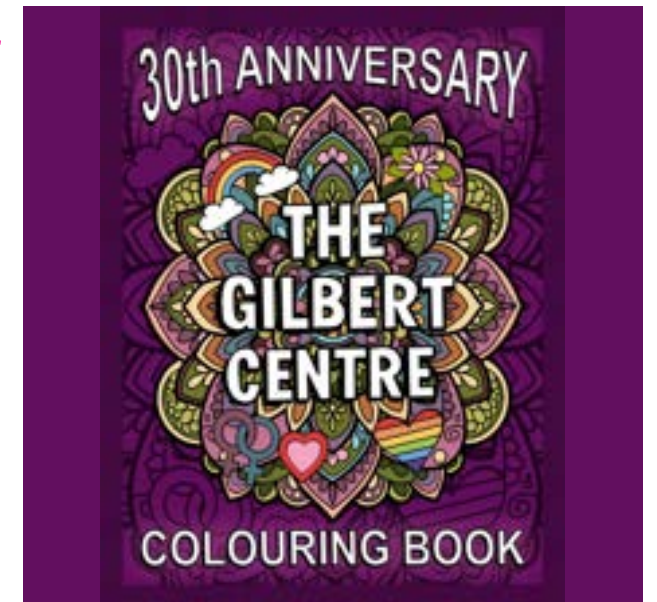


## Education Highlights

### *The Colouring Book Project*

In collaboration with  
the Gilbert Centre

Beginning in summer 2025 through October 2025, the MacLaren collaborated with the Gilbert Centre on a community-based project commemorating its 30th anniversary. Two workshops, one with an adult group and another with a youth transgender group, and the MacLaren invited four regional queer artists to contribute colouring pages to the project.



### *SenSational Art Program*

With support from the Government of Canada's  
New Horizons for Seniors Program

Last spring, the MacLaren applied for and received a New Horizons for Seniors Grant. A program inspired by the five senses was developed and led by Mariya Blyznyuk, Karin Foulds, Meg Leslie, and Leslie Foster. The team led 20 programs for over 300 seniors at VON locations across Simcoe County and Muskoka.



### *commUNITY*

In collaboration with NewPath Youth  
and Family Services

*commUNITY* is a group exhibition that features paintings created by participants in workshops at the MacLaren, visually representing each participant's take on growth, hope and transformation.



**“...I have seen firsthand the benefits received from the participants through the education and experience provided around the art. I believe that art plays a pivotal role in expanding minds to think outside the box, assists in self-discovery and expression, as well as develops new skill sets and provide wholesome enjoyment. Instructing in the Gallery provides an elevated atmosphere and the supportive team is always there to help.”**

*– Monica Loney, regional artist and MacLaren Instructor*



Guests enjoy *The Shape of Transference* by Suzanne Morrissette.  
Photography by Robyn Clarke



## 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.

**“I think this program is outstanding. The artists are so engaged with the students and explicit in their instruction, therefore, I do not think there is anything else they could do better.”**

**-Monsignor Ronan Elementary School**



**“My students and I thoroughly enjoyed the program. It was highly engaging and all of the students were able to produce an excellent piece of art. The instructors were extremely helpful, knowledgeable and provided clear, concise instructions. I would be interested in booking another visit in the future.”**

**-St. John Vianney**





# Fundraising Highlights

## Black Tie Gala

Saturday, April 26

- 120 attendees
- 23 sponsors
- \$154,000 grossed
- 20-minute performance by Rêve

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.

### 2025 Black Tie Committee:

Michael Kuluva (Chair), Dr. Matthew Follwell, Nicole Murphy, Gary Pearson, and Mira Ray.

## Benefactor Art Exchange

Saturday, April 26

- 103 artworks
- 74 Benefactors

The Benefactor Art Exchange is a longstanding MacLaren program aiming to showcase regional artists, foster regional collectors, and increase gallery membership. For over 25 years, artists have been showcasing their work in this annual exhibition while building relationships with the region's many art collectors and budding art lovers.

## 33rd Annual OFF THE HOOK Silent Art Auction

Friday, November 14

- 250 attendees
- 17 sponsors
- \$84,000 grossed
- 64 artworks

The 33rd annual Off the Hook Silent Art Auction drew art-lovers and guests in support of the Gallery's programs and regional artists. Featuring over 60 curated artworks donated by local and regional artists, the event showcased the strength and generosity of our creative community while raising crucial funds for Gallery programs.

### 2025 Art Auction Committee:

Carol-Ann Ryan (Chair), Ruth Anderson, Nadine Carr, Shannon Dawson, Sheila Delaney, Patti Gwin, Barb Robilliard, Tammy Shuster, Esther Sabet, and Angela Gray.



Previous: View of the Black Tie Gala. Photography by Juicebox Studios  
Opposite, above: Rêve performs at the Black Tie Gala. Photography by Juicebox Studios  
Opposite, lower: View of Benefactor Art Exchange. Photography by Kimberly Vincent

# 2025 Financial Overview

## Revenue Breakdown

Total Revenue: \$1,510,352

## Source Amount

- City of Barrie \$165,000
- Ontario Arts Council \$153,901
- Ontario Trillium Foundation \$20,000
- Canada Council \$69,000
- Department of Heritage Canada \$17,333
- Young Canada Works \$12,000
- Simcoe County District School Board \$3,390
- Donations & Fundraising \$758,736
- Retail Operations \$116,794
- Education Program Fees \$200,453

Note: Donations & Fundraising are 50% of total revenue

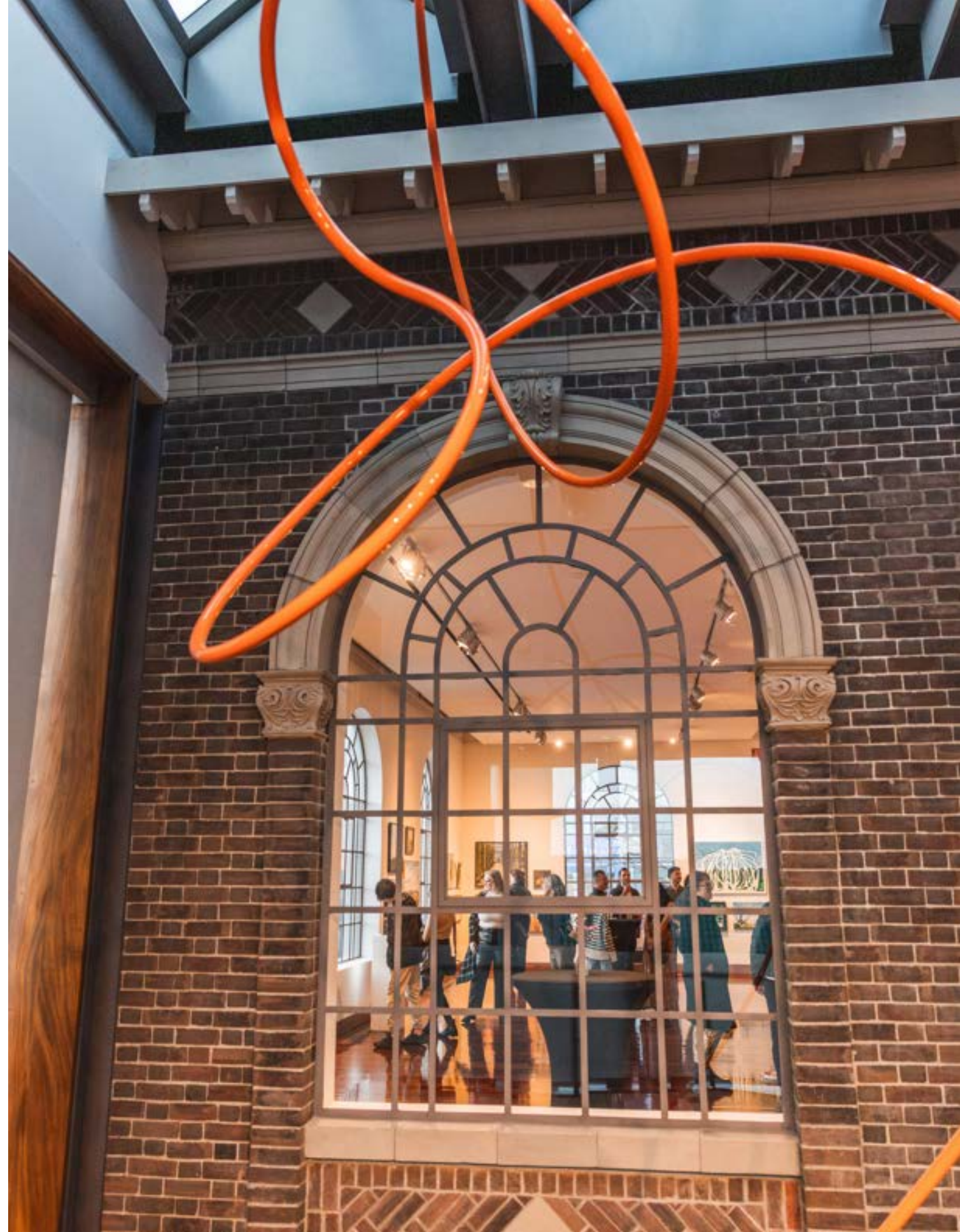
## Expense Breakdown

Total Expenses: \$1,487,823

## Category Amount

- Collection \$31,119
- Communications & Public Relations \$23,816
- Education \$40,111
- Exhibition \$82,174
- Fundraising \$299,907
- General \$72,388
- Professional Fees \$31,581
- Retail Operations \$15,221
- Wages & Strategic Plan Contract \$891,506

Opposite: Photography by Juicebox Studios



# Thanks to our Supporters

## Members

### SUSTAINING

Janey and Barry Green  
Marshall and Susan Green  
Michael Kuluva and Dr. Cory Hartsburg  
Cindy Miller  
Mira and Dr. Andrew Ray  
Norman Thomas

### CONTRIBUTING FRIEND

Frances Hachborn  
Gary and Cheryl Norton  
Janet Jansson  
Mareka Martin  
Patricia Lawson  
Marshall and Susan Green  
Robert Marchessault and Teresa Cullen

### CONTRIBUTING ARTIST

Alexandra Deer  
Allan M. Craig  
Amy Bagshaw  
Anastacia Chapdelaine  
Angela Aujla-Letts  
Anna Watson  
Beverly Pearl  
Bonnie Dorgelo  
Brian Barrer  
Brielle Laurie  
Bruno Smokey  
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Carolyn Boyd  
Carrie Paquette  
Cheryl Ruddock  
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Denis Bolohan  
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Matthew Ferguson  
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 Naj Saghaei  
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 Olga Hewett  
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 Paige Burt  
 Paige Russell  
 Rayne Hennessey  
 Shauna Umney-Gray  
 Sheila Gordon  
 Sofia Shevchuk  
 Tamara Crist  
 Thomas and Linda Greg  
 Tia Bates  
 Tracy Chippett  
 Tyler Think Luu  
 Victoria Scott  
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Robert and Joan Gilroy

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Joan and Robert Lehman

### COLLECTOR'S CIRCLE

Frances Thomas

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