

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

2023-2024
Hamilton Artists Inc.



Trans
Lives
are
Sacred

Trans
Joy is
Sacred



Trans Lives Are Sacred, Ris Wong Cannon Project Wall. May 30, 2024 -May 29, 2025

Board Co-Chairs

Jordyn Stewart + Samuel De Lange

This past year really has been one for the books at Hamilton Artists Inc. – the quality of the Inc.'s programming is no small feat, especially with such a small team driving our programs. From presenting exhibitions, film festivals, and publications, to special events, workshops, talks, tours, panel discussions, new exhibition spaces and more. All thanks to the strength and expertise of the Inc., Staff, past and present, and the support of the Inc's Volunteers, Members, Committees, and Board of Directors over the last year. At whatever capacity you've supported the Inc. throughout 2024, we thank you for contributing to the Inc.'s thriving and influential programming.

Exhibitions within the James Gallery and Cannon Gallery, as well as our exterior spaces like the Cannon Project Wall and James Street Banner, gave way for 25+ paid artist exhibition opportunities, with additional exhibition opportunities for 80+ members in our SWARM member's show earlier this year. Not to mention working with guest curators and writers, plus the launch of three new publications!

Our many public programs and special projects continued to energize the community for another year! We continued our 'Working On It!' series of professional development workshops, collaborated with Clear Eyes Collective to learn an intro to mural work and spray painting, co-organized the Fluxus Film Festival, and continue to host the Zine Machine to connect with local Zinesters...and this is just to name a few.

Despite the cuts to funding bodies across the sector, we've been able to continue this high level of programming and meet or exceed CARFAC fees. We have also made a commitment to implementing yearly cost of living raises for all staff. The Inc. remains in a good financial place thanks to the organization's management from Staff and treasurer Dianne Twombly.

It's hard to believe this is all possible, but our driven team continues to amaze us. We are very grateful for the work of Derek Jenkins, John Hill, Sanaa Humayun and Paige Paton. This year, we also welcome Sonali Menezes as Programming Coordinator – the perfect compliment to the team. We want to take this opportunity to celebrate these folks, not only for their impact on the organization, but to recognize their contributions outside of the Inc. They are artists, have personal board and committee commitments, curatorial projects, screenings and community events, etc. They are active in the community the Inc. aims to build a space for, and this is ever so important and evident in the work the Inc. does.

This year, our Public Programs Coordinator, John Hill, and Board members Julie Dring, Olga Kolotylo and Zana Kozomora transitioned to new opportunities and we are grateful for their expertise and commitment to the organization. We are delighted to welcome incoming Directors: Suad Badri and Caitlin Sutherland. As well as thank our returning Directors, Sam de Lange, Alexandria Holm, Dianne Twombly and Jordyn

Stewart. Following the AGM, Jordyn Stewart will be stepping down as Co-Chair after offering her expertise on the executive committee for the past 4 years and welcomes Caitlin Sutherland into the role as Co-Chair alongside Sam de Lange.

Throughout the following Staff and Board reports, you'll hear about the Inc.'s significant accomplishments over the past

year. These successes are a reflection of the Inc.'s supportive community. Without the folks that attend our openings, workshops and special projects, or apply to our exhibitions, there would be no Hamilton Artists Inc.. We are grateful to the support of our community and the collective ambition of Staff, Board, Chairs, Committee members and Volunteers for their distinct mark on another incredible year.



Working on It! Grant Writing Workshop, July 27, 2024, Cannon Gallery

Executive Director

Derek Jenkins

2024 will go down as Hamilton Artists Inc.'s first full throttle year post-pandemic. The impacts of the pandemic linger, as funding bodies respond to tightened budgets at all levels of government and fundraising struggles to keep up with the broader impacts of inflation, but we have seen a much more active community at in-person events, and we have responded with a dramatic increase in public programs and outreach following the community-focused vision of Artistic Director Sanaa Humayun and spearheaded by new programming coordinator Sonali Menezes.

This focus on community led to increased official and ad hoc partnerships, including with Disability Justice Network of Ontario, Hamilton Zine Machine, Hamilton4Palestine, Industry, Places Collective, Melanin Market, Clear Eyes Collective, McMaster's Indigenous Health Movement, McMaster SOTA, OCADU, DVSA, Factory Media Centre, Art Gallery of Burlington and the Workers Arts and Heritage Centre, and Tangled Art + Disability Centre. Participation in reception and events was up, along with vibrant activity in workshops, as well as an increase in rentals and fundraising income such wide-ranging activity incentivizes.

Our beautiful facility is a beacon of the downtown art scene, and plans are under way to strengthen the connections between committees to fully exploit this resource. We're seeing increased overlap between previously somewhat siloed committees like facilities and programming, fundraising and com-

munications, and our shift to bimonthly board meetings means that board members have more time to emphasize their contributions at the committee level.

With sustainable labour compensation, the Inc. proceeds according to a balanced budget for the first time since 2019. Artistic Director Sanaa Humayun enters her second full year guiding exhibitions and programming, having already added new partnerships and exciting initiatives aimed at expanding our reach in a diverse community. After a busy summer, new Programming Coordinator Sonali Menezes will helm a full year of public programming designed to support and expand our steadily growing audience of artists, advocates, and communities. With Programming Assistant Paige Paton on board, each enjoy added administrative and outreach capacity. These roles are supplemented by contract staff including seasonal Gallery Assistants, high-school co-op students, interns, and volunteers.

In FY25, a new operational plan will be drafted to help realize our strategic goals, while cementing the legacy of an organization which will reach 50 years old. Such a milestone is the perfect time for reflection and recommitment, and the Inc. is poised to continue serving the local sector and artist in our community for decades to come.



Still Lives in Transition, Sangmin Lee. April 19 - June 1, 2024 / Cannon Gallery.

Artistic Director

Sanaa Humayun

Hamilton Artists Inc. is not immune to the increasing weight of the world. As we moved through our programming year, that weight sat heavily on us, informing the scope and breadth of our experimental, playful, community-led programming.

This year we welcomed Sonali Menezes as our Programming Coordinator, and with a full programming team I truly believed we flourished, really hitting our stride as a team as we work towards our ongoing goals. Upon the completion of our strategic plan we reflected on the need for more meaningful opportunities for regionally-based artists, and adjusted our structures accordingly. Change takes time, but I'm proud to say that 70% of the artists who exhibited in our space were based in the Greater Hamilton area, which was a significant increase from years prior, reminding us that we are lucky to live in a city filled with talented, critically-engaged artists. This year we renewed and developed relationships with so many community organizations and collectives, including Hamilton4Palestine, Industry, Melanin Market, Places Collective, Clear Eyes Collective, McMaster's Indigenous Health Movement, McMaster SOTA, OCADU, DVSA, Factory Media Centre, Art Gallery of Burlington and the Workers Arts and Heritage Centre, and Tangled Art + Disability Centre.

Our programming at the Inc is split across two streams: exhibitions & public programming. Upon completion of SWARM in 2023, we began this programming year in the Cannon Gallery with my first curatorial exhibition of the year, I hear you everywhere I go, by Halie Finney and Jalen Frizzell. This exhibition

explored relationality within art-making and tattooing, and the balance of vulnerability, and trust that comes with this work. I hear you everywhere I go was an excellent guidepost for the year, reminding me that this work can move slowly and kindly, and we are able to create critically-engaged art while still being accessible - and fun! Sangmin Lee's Still Lives in Transition explored gentrification, object, and collective memory, through a paper-mache and ceramic installation spanning the Cannon Gallery's exhibition space.

In the James Gallery we invited McMaster's Indigenous Health Movement to guest curate Art is Medicine, featuring the work of, Anang Binesi, Courtnee Osawabine, Justice Ryan, Nikaronhya'a Dawn Martin, Shayde Sandy, inviting viewers to understand the perspectives of these Indigenous emerging artists within the scope of art, healing, and medicine. In the summer we featured five emerging artists in Won't you rage with us? By Miles Obilo, Nala Ismacil, Sage, curated by Venus Underhill. This exhibition played with the political nature of rage, through a range of collage and mixed media work.

Our James Wall Banner featured Victory Soaring Above Tyranny, by Ibrahim Abusitta, addressing the profound impact of the genocidal conflict in Gaza and the West Bank. The accompanying riso-printed publication with writing from Razan Samara framed this work with devastating tenderness. Our Cannon Wall Banner was part of an exciting billboard exchange with The New Gallery, an Artist-Run Centre in Calgary. This exchange was curated in response to increasing transphobic

rhetoric, spurred by the transphobic laws put forward, and recently passed by Alberta's provincial government. Our billboard features the work of Ris Wong, in *Trans Lives are Sacred*. Ris's art balances joy and grief, honouring the necessary resilience of trans folks, as well as celebrating their joy. We also opened a new wheatpaste exhibition space in our bathrooms, led by Paige Paton, who curated two wheatpaste installations in the newly (and cheekily) named McNabb Gallery.

Our summer was marked by a flurry of public programming. We launched "Workin' on it!" a series of professional development workshops for artists, developed and led by our Programming Coordinator, Sonali Menezes. We debuted our new wheatpaste wall in our courtyard as an open space for the community to play with wheatpaste and learn the history of this DIY medium. We ran an Intro to Spraypaint workshop with Clear-Eyes Collective, resulting in a new mural in our courtyard space. Due to the overwhelming success of this workshop we ran it a second time, this time in collaboration with Pivot Centre, creating a new mural at the Unity Community park. We hosted a night market and pop-up exhibition with Hamilton4 Palestine, featuring the art and craft of over 15 Palestinian artists and makers, and we continued our ongoing relationship with Places Collective, hosting DJ workshops, as well as open play time in our gallery space for weird, experimental music. We ended our incredibly busy summer with Fulxus, a new film festival hosted in collaboration with Factory Media Centre and McMaster SOTA, featuring experimental film works.

This year was certainly not without its challenges. Our programming was robust, and led by an urgency we felt as a team to do as much as we could with the resources we have. We considered how to create as many meaningful paid opportunities as we could for artists, and asked how we could foster a constructive community space for artists and activists. Our intention was to create paid opportunities for artists and activists, while also creating a gentle space for folks to land, even

if only for a moment. We balanced this work as best we could, recognizing that we were stretching to the very edge of our capacity at points, and sometimes beyond it. Our work was not met without vitriol at times. Our Cannon Wall Billboard, *Trans Lives are Sacred*, was met with repeated transphobic graffiti. This vandalism began as memes taped onto the banner, escalating to transphobic commentary written in sharpie, and then to multiple attempts to rip down the billboard, leaving it with a tear that runs across its length. These repeated events were brutal to witness - they occupied so much of our time, and they left us starkly aware of the limits of our capacity. We took a lot of solace in the themes of resilience in the billboard. In line with that, and in conversation with the Ris, we intentionally chose not to repair the rips in the banner. Instead we invited Ardyn Gibbs to create their artistic response, *To be soft is not to be weak*. To be soft is to be resilient, around the remnants of the billboard. In painting Ardyn's work together we were reminded of the joys of working in the arts in Hamilton, and of being in community and in friendship with other artists. Ardyn's mural was one of the final things we did this programming year, and it reaffirmed to us the importance of artist-run spaces, and of art that dismantles the academic notions of contemporary art enough to understand that accessibility and understanding matter. It reminded us that joy and play are inherently political, and community work cannot be meaningful without them. We're taking that reminder forward into the programming we put together for you.

Programming Timeline

April 2023 - September 2024

Indigenous Artist in Residence: Olivia Shortt

May 30, 2024 - May 29, 2025

Trans Lives are Sacred: Ris Wong

Cannon Project Wall installation - Billboard exchange with
The New Gallery (Calgary, AB)

January, 30 2024 - January 30, 2025

Victory Soaring Over Tyranny: Ibrahim Abusitta

Publication essay by Razan Samara

January 26- March 9, 2024

I hear you everywhere I go: Halie Finney & Jalen Frizzell

Curated by Sanaa Humayun

Cannon Gallery Exhibition

Publication artistic response by Thalia "Vegas" Dixon

January 26- March 9, 2024

Art is Medicine: Anang Binesi, Courtnee Osawabine, Justice

Ryan, Nikaronhya'a Dawn Martin, Shayde Sandy

Curated by McMaster Indigenous Youth Health Movement

Exhibition

James Gallery Exhibition

April 6, 2024

Taxes for Artists, Creatives, and Freelancers Workshop

Sunny Widerman

Working On It! A Professional Development Workshop Series

April 13, 2024

Zine Machine Launch: Zine Reading

Special Project

Participating artists: Birdie Gerhl, Jayden Charles, Vania Void

April 10, 2024 - June 1, 2024

Still Lives in Transition: Sangmin Lee

Cannon Gallery Exhibition

Publication essay by Ho Won Kim

Related Programming: Space for Artists: a Panel Discussion

Sangmin Lee, HAVN collective members Ariel Bader-Shamai
and Sahra Soudi

April 10, 2024 - June 1, 2024

Won't you rage with us?: Miles Obilo, Nala Ismacil, Sage

Curated by Venus Underhill

James Gallery Exhibition

Publication essay by Nazanin Zarepour

Related Programming: Rage Night Fundraiser

June 1, 2024 - June 1, 2025

Connection: Cruz

MacNab Gallery

June 1, 2024 - June 1, 2025

I literally love everything and everyone: Lorraine Postma

MacNab Gallery

May 25, 2024

Introduction to Wheatpaste workshop
Hosted Erin War

June 1, 2024

Introduction to Risograph Printing Workshop
Hosted by Alex Borghesan

June 21 - Aug 10, 2024

Little Mexico: Carlos Colín
Cannon Gallery
Publication essay by Danica Evering

Related Programming: Bus tour and & artist talk
Co-presented with Tangled Arts & Disability Centre, Workers
Arts and Heritage Centre, Art Gallery of Burlington

June 21 - Aug 10, 2024

Out of Sight: Bethany Kenyon, Catherine Mellinger, Claire
Anderson | James Gallery

July 13, 2024

Intro to Spray Paint Workshop
Hosted by Clear Eyes Collective
Public Programming

July 25, 2024

Fake Ads Creative Workshop and Zine Launch
Hosted by Rulito
New Committee Special Project

July 27, 2024

Grant Writing 101
Hosted by Sanaa Humayun
Working On It! A Professional Development Workshop Series

September 20-22, 2024

Fluxus Experimental Film Festival
Co-presented by Factory Media Centre & McMaster SOTA

September 13-November 1, 2024

The book of [un]Happiness: Olivia Shortt
Cannon Gallery

Related Programming: Musical performance by Olivia Shortt &
Justin Massey and a conversation with Carmen Galvan
Presented in partnership with StrangeWaves

September 13-November 1, 2024

The Gold Boxes: Ravinder Ruprai
James Gallery

September 13-November 1, 2024

Sent from a Distant Party: Sal Shivji
James Gallery



Spray Painting Workshop
facilitated by Clear Eyes
Collective. July 2024 / Arcelor
Mittal Dofasco Courtyard.

Programming Committee

Alexandria Holm

Current Members: Alexandria Holm (committee chair), Sanaa Humayun (as staff), Sonali Menezes (as staff), Dominic Pinney, Sarah Sproule, and Rachelle Wunderink,

The programming developed by Hamilton Artists Inc. relies on the expertise and input of its programming committee, and is an important reflection of its community. As an artist-run centre, the Inc. has always prioritized artistic experimentation, community engagement, and alternatives to commercial gallery structures. With the development of our current strategic plan, the programming committee continues to celebrate and support critically engaged contemporary art, amplifying marginalized voices and important socio-political commentary. We have also prioritized a renewed engagement with the local artistic community, providing more opportunities and resources to support regional artists.

This year as part of our programming we offered a series called "Workin' on it!" led and developed by our Programming Coordinator, Sonali Menezes, and supported through the work of the committee. This series featured workshops geared

toward professional development skills for artists and other arts professionals. Importantly, the programming committee offers insights as to how the Inc., through its programming, can offer experiences that nurture Hamilton's artistic community. Additionally, this year the committee sat on and oversaw the James Gallery's 2024-25 jury. The committee overhauled the jury process and adjudicated with a renewed commitment to local artists - all 15 artists featured in the James Gallery reside in the Greater Hamilton Area. This prioritization of community will continue to be developed over the coming years. Special thanks to Rachelle Wunderink, Caitlyn De Groot, and Tyler Matheson, for participating in these juries.

This year we discussed different ways our committees can help collaborate and support each other. This is a work in progress, and for the new year the committee plans to continue our focus on workshops and juried exhibitions that support and nurture Hamilton's artistic community, providing important mentorship and educational opportunities that reflect the Inc.'s strategic values.

Communications Committee

Jordyn Stewart

Co-Chairs: Paula Rebello & Arturo Jimenez

Members: Jordyn Stewart

Thank you to our committee members Paula Rebello, Arturo Jimenez and outgoing Public Programs Coordinator, John Hill for their expertise and contributions to the committee. As we transition to 2025, we welcome Derek Jenkins as the Staff representative and Jordyn Stewart as the Board representative.

This is the first full year of our new website designed to aid in accessibility and we've been very happy with how it's been received by the community. The next step is to continue that momentum through researching digital access grants to offer hybrid exhibitions and events aimed to continue to increase accessibility. The grants would contribute to the needed equipment to allow for live streaming, digital tours, hiring of interpreters etc.

The vision for the committee is to be more involved with the organization to support Staff capacity. The committee will use their expertise in design and communications to assist with generating assets for upcoming events and special projects. The committee will work collaboratively with the Fundraising committee to create marketing materials to help promote their events. This will help take that commitment off of Staff while also giving opportunities for our Communication committee members to share their design work with the community.



Little Mexico. Carlos Colin. June 21 - August 10, 2024. / Cannon Gallery.

Facilities Committee

Samuel De Lange

The building remains one of The Inc.'s greatest assets. It was exciting to refurbish and refresh the office, making it a more comfortable place for staff to continue their great work. The new mural in the courtyard from Clear Eyes Collective has brightened up the space and brings a great energy through the window!

Overall, the facility is in good shape and has only required routine maintenance over the previous year. The AC system required service and a mason was hired to touch up some of the brick work on the building's exterior. These expenses did not exceed the amount allotted for maintenance and repairs. We have also hired a pest control company Abell who performs monthly checks through the facility.

In the coming year, the building does not present any immediate needs. Tagging continues to be an issue along the cannon wall, and with the escalation of hateful vandalism this year, we will be exploring preventative measures in the Spring/Summer of 2025.

New Committee

Sanaa Humayun

Current members: Razan Samara, Sanaa Humayun (as staff), Sonali Menezes (as staff), Suad Badri

The New Committee remains small but integral to the ethos of Hamilton Artists Inc. The New Committee's work provides a sounding board for the organization, and leads the anti-racist work that we endeavor to prioritize. This year we said goodbye to Jeannie Kim, who chaired the committee for over 3 years with unwavering diligence, patience, and thorough reliability.

We executed one special project this year - our special project structure is built on a call for submissions model, juried by the committee. Fake Ads Creative Workshop, hosted by Hamilton-based artist, Rulito, taught workshop members the basics of constructing an ad, evaluating why advertisements exist, and who they serve. Participants created their own fake ads for fictitious projects, which were then compiled into a zine by Rulito and distributed at the Inc for free.

The execution of the New Committee's role at the organization has fluctuated depending on the needs of our community. This year we prioritized supporting the activists and advocates in our communities, through donating staff labour, funds for

printing posters and informational leaflets, and in-kind rentals of our space. We firmly believe that anti-racist work begins in the hands of our community members, and we view it as our organizational responsibility to aid that work with our resources whenever possible. The deliverables of this work don't wrap up into a convenient project - the work is ongoing, and we are rewarded for it by stronger ongoing relationships with other community organizations and members.

Fake Ads Zine, Rultios, Special Project, July 25, 2024.



Treasurer

Diane Twombly

Moving into the 2025 fiscal year, the Inc. continues to proceed from a position of sustainability. Our current accumulated surplus provides us with three months of budget reserves and we hope to maintain this same reserve moving forward. We are set to operate with balanced budgets as we proceed into the next fiscal year.

Some challenges for the Inc. in 2024 have included a lack of increase in municipal and provincial funding, some unanticipated staff transitioning costs, a significant increase in operational costs due to inflation, and increasing our use of the Inc. physical facility for rentals and events while recognizing ongoing maintenance issues such as the courtyard and our need for renovating the building's basement. We continue to look at viable options for outstanding issues, particularly with regard to building maintenance.

In response to the rising cost of living, the Inc. HR policy was amended to include a modest annual cost of living increase of 2% for permanent employees which will allow us to continue to provide appropriate compensation to the team and while ensuring the Inc's current staffing levels are sustainable. We now have four permanent staff members and one contract staff member and we continue to successfully utilize Young Canada Works and Canada Summer Jobs for supplementary staffing needs.

We are currently in the second year of a three-year Concept to Realization composite grant (\$300,000) from the Canada Council and the first year of a new composite grant from Cana-

da Council for \$100,000 a year. While we anticipate a small cut from the City Enrichment Fund as there will be no more bridge funding supplements, the Ontario Arts Council has committed \$27,261 for the next two fiscal years, while Incite has committed \$25,000 over the same time period. We will also receive the final year's funding of \$30,033 from OCADU. While bingo funding was down slightly, we anticipate amounts returning to usual in the coming year (approximately \$24,000 annually).

Following last year's AGM we consolidated our Special Events and Fundraising Committee and our Development Committee. The new FUNdraising Committee has been working on a sustained basis this past year, increasing partnerships and sponsorships, hosting events, and introducing more new artist-designed merchandise in partnership with the Programming Committee. The year 2025 is the Inc.'s 50th Anniversary and the FUNdraising Committee is aggressively planning a variety of anniversary-related fundraising activities to celebrate our membership and our successes. We will also seek to increase membership, and volunteer and Board involvement through an active membership drive and events such as our annual members' show, SWARM! Our rentals continue to increase year over year.

Overall, The Inc's cash flow will be stronger as we move into the 2025 fiscal year with increases in grants at the federal level, the addition of the funding from OCADU and increased revenue from small-scale fundraising like merchandise and alcohol sales at events. Our staff complement is currently solid, our plan to establish suitable reserves has been successful, and our increased project grants combined with aggressive fundraising will ensure balanced spending or a modest surplus moving forward.

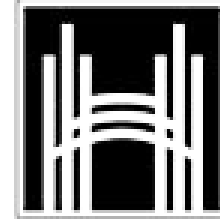
We continue to feel confident in the sustainability of our programs and services and are excited to once again be moving forward into the new fiscal year from a position of strength.

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**Thank
you!**