

**Gardiner Museum  
Strategic Plan**

**2021 – 2023**

**In 2021, we will focus on re-establishing the pre-COVID momentum of the Museum.**

**In 2022 and 2023, our goal is to expand the Museum's relevance and significance through our ability to unite communities through clay.**

# Essential to our community

**From** a friendly-sized museum that stewards an important collection, and is recognized for well-designed exhibitions; respected curatorial oversight; innovative programming; and exemplary clay education

**To** a creative hub that prioritizes education, programs, and exhibitions created in collaboration with community partners; and where diverse publics can connect around clay and engage with contemporary and historical collections made relevant for them

# **Becoming essential to our community means:**

- **Greater emphasis on programming**
- **Innovative education that is highly visible**
- **Fewer large-scale exhibitions in favour of more small-scale exhibitions that showcase our community partners, collaborators, emerging artists, and artists from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences**
- **Continuing a tradition of exemplarity scholarship and expanding our academic partnerships**
- **Commitment to representing the diversity of the GTA through our visitors, volunteers, students, staff, Board members, and collaborators; and ensuring that our publics see themselves reflected in our galleries and programs**

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# Part 1 Building community with clay requires establishing anti-racism, anti-oppression, and equity as foundational values

## 1.0 Anti-racism, anti-oppression, and equity

**1.0.1 Equity Action Plan.** The Gardiner is working with a consultant to establish a longer-term anti-racism and anti-oppression action plan that references all areas of the Museum including content, audience engagement, fundraising, and Board participation. This plan will build upon the work that was started at the Museum in 2018.

**1.0.2 The Gardiner Board and Board Committees.** The Gardiner will continue to transition from a Board constituted primarily of donors to one that better represents the communities that the Museum serves. The addition of community oversight as a Board priority does not lessen the governance imperatives related to finances or risk. This transition will result in changes to Board recruitment practises and the expectation of Board members' financial contributions. The Gardiner will revise policies to clearly support a Board that represents the diversity of the GTA—with an emphasis on BIPOC and disability communities—by recruiting new members from partner organizations, collaborators, and local community groups.

**1.0.3 Gardiner Museum Staff.** The Gardiner will review all staffing policies to ensure that there are no impediments to hiring and retaining candidates from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Our onboarding procedures must strive to make candidates feel comfortable at the Museum and confident that the benefit of their experience is fully utilized. Equity is an ongoing aspect of growing and developing the

Gardiner's staff team. The work that began in 2018 will continue and be shaped by staff, rather than driven by management.

### 1.1.1 Mandate expression and policies supporting the Museum's vision

**1.1.2 Refine Mandate.** We will refine the Gardiner Museum's mandate to communicate the urgency of building community with clay and the relationship of this mission to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and equity. This mandate will be adapted and reflected in every aspect of the Museum's functions, including exhibitions, programs, and development.

**1.1.3 Messaging.** Along with the refined mandate, we will consolidate the Gardiner's marketing messaging on an annual basis—including the marketing for exhibitions and events—to give the brand more impact, particularly with new audiences.

## 1.1 The Virtual Gardiner

Inclusivity requires a responsive website and online strategy

**1.2.1 Gardiner Website.** The Gardiner will develop a multi-part digital approach that includes the website, social media, and recorded and live programs. The website must become a better vehicle for the Museum's content and meet the needs of audiences not necessarily familiar with the Gardiner. We need to address the central question for potential visitors: "What is there for me?" Other than the academic work of its curators, including publications and attendance at international events, we recognize that the Gardiner's reputation beyond Toronto is largely created virtually. In 2021, we will form a staff committee to guide the website update process.

**1.2.2 Website and Marketing Staff.** While the Gardiner website is scheduled to be upgraded, marketing staff positions or consultants need to be in place to use a retrofitted site to achieve its potential. We will plan for staff enhancement in 2021, or the continued and regularized use of consultants.

## **1.2 The Gardiner Welcomes: Front desk and other points of contact**

**1.3.1 Front Desk.** The Gardiner will emphasize the importance of a warm and personal welcome when visitors enter the Museum. Staff and volunteers will be trained to recognize situations where some visitors (especially first-time visitors) might feel uncomfortable, and be equipped to foster a positive experience. We will establish protocols and training immediately to support this goal.

**1.3.2 Volunteers.** Volunteers are an essential support to the Museum's operations and the Gardiner will expand their involvement; however, with this expansion will come a more direct relationship between Museum administration and volunteers. We will review the role of the GVC in that regard, with a goal to establish leadership opportunities for volunteers, overseen by Gardiner administration as relates to distinct areas of volunteer responsibility. Our priority is to recruit volunteers who reflect the diversity of the GTA, with their varied backgrounds, experiences, and expertise informing a welcoming visitor experience for all.

**1.3.3 Teachers and Operations Associates.** Teachers and Operations Associates will receive training that equips them to interact positively with the public and understand the needs of diverse audiences. The Gardiner will hire a pool of teachers and Operations Associates that reflect the diverse communities of the GTA.

**1.3.4 Welcoming Community Events.** As part of the preparation for special community events, the Gardiner will help guests plan for their visit and understand what

to expect. This will become a priority in our event production protocols. We want guests to feel comfortable and confident entering the Museum.

**1.3.5 Lobby.** Our goal is to create a better sense of physical comfort without compromising the lobby's utility or flexibility. As part of a longer-term plan for the renovation of the ground floor, the Gardiner will consider designing an orientation area that is comfortable and sets a welcoming tone. Upon entry, the content of the Museum will be communicated visually in a way that speaks to new audiences, including youth. In 2021, Curatorial will lead the creation of a ground-floor renovation program that investigates how the lobby can be made more welcoming.



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## Part 2 Collections should reflect the community and build on the Museum's legacy

### 2.0 Keeping the Permanent Collection Alive

Working with various community partners and consultants, the Gardiner is undertaking an ongoing review of the colonial perspectives embedded in the galleries and identifying barriers that prevent visitors from positively experiencing the art and engaging with the Museum.

### 2.1 Collecting mandate

**2.2.1 Acquisitions by Donation.** While the Gardiner will continue to consider all donations offered, we will give priority to donations that augment the focuses of the permanent collection.

**2.2.2 Acquisitions by Purchase.** Acquisitions by purchase or requests to donate will focus on two areas: Canadian ceramics and historical or contemporary works that represent the diverse communities that comprise the GTA. We will emphasize The Raphael Yu Centre for Canadian Ceramics as the Gardiner's vehicle for communicating Canadian ceramics and related projects.

**2.2.3 Commissioning.** The Museum will take a proactive role in identifying opportunities and commissioning new work by Canadian artists for its permanent collection, primarily by acquiring work in commissioned exhibitions rather than relying solely on works that are available for sale.

**2.2.4 Deaccessioning.** The Museum will develop a deaccession procedure and plan that addresses redundancy and low priority works. This process will create additional storage space, as well as funds for acquisition that are in keeping with the Museum's current priorities.

## **2.3 Museum renovations**

The Museum's physical space will evolve to better accommodate our communities and present the permanent collections to the public as being relevant and accessible.

**2.3.1 Ground Floor Renovation.** The goals of a renovation to the ground floor include making the entry a more welcoming experience and enhancing the lobby as an exhibition space. Gallery re-installation will emphasize diverse contemporary works; Canadian ceramics, both Indigenous and settler; and global connections between traditions. We will create a program for the ground floor renovation in 2021, consider a building plan in 2022 and, once costed, develop a fundraising strategy to be implemented in 2023.

**2.3.2 Collections Storage.** If onsite renovations and deaccession plans do not address mid-term storage needs, the Museum will review and develop appropriate off-site storage. We will also evaluate open collections storage onsite. This decision must be made within this three-year strategic plan.

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## Part 3 Exhibitions and programs build community, not only attendance

The Museum will evolve to focus annually on one major exhibition as well as the International Ceramic Art Fair (ICAF). Smaller-scale exhibitions will provide opportunities to connect with diverse organizations and communities, and an expanded Community Arts Space mandate and holiday season programming will engage the family audience.\*

\*This goal may be delayed as a result of postponing *Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me* to 2022.

### 3.1 Major exhibitions

Major exhibitions will be complemented by the International Ceramic Art Fair (ICAF); smaller-scale lobby exhibitions; the Community Arts Space; community in-reach; and other temporary displays. Beginning in 2021, major exhibitions will typically extend from fall through spring of the following year, effectively occupying what had previously been two exhibition slots (to a maximum of eight months). The costs associated with major exhibitions warrant extending their runs. This will also allow staff time and financial resources to go toward activities that build community. ICAF will be the marketing anchor in the late spring, as the major exhibition is in the fall.

**3.1.1 Criteria for Choosing a Major Exhibition.** 1) An imperative conversation to which the Gardiner can productively contribute; 2) advance understanding and appreciation for Canadian artists and issues, especially in partnership with other institutions; 3) potential for cultivating new perspectives and scholarship on ceramics, including works in the collection 5) prioritize content and artists from under-represented

communities in Canada and the GTA.

## **3.2 Lobby and other exhibitions and displays**

Smaller-scale presentations with a focus on programming potential, community engagement, and adventurous and provocative content.

**3.2.1 Criteria for Choosing Smaller-Scale Exhibitions and Presentations:** 1) An imperative conversation to which the Gardiner can productively contribute; 2) topical, responsive, and embrace the potentially provocative; 3) serve as a platform for a diversity of voices, with an emphasis on local artists; 4) prioritize content and artists from under-represented communities in Canada and the GTA.

## **3.3 Gallery interventions**

The Museum will place greater emphasis on animating and re-interpreting the permanent collections, both in-gallery and virtually, to relate them to contemporary issues and diverse perspectives.

## **3.4 International Ceramic Art Fair (ICAF)**

The Gardiner will expand the International Ceramic Art Fair (ICAF), in terms of the diversity of presentations and programs, to support community outreach. ICAF will evolve and expand in duration based on the experience of its first year in the Exhibition Hall to become a major international event—the brand ambassador for the Museum across Canada and the world. We will create a multiyear plan for growing ICAF and promoting it nationally and internationally.

### 3.5 Community Arts Space (CAS)

The Gardiner will develop the Community Arts Space (CAS) as a distinct yet linked series of summer and seasonal activities that extend year round, with workshops and programming both on and off site. CAS will be the conceptual umbrella for the Museum's outreach activities, and part of the Museum's Development Plan. CAS will be central to the Museum's operations and image in the community.

### 3.6 Cultivating diversity and anti-racism in ceramics

The Gardiner will establish mentorship and pipeline opportunities for emerging artists, curators, scholars, and museum professionals from Black, Indigenous, and other historically under-represented communities.

**3.6.1 Advancement.** We will explore existing and new funding streams to provide opportunities and mentorship to emerging professionals from Black, Indigenous, and other historically underrepresented communities.

**3.6.2 Expanding Platform.** The Gardiner will create programming and exhibition opportunities for artists from Black, Indigenous, and other historically underrepresented communities.

**3.6.3 Shop Shows.** We will use Gardiner Shop exhibitions to support and cultivate emerging artists from diverse communities.

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**Part 4 Education is central to outreach and revenue, and galvanizes the power of making in all aspects of the Museum. Education will be the most highly visible of the Museum's activities, and along with Programs, the most potent tool for engagement with communities that are unfamiliar with the Gardiner.**

#### **4.1 Education revenue generation**

The Gardiner will expand community clay education as additional physical space is found, even on a temporary basis, such the Exhibition Hall. Education, which has an impact on membership sales, will become a revenue driver equivalent to temporary exhibitions and ICAF.

#### **4.2 Education as outreach**

The Museum will use clay education as an opportunity for outreach. We will always be asking communities, organizations, or individuals what the Gardiner can do for them, rather than telling them what we can offer. The Gardiner will explore and develop models for delivering offsite clay education. Recruiting teachers that represent the diversity of the GTA is a priority.

#### **4.3 Education as innovation**

The Gardiner Museum will become a leader that uses clay to enhance and enrich people's lives through mindfulness and other diverse approaches. While we expect clay education to sustain revenue, the focus will be on creating programs not found at other institutions.

#### **4.4 Education and Programs**

There will be further integration of Education and Programs as an important component of the Museum's Curatorial Department.

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## **Part 5 Sustainability means confidently proceeding to fulfill the Museum’s mandate with dependable financial support that is not reliant on exceptional attendance, donations, and over-extension of staff resources**

There are two priorities to ensure sustainable operations: **1)** Ensuring that there is a dependable revenue stream that is not reliant on an annual fundraising event or the success of temporary exhibitions to attract audiences and; **2)** that staff can expect a workload that, while it has more intense periods, is not always stressful with no downtime or few regularized activities.

We are assuming that the Museum is sustainable at the previously achieved scale of operation (approximately \$5 million annually), and that this could reasonably increase over several years, beyond the purview of this Strategic Plan, by about 20% (not including inflation). Beyond this, the facility size, even with renovations, cannot likely accommodate further growth, nor would it be advantageous in terms of the intimacy of the experience that differentiates the Gardiner from other institutions.

### **5.1 Audience**

While the Gardiner aims to be accessible to as many people as possible, exhibitions and programs should be developed based on what best serves the Museum’s mandate, rather than what may be the most commercially popular. We realize that other than exceptional circumstances, very few exhibitions drive traffic to the extent that it has a significant impact on revenue. The Museum assumes less risk by not relying on major exhibitions as the sole attendance driver or the major vehicle to bring attention to the Museum vis-à-vis membership, donations, and public funding.



**5.1.2 Victoria College/University of Toronto.** The Gardiner will establish a format that encourages students to enjoy the Museum and feel that it is part of their campus. We will work with Victoria College on opportunities that students will find appealing but don't add to the College's or the Gardiner's administrative and financial obligations.

## **5.2 Education**

Education will be developed to be a sustainable aspect of Museum revenue. [Note section 4.]

## **5.3 Shop**

The Shop will continue to offer its currently successful combination of products as well as hosting a mix of commercial and gallery-type shows for individual artists. Increasing Shop revenue will depend on more online sales; promoting the Shop as a destination rather than relying on Museum attendance; and hosting special events for Gardiner Friends and other communities.

## **5.4 Venue and Hospitality**

The Museum works well with its main hospitality partner The Food Dudes. We will review opportunities with The Food Dudes regularly, including other venues' rates and practices, allowing the Gardiner to maximize hospitality revenue while not interfering with our function as a cultural venue. We will consider the potential for increased hospitality revenue around the Plaza and Exhibition Hall when it is not otherwise in use.

## **5.5 Curatorial**

**5.5.1 Support curator development.** The Gardiner will fund curatorial development and attendance at conferences, and encourage our curators to contribute to the Gardiner's website and become public facing as much as possible.

**5.5.2 Victoria College.** The Gardiner will continue to work with Victoria College to support our academic involvement with the College. We will consider joint fundraising for a shared curatorial/academic position and review options for joint academic events.

## 5.6 Development

Financial growth is dependent on growing our Development capabilities.

**5.6.1 International Ceramic Art Fair.** The Gardiner will increase fundraising related to ICAF from auxiliary events such as the gala opening and SMASH art party. We will grow ICAF into the major attention and donation driver for the Museum; a potent expression of stewardship; and a powerful magnet for new audiences and donors. The Museum will establish a strategy to expand ICAF after the first year of its move to the Exhibition Hall. This will include extending its international reach to validate ICAF for local audiences, internationalize the Gardiner brand, and increase sales and interest outside of the GTA and Canada.

**5.6.2 Legacy Donations.** The Gardiner will strive to maximize the value of legacy donations. We will create a strategy beyond the Porcelain Society format to maximize the anticipated donations from the Boomer generation in the next decade.

**5.6.3 New Members/Young Members.** The Gardiner will continue to offer our \$30 Get Acquainted Pass and find ways to promote trial memberships to new communities and younger potential members. We will use the Young Patron Circle to attract and steward younger members and build the next generation of Museum leaders by including YPC members on Board Committees, as well as having at least one YPC member on the

Board.

**5.6.4 Endowment.** The Museum will initiate an endowment campaign by creating a framework that aggregates many diverse and attractive funding opportunities to appeal to people who make sustained contributions to the Museum. We will begin this campaign after a consultation with the Development Committee and an external fundraising consultant.

**5.7 Staff Compensation.** While we acknowledged that staff seeking expanded opportunities in their specialities may need to find growth elsewhere, staff compensation levels will be reviewed to ensure that the Gardiner retains staff with above average compensation. Professional development, personal profile, and the opportunity for research will be expanded to sustain a stable workforce. We will review all Gardiner Museum compensation with a consultant in 2021.