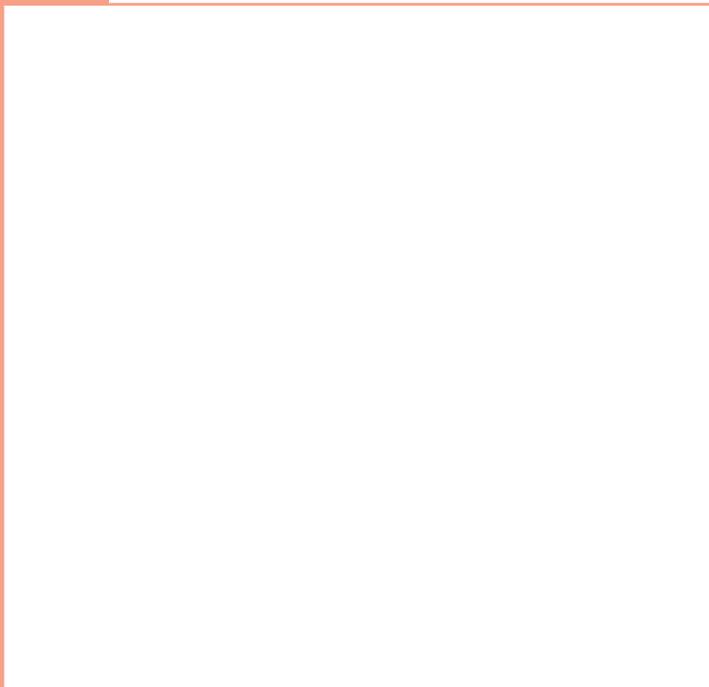


Artist-Run Centres:

Community Contribution Situation

An initiative of the
Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference /
Conférence des collectifs et des centres d'artistes autogérés

Part of the Canadian Coalition for the Arts'
ARTS 308 Campaign



Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference
Conférence des collectifs et des centres d'artistes autogérés



CANADIAN ARTS
COALITION
CANADIENNE DES ARTS

What is an Artist-Run Centre?

Artist-run Centres (ARCs) are non-profit organizations that support new and innovative practices in the arts. ARCs are run by a Board of Directors, which is elected by the centre's membership at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). For the most part, the Board consists of professional artists. Members of ARCs are actively involved in the arts community and are typically highly educated arts professionals including: artists, curators, art historians and educators. Our members identify with our centre's mandate to

The artist-run centre

is located in the riding

Artist-run centres provide essential services to the members of its community. These services are fostered through **peer-to-peer engagement** including socio-professional **networking opportunities** and access to **artistic distribution and production** resources and support. ARCs constitute key components of the Canadian visual art system; they provide community-engaged programs and activities, support the development of artists' and cultural workers' careers, and foster artistic innovation.

History

is a member of

and actively takes part in

Since their inception in the late 1960s, ARCs have played a defining role in the development of contemporary art practices in Canada. By providing a framework in which to showcase experimental and non-commercially driven art, ARCs have been vital to the development of new artistic practices and have contributed to the expansion of critical discourse on contemporary art.

ARCs have formed a pan-Canadian **network** of artists, curators, critics and arts administrators, as well as regional, national, and international alliances. By sharing the mandate of serving the artistic community and expanding contemporary art practices, ARCs in Canada serve as an autonomous network of many kinds of spaces for the production and presentation of art including: galleries, presentation spaces, artists' studios and specialized production facilities, collectives, archives, publishing houses, magazines, bookstores, and festivals. There are approximately 170 ARCs in Canada. The mandates of certain centres are based on the development of particular practices (such as video and new media, performance, and print-making), while others focus on the exploration of particular identities through art (e.g. feminist and queer art, First Nations' artistic production, or Francophone cultural production in English Canada).

Cultural Contribution

With a rich history that spans over forty years, ARCs have had a significant impact on cultural ecology in Canada and around the world. Generally, ARCs present contemporary art that parallels larger public institutions and private commercial galleries – offering an alternative to artists in determining how to present their work. Accordingly, ARCs can be said to fulfill the “Research & Development” needs of the Canadian visual arts sector. In fact, we can historically trace the development of practices such as performance art, video, and new media back to programming and education initiatives of ARCs.

Most of Canada's **internationally recognized contemporary artists** have come out of the artist-run movement. Notably, has supported

Professional Development

ARCs play a key role in integrating new generations of artists and cultural workers in the professional visual and media arts sector. ARCs often serve as stepping-stones for **emerging artists** to exhibit work in a professional context, but also provide young members of the artistic community opportunities to network and learn about cultural management by volunteering on committees and attending AGMs. By providing hands-on experience to emerging artists and cultural workers, ARCs bridge the gap existing between higher education training and professional artistic practice and cultural management. In fact, approximately half of all ARC employees are under 35 years of age.

Community Engagement

actively seeks to expand its audience through community-engaged programming and activities, and has established partnerships with local community and educational organizations throughout its history of operation.

Recently,
has collaborated with
to realize
a project that

In terms of artistic dissemination,
has realized publications including exhibition catalogues, artists' books, and critical anthologies. Publications produced by ARCs contribute to the promotion of Canadian art on an international level and participate in the advancement of artistic knowledge.

Structure

According to a study commissioned in 2007 by the Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference (ARCA) – an organization representing the Canadian artist-run community, most ARCs' annual budgets are between \$100,000 and \$200,000 (including subsidies and self-generated revenue). ARCs usually have between 2 and 3 employees. In 2012-13, with a total budget of realized exhibitions, including solo and group exhibitions, which showcased the works of emerging, mid-career and established artists.

Individualized artists' use of the **presentation and/or production space** is at the heart of an ARC's operations. Use of the centre's resources and space is determined by either a curator/artistic director or by a committee of peers following a public call for project proposals. Because resources are limited, a centre will only be able to accommodate a small amount of proposed projects each year. Having their project selected by a committee of peers is an **important form of validation** for an emerging artist. ARCs encourage established artists to experiment with new ideas and techniques, providing them with support that they would otherwise not receive from a museum or a public or commercial gallery. Production resources and presentation spaces are then allocated to each artist/project according to their needs.

In small localities, ARCs often constitute the only space dedicated to the production and presentation of contemporary art. Thus, ARCs contribute to the retention and attraction of creative individuals in these regions.

ARCs also take part in collective cultural events with national and international reach.

In addition to these exhibitions, _____ has organized **free public events** including artists' talks, screenings, workshops and performances

In Brief

An ARC is a **public and community-driven space** with a flexible structure that is administered by professional artists (volunteers, regular or contracted staff) that accommodates emerging and established artists and practices. The centre remodels itself with each new exhibition it presents and with each new generation of artists and cultural workers that form its community. ARCs' structures facilitate artists' involvement at different stages of their careers and in different capacities. While the situation of artists in Canada is, to say the least, precarious, ARCs remain essential resources that allow artists to produce and present work. ARC staff, who are also artists, are encouraged to actively maintain an artistic practice, as their artistic success may reflect positively on the centre.

ARCs strengthen their community and Canadian cultural identity, increase the visibility of local artists, and contribute to the circulation of contemporary Canadian art on local, national and international levels

Current Situation

Issues faced by ARCs

A lack of adequate access to operational funding and the chronic instability of project-based funding pose many difficulties for the daily operations of non-profit arts organizations like ARCs. Currently, less than half of the ARCs in Canada receive operational funding from the Canada Council for the Arts. Organizations operate with less paid staff than what is needed, and often have to shut down due to a lack of financial resources. The last evaluation round of the Council's Assistance to Artist-Run Centres Program, found that funding requests deemed "very reasonable" amounted to \$6.3 M. The total funds allocated through this program (for one year) amounted to \$4.1 M, which represents only 65% of requested funding. Increasing the Canada Council for the Arts' core budget would allow for increased subsidies to centres that currently receive the program's minimum level of assistance, which is capped at \$20,000. This measure would increase the minimum level of assistance to \$40,000 and support centres that are currently not receiving operating assistance, many of which are located in mid-sized cities and regions.

Issues Faced by Artists

Artists are at the heart of Canada's cultural vitality. However their situation is, to say the least, precarious. The average earnings of artists are 37% below the Canadian labour force average. Typically, an artist living alone finds herself in a situation of extreme poverty: the average median income for artists is 38% below poverty line, as determined for urban centres.

Accordingly, the Canadian artist-run community supports the Canadian Coalition for the Arts' recommendation to stimulate job creation and local economic development by increasing the annual Parliamentary allocation to the Canada Council for the Arts by a minimum of 10% in 2014-15.

Arts 308 Campaign

is proud to participate this year in the ARTS 308 Campaign, an initiative of the Canadian Coalition for the Arts, which encourages the artistic community to meet with their MPs. The goal of this campaign is to sensitize Members of Parliament to the contribution of arts and culture organizations in their riding, and to communicate them the Canadian Coalition for the Arts' 3 pre-budget submission recommendations. These recommendations aim to increase overall funding to the arts in Canada in order to ameliorate employment opportunities and conditions in the arts, and improve the cultural sector's economic situation, and by extension, that of Canadian communities and cultural diplomacy.

Thank you!

Sources:

The Distinct Role of Artist-run centres in the Canadian Visual Arts Ecology. Report prepared for the Canada Council for the Arts by MDR Burgess Consultants. 2011.

A Statistical profile of Artists in Canada Based on the 2006 Census. Prepared by Hill Strategies. 2009.

For additional information:

www.arccc-cccaa.org

Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference / Conférence des collectifs et des centres d'artistes autogérés

www.canadianartscoalition.com

Canadian Arts Coalition