



## DO THE WORK (June 2020)

“Do the work.” This is our commitment as allies in the Canadian and international arts community, who believe Black lives matter, and that systemic racism must be addressed in Canada.

As the Director of Angell Gallery, I have been asked how I feel about recent statistics that clearly illustrate underrepresentation in the Toronto arts community, and our own gallery. It is unacceptable to have only 57 BIPOC-identifying (Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour) artists out of 454 artists represented at commercial galleries in the city. There is much work to be done, and I am honoured to have this responsibility at Angell Gallery.

Today, I’m announcing three concrete steps we are taking that elaborate on the planning we’ve been doing at the gallery, addressing our artist roster, programming, and community.

### 1. ARTIST ROSTER

Our artist roster, as it appears now, needs to better reflect our community, and the programming we have been doing at the gallery. Within the next **6 - 12 months** it will certainly look different, and be a better expression of both. We also respect the right of artists who wish to collaborate outside of formal representation.

### 2. PROGRAMMING

With the recent pandemic, we have been thinking a lot about what digital programming means to us at the gallery. With that, I am excited to announce **PLATFORM**, a yearlong initiative devoted to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Person of Colour) artists and curators.

Beginning with **PLATFORM: Pride** this month (more information to come soon), we will follow with an open call to BIPOC artists and curators for digital exhibitions that will take place throughout the next 11 months, culminating in a group exhibition at the gallery in **August 2021**. This initiative has been created to amplify and elevate the work of BIPOC artists and curators in our community, and to make much-needed space for new voices at the gallery.

### 3. COMMUNITY

Open conversation and continued participation in the greater community is crucial to us, and we recognize there are systemic barriers to access in the arts. In addition to our existing outreach and philanthropy with youth arts education organizations like **VIBE Arts**, we are creating an **annual bursary for undergraduate arts students** who identify as Black, Indigenous, or Person of Colour.



I have taken this past week to be personally and professionally on mute, which means to me that my eyes and ears have been wide open in listening and learning. It has meant making the space for other voices to be heard, and pausing promotion and business and daily life to pay attention. In understanding non-optical ally-ship, my role as an artist and newly appointed curator/director, simply as a human being, listening and learning has—and will continue to be—an important first step.

In my artistic and curatorial practice, I am committed to elevating underrepresented voices, specifically Female, Feminist, LGBTTTQIA, and BIPOC identifying voices. I acknowledge and humbly face the role I now have that comes with a platform and the responsibility to continue Angell Gallery's evolution. I am very aware that the gallery has work to do, and it was in my mandate when I was appointed to this position in August 2019, with my first curated efforts appearing at the start of 2020.

There are many systemic and economic barriers to access in the arts: from funding for arts education in our public schools, to the mounting costs and diminishing employment prospects of post-Secondary arts education, and the often prohibitive fees to access quality programming, all within an increasingly unaffordable major city. That's why our plan for the coming year addresses not only the changes we can bring to our own gallery, but to our community at large with the creation of a new bursary for BIPOC-identifying undergraduate arts students.

We recognize the need for diverse voices in our roster and programming; I know we can do so much more, and I have been actively engaged in collaborations and conversations that continue to move this mandate forward. In addition to these efforts, the gallery has been committed to ongoing support of important organizations including Vibe Arts for Children and Youth, Sherbourne Health Clinic, Casey House, and Rainbow Railroad.

With early and continued arts education being invaluable, we believe in organizations like VIBE Arts who provide community and school based arts education in under-resourced communities in Toronto, an important pillar of our outreach for many years.

Though this year has challenged our existing plans, there have been and will continue to be new ideas and projects to come at Angell Gallery that show we are living what it means to, "Do the work." We hope you will continue to stay engaged with the gallery as we grow and evolve, and we welcome more opportunities to have open conversations. We are listening.

With hope and respect,

Noah Gano  
Director, Angell Gallery