

Art Market Forum 2020

Report

2020 Report

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The Art Market Forum is an event aiming to promote communal skill sharing and networking, while offering participants an opportunity to come together to discuss the challenges currently affecting our sector. The forum will explore the themes of management and the digital shift.

Through lectures, workshops and discussions, AGAC wishes to provide participants with the means to deal with new art market trends.

Here is a look back on this second edition which took place virtually from November 16 to 20, 2020.

Art Market Forum

Nov. 16 — 20, 2020

Art Market Management

In Canada, there is no educational program that leads to specific professions related to the art market and most people in the sector have learned from first-hand experiences, through mentorship or by instinct. The theme of art market management is therefore essential to complement the skills acquired by professionals with specific training that addresses current issues.

With this management component, we aim to train participants in aspects of management in areas such as public and media relations, marketing, team management and relations with artists.

The Art Market in the Digital Era

In the context of the last few months having pushed cultural players to turn to online tools, we will explore for a second year the art market in the digital age. This theme is a must, as changes in this field are rapid and constantly require the re-evaluation and updating of newly acquired skills.

The lectures and workshops offered under this theme will allow participants to better understand and master tools and concepts such as data, search engines, Instagram, Wikipedia or augmented and virtual realities.

Theme #1

Theme #2

How to increase the coverage given to visual arts in the media with better press relations?

In January 2020, the visual arts community lobbied the media to increase the amount of press coverage devoted to this discipline. The various key cultural players in this ecosystem, such as galleries, often receive recurring press coverage from a few main allies. However, these cultural enterprises wish to increase their notoriety by new means in order to contribute to the achievement of their business objectives. This workshop allowed participants to discover how to enhance their profile and how to interact with the media to generate richer and more abundant press coverage.

Presented by **Olivier Lapierre**, Communications, public relations and media relations consultant.



Olivier Lapierre spoke with a number of journalists, columnists, and interested parties to share their point of view on the situation. They were invited to give advice so that gallery owners could better communicate with the media:

“

Convince the players in the field (artists, galleries, curators, etc.) of the need to speak up and to come out publicly on issues that go beyond their personal practice so that their voices carry as much weight in the public space as those who do so more naturally in other cultural settings.

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Visual artists are at the forefront on many social and political issues and society would benefit from hearing from them more often.

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We are going through an unprecedented crisis, and it would be to the advantage of the players in the field to unite their voices around common issues. The strength in numbers clearly makes the difference in a media space that is also shrinking due to the crisis.

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Any advice? Patience. There are so many more things we don't cover than things that we do cover. And also, don't associate the text with a marketing stunt. Advertisements are about boosting sales. Articles are about making an artist and their work known.

• • •

Don't just reach out to journalists once the works or the exhibition are ready to be unveiled. Everything that leads to it can be part of the story. In this spirit, do not hesitate to propose interviews, studio visits, behind-the-scenes reports. The art world is very secretive, and it would benefit from opening up and engaging in a more sustained dialogue.

”

Tips for Media Relations

→ Choose the right time to contact the media

- Privilege the beginning of the week to contact them and do not wait until the last minute (preferably 2 or 3 weeks in advance);
- Anticipate times when the media might need you or when the competition will be strong (e.g. fairs, back-to-school season, important celebrations, etc.).

→ Make a list of potential journalists and targeted publications

- It is necessary to read the news to properly identify each journalist's areas of interest in order to better target who to approach;
- A good media list is defined more by quality than quantity. It contains a variety of themes: business, economy, visual arts, entertainment, lifestyle, interior design, society, etc.

→ Propose good stories

- It is a combination of factors that makes journalists interested in a subject or not: quality, originality, momentum, relevance, historical aspect, etc.;
- Do not hesitate to get together with others around you to make a turnkey proposal to journalists.

→ Prepare a clear and structured proposal

- Clearly identify the who-what-where-when-why. A proposal should contain factual data, artistic approach, a summary of the project or previously published texts and visuals.

→ Make it easy for them

- Impersonal mass emails clutter up the messaging system. Favour personalized and well-targeted emails, with a specific recipient, a clear title, a detailed proposal that is well adapted to the targeted media, and relevant, varied and available contributors;
- Be available to answer their questions at all times. A quick follow-up in response to their questions or just touching base will allow you to put all of the chances on your side.

→ Follow-up

- You don't receive an answer? Keep watch! Wait a few days and follow up a maximum of one time, adding new information or a new element. If the journalist is not interested in your proposal, it does not mean that they will never be interested in your proposals. Persevere.

Ressources

[Op-ed writing tips - McGill University](#)

[Redaction Guide - Government of Québec \(French only\)](#)

[State of the media's report - CISION](#)

Presentation of the Art+Feminism Project

This lecture presented the Art+Feminism project, an intersectional feminist non-profit organization that directly addresses the lack of information on gender, feminism and the arts on the Internet, and more specifically the lack of inclusion within Wikipedia. Camille also discussed *Reading Together: Reliability and Multilingual Global Communities*, a research project that deepens the important work of Art+Feminism by identifying barriers to the inclusion of relevant sources and equitable editorial resources on the Wikipedia platform.

Presented by **Camille Larivée**, ACC/CCA's Director of Programming.



Context

Created in 2004, Art+Feminism is an intersectional feminist non-profit organization that attempts to address the lack of information on gender, feminism and the arts on the Internet, and in particular on the Wikipedia site.

It should be noted that Wikipedia is the seventh most visited website in the world and that less than 16% of contributors on the site identify themselves as women, and even less as part of the BIPOC and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. There are still very few articles and pages on Wikipedia, images on Wikimedia Commons and entries on WikiData focusing on BIPOC women and 2SLGBTQIA+ artists and curators.

Edit-a-thon

Art+Feminism hosts Edit-a-thons around the world where participants are invited to learn, edit, update and add articles to Wikipedia. These events are free and take place throughout the year in community centres, galleries, museums, artist-run centres, universities, cafes, etc. Participants receive a short training on Wikipedia and can subsequently support the project by editing and adding articles on women and BIPOC and 2SLGBTQIA+ artists and curators.

In a few words, what are the different types of Wikipedia contributions for Art+Feminism?

- Be an editor and edit articles and pages;
- Identify items that need to be improved. They are also called notification templates or banners;
- Create new pages - to do this you need to make a minimum of 10 small or large edits to existing pages or posts. It can be as simple as adding a comma or adding information like a date, name or place.

Tips

→ Username

If you edit potentially controversial topics (feminism, politics, climate change, etc.), using your real name as your username increases your risk of being the target of harassment outside of Wikipedia by trolls. Using a pseudonym can make it easier to associate your Wikipedia account with your other digital accounts and activities. It is possible to make edits on Wikipedia without creating an account, but it is not recommended. In this case, your computer's IP address will be recorded and displayed in the history tab of the page you edited, which may cause you harm.

→ Security toolkit

A security toolkit is also available on the Art+Feminism website. It contains information on anti-oppression and harassment policies, useful templates for editing or creating a page or an article to avoid deleting articles, useful technical support, etc.



Would it be possible to organize an edit-a-thon for the galleries?

You cannot edit your own page as an artist, gallery owner or other institution. An artist's centre, a gallery, a museum, all these spaces can organize Edit-a-thons. It is interesting to come together for the event to be successful (for example several galleries that come together to organize a common Edit-a-thon).

It is recommended that one or more members of the Art+Feminism community be invited to participate in the Edit-a-thon so that training is given to all participants, which will make the event a success.

Ressources

[How to edit a Wikipedia page](#)

[Wikipedia guide by Arttexte](#)

[Security toolbox](#)

[Research project *Reading Together: Reliability and Multilingual Global Communities*](#)

Augmented and Virtual Reality: A New Business Model?

Over the past year, AGAC developed an augmented reality application that allows users to view artwork, at scale and in a realistic manner, on their own walls, from their phones. Launched last May, Collecting – the App. has been well received and has taken on a new dimension in the context of the pandemic. Indeed, from creation to marketing, the last few months have accelerated the digital shift in the art world.

The aim of this discussion was to explore the different uses of augmented and virtual reality and, more broadly, the impact of new digital tools on the art market. Are we on the way to a new business model? Will augmented reality and virtual reality change the way we “consume” contemporary art?

This discussion was moderated by **Benjamin J. Allard**, cultural worker and artist.

Guests: **Myriam Achard**, Chief New Media Partnerships & PR, Centre Phi; **Samuel Arsenault-Brassard**, VR/AR Artist and Curator; **Nicolas S. Roy**, CEO and Creative Director, Dpt.



Definitions

Augmented Reality: Augmented reality (AR) is a technology that allows the integration of virtual 3D elements - in real time - within a real environment. The principle is to combine the virtual and the real and to give the illusion of a perfect integration to the user.

Virtual Reality: Virtual reality (VR) is a technology that allows a person to immerse themselves in a digitally created artificial world. It can be a reproduction of the real world or an imaginary universe. The experience is both visual and auditory.

Extended Reality: Extended reality (XR) brings together the various forms of immersive reality that make up augmented and virtual reality.

How can these technologies change the cultural environment?

Until this year, only virtual reality had really stood out in the cultural sector. Now, we are seeing AR starting to become a means or even an interesting medium for telling stories, creating works, showing works, etc.

There are two very different aspects to consider when talking about XR: creation and access.

For Nicolas S. Roy, XRs are, above all, about making collections more accessible, rather than being creative tools. According to him, these technologies encourage the decompartmentalization of collections, allowing works to be discovered outside of the exhibition space.

They could, for example, make it possible to interest new generations in contemporary art. XRs would therefore represent the possibility of democratizing access to art. Let's not forget that any way of democratizing access to art is positive for all. This is exactly the policy of the Phi Centre, which wants to make art accessible to as many people as possible. Moreover, the Collecting application uses AR to allow users to freely project works by different artists at scale, on their own walls.

How to collect virtual reality or augmented reality artworks?

According to the panelists, we are still in an era where what is most important, before talking about collecting, is to disseminate XR artworks as much as possible. Before there are collectors, there must be amateurs. However, Samuel Arsenault-Brassard suggests imagining a model where a work would be limited to 3 editions, buyers would have a period of exclusivity for a given time, then the works would be accessible to the general public free of charge, and collectors would be mentioned as “patrons” as soon as the work was distributed.

Concerning the conservation of works over time, with the Cloud, the works will be able to live on a centralized server, our devices will then only be broadcasting devices, which would make it possible to compensate for their obsolescence and therefore to collect these works more easily.

What business models?

Myriam Achard describes the Phi Centre's business model, which is based on diffusion and distribution. Phi Centre's exhibitions are proposed to other international exhibition venues, which are provided with all the necessary equipment, so it is a question of exporting “turnkey” exhibitions (scenography, headphones, sensors, etc.). At the same time, the Phi Centre has also been involved with artists and studios that have already produced works, in order to act as a distributor for museums.

Galleries or other exhibition spaces would need specialists to guide them, to introduce them to these technologies, other than artists whose role it is not. Presenting a work in augmented or virtual reality requires real expertise, which is why many places remain reluctant to exhibit these works. Especially since when the time comes to buy or sell these works, it is not something that has yet been standardized, we are talking about an industry that is still in the process of being built.

These technologies are sometimes expensive, and several ideas were put forward to overcome this

- Home XR residencies for artists. A VR/AR equipment kit would be sent to allow artists to access this technology and create for several months.
- During the pandemic, the Phi Centre has set up the “VR to go” program: it is possible to rent a virtual reality helmet for 48 to 72 hours, on which a selection of short films awarded in major international festivals is programmed.
- To share this kind of equipment, both for creation and for access between galleries or exhibition spaces.

Ressources

[Collecting – the App.](#)
[Centre Phi](#)
[Dpt.](#)

Respectful Workplaces in the Visual Arts Sector

This workshop reviewed issues surrounding respectful workplaces in the arts to be considered by employers in the visual arts sector. Jeanne LeSage reviewed legal compliance considerations, working with our sector's values, the roles of boards, management, teams and artists – and how to do this with limited resources and capacity. The structure of the session was a combination of content delivery and discussion.

Presented by **Jeanne LeSage**, Director at LeSage Arts Management.



Definitions

Workplace: Any place where employees work, and it can include the office, the lobby, a temporary event location, etc.

Employees: This includes salaried employees, contractors, volunteers, interns, etc.

Harassment in the workplace: This means “engaging in vexatious comments or behaviour against a worker that is known or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome”. Harassment includes both psychological harassment and sexual harassment.

“With artists, we need to have discussions about their status. If you are showing an artist exhibit in the gallery, is that a worker? Probably not. If you hire that artist to do an educational program, probably considered a worker. But again, we have to define it in the policy.”

Jeanne LeSage

The ecosystem of the sector

One thing about the cultural sector: it is difficult to identify problematic behaviours. But why? The cultural sector - being a passionate field - is known for this very fine line between professional and personal life. In addition, the structure of organizations and the management of employees are often ill-defined: many repeat contracts, part-time employees, many volunteers and stakeholders, very small teams and therefore rarely any human resources departments.

As employers, we have obligations. Failure to comply with the law could have serious repercussions, including fines and legal action. Labor laws are there to guarantee and regulate the safety of employees in the workplace.

From an ethical standpoint, taking care of your employees and providing them with a healthy workplace is the right thing to do. Especially since one of the main values of our sector is collaboration, the human aspect and sharing.

What does the law impose on organizations about workplace harassment?

The Criminal Code of Canada contains laws to protect employees, including against violent acts, sexual harassment or assault, and threats. If either of these occurs, the police should definitely be contacted.

Workplace violence and harassment are unwanted behaviours towards an employee that can be perpetrated by anyone in the workplace. These unwanted behaviours could be done by another worker, or by a client, a volunteer, etc.

→ What harassment can include:

- To make offensive remarks, whether they be jokes or innuendo that demean, ridicule or intimidate;
- To show or circulate offensive photographs or material, whether printed or digital;
- To intimidate;
- Repeating offensive remarks or bullying over the phone or email.

→ What sexual harassment in the workplace can include:

- Adopting behaviour or vexatious proposals against a worker because of gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, while the proposals or behaviours are known to be unsolicited;
- Making solicitation or advances when the person is in a position of power vis-à-vis the worker and the person knows or has reason to know that the solicitation or advances are unsolicited.

→ What harassment does not include:

- Reasonable action taken by an employer or supervisor with respect to the management and direction of employees or the workplace;
- Reasonable managerial action which can be part of a manager's normal duties and which could include re-shuffling of duties, scheduling, assessments, workplace inspections, implementation of health measures and security and disciplinary action;
- Differences of opinion or minor disagreements between employees are not generally considered harassment in the workplace.

A policy against harassment in the workplace

Employers absolutely must have a policy on harassment in the workplace. Every organization should have a policy that they review each year. This policy should include a procedure for reported incidents, a designated contact person, as well as response procedures.

This policy is used to prevent and counter conflicts in the workplace. It is best to write it when things are going well, rather than when conflicts arise.

There is no one-size-fits-all policy against harassment. A policy must be adapted to the reality of the company (number of employees, stakeholders, etc.). The policy must also take into account all the workplaces available to employees (office, events, etc.).

It is important to make all employees aware of the policy and to establish good practices, such as systematically presenting the policy to all new employees on their welcome day.

“ The best time to set up a policy and a program is when you don’t have a complaint in front of you. You don’t want to be creating a baseline policy and programs when there is a complaint that lands on your desk. Those are very challenging times and you want something in place for it. ”
Jeanne LeSage

Procedures

→ Before an incident

- Prevention: Learn about the rules and laws in your area
- Create a policy and make sure to present it to each employee and new employee
- Understand: Who to refer to? Who in the organization is responsible for adhering to the policy?
- Share resources in common workplaces

→ During an incident

- Fear of retaliation
- Observation techniques
- How to talk to the people concerned?
- Is it possible to defuse the situation?

→ After an incident

- Check with the people concerned
- Should the situation be postponed?
- Establish the chronological sequence of actions
- Records and documentation: keep written records
- Review the policy and update according to recent events
- Resubmit the policy to employees
- Are external resources needed?

Everyone’s roles

Board of Directors
→ Ensure policies and programs are in place, designate a manager to whom employees can report in the event of conflicts.

Leaders
→ Make sure policies and programs are put in place and followed by everyone. Allocate time and resources to present the policy to everyone.

Supervisors
→ Know your obligations in the event of an incident report.

Employees
→ Common responsibility / Report if you witness an incident.

Laws differ from province to province. Please refer to them when developing your policy to be familiar with the legal framework.

Ressources
[CNESST \(Québec\) \(French only\)](#)
[Occupational Health and Safety Act \(Ontario\)](#)
[Canadian Human Rights Commission](#)

Instagram and the Visual Arts

Linked to the visual by its nature, the Instagram platform has seen a culture of inspiration and entertainment develop over the years. Its vocation as a photo and video sharing service – through permanent and ephemeral content – makes it a must in the field of visual arts. However, the broadcasting and distribution of content on Instagram are increasingly modulated by advertising options, algorithms, influencers and recommendation functions. What are the methods and skills to be developed to make the most of the resources available to us? What sort of budget is necessary? Which targets and content formats?

This workshop helped to better understand Instagram's ecosystem and the elements to put in place to increase the impact of your presence on the platform.

Presented by **Nellie Brière**, Digital communications strategist.



Instagram is a platform based on the culture of inspiration and hashtags. The hashtag is a tool to gather niches and tribes of interests around a word, for example #artgallery.

Sometimes these are words that do not specifically define what we are talking about, but they have a precise meaning for these communities. It takes a knowledge of the communities that you want to address on Instagram to be able to reach them. In order to make the best use of the platform, you need to know the habits of your targets on social networks; you need to know who you're talking to in order to know how to talk to them.

Instagram in numbers

- More than 1 billion active monthly users
- The 2nd most downloaded free app in the Apple store
- 63% of users use Instagram on a daily basis
- Users spend an average of 28 minutes per day using the app
- It is the preferred social network of influencers
- The engagement rate on Instagram is 60 times higher than on Facebook

“It is essential to be on Instagram when you're in the visual arts, because it's a platform that promotes a culture of aesthetics and inspiration.”
Nellie Brière

The news feed

The news feed is formed according to the platform's subscribers, both on Facebook and on Instagram. Keep in mind that, as a company, you use social networks for professional reasons while your followers use them for personal reasons.

The more interaction there is on a publication, the more visible it becomes to a larger pool of users later on. It is therefore important to put hashtags in the text of the publication to target your subscribers.

Stories

Stories work according to the same principle as the news feed: algorithms determine the order of the stories. Stories allow for a lot of spontaneity, since they remain visible for only 24 hours: reposts, live stories, etc. It is also possible with stories to see detailed statistics.

The creation possibilities are endless because the platform has several tools: filters, interaction stickers, gifs, texts, identifiers, etc. In order to publish several stories simultaneously as a part of the same sequence, the trick is to save them in advance with the function for this purpose in the interface.

For businesses, it is not recommended to use stories uniquely, because the subscriber may not understand what you're talking about. Stories, naturally, allow for storytelling, and you really need to tell stories because it is more engaging for your audience. According to Nellie Brière, it takes at least three occurrences to really capture the attention of your audience.

Advertisements in stories are quite effective, as they often feature well-told stories in photo or video format, and allow the use of the swipe up option, linking to an external site.

Advertising

Despite the fact that the platform is free to use, free use is limited, especially for companies. With your account, you will see growth in terms of visibility only after publishing a lot of content. Building a network therefore takes a lot of time. That's why you have to buy advertising to be seen by more people.

Even though many companies are on the platforms, very few are using media placement, which means that media placement is still very affordable. The results are substantial because their profiling tool is quite powerful. It can take into account the profile mentioned by the user, but it also provides insight on behaviour: what they like, where they go, how they talk and what they talk about. This data collection allows the development of consumer profiles which, in the context of paid advertising, become very easy to target.

The best place to learn about the different Instagram niches is on Facebook with the Audience Insight tool (available via Business Suite). This tool allows users to search for certain demographic information and areas of interest. It also allows for the correlation of these characteristics to better build and understand the niche.

On Instagram and Facebook, there are a total of 17 placement possibilities on both platforms: whether in their respective news feeds, in their respective stories, on Messenger, Whatsapp, etc. Since Facebook and Instagram platforms are interrelated, it is possible to select on which platforms to broadcast them.

The magic of the platform is that subscribers can hardly get tired of ads, as algorithms have been put in place to track when an individual has reached their advertising limit. If a user finds that there are too many, it's probably because they are not active enough on the platform and therefore the algorithms can't adapt well to the frequency and type of advertising based on personal tolerance.

“ Users don’t get tired of advertising on Instagram, because the algorithms are there to monitor everything. Each person is exposed to a maximum number of ads determined by the platform, and each individual is evaluated as being able to endure a certain number of ads based on their usage. ”

Nellie Brière

Number of subscribers

There is no universal way to gain subscribers. It’s a combination of several elements: having the right content, the right hashtags, influencers talking about your account, events that you broadcast online, etc. However, advertising is still the best technique to get people to subscribe. And for that, it takes a good strategy.

It doesn’t matter if you have thousands of subscribers, because it doesn’t guarantee that they will see or interact with all of your publications. So the statistics are not necessarily better with a larger number of subscribers. Ultimately, it takes interesting content that has value and will appeal to your subscribers.

Never pay for subscribers! First of all, this is forbidden by the platform, which means that if you get caught, you can lose your account. To increase your number of subscribers, it makes more sense to make targeted advertising campaigns with adapted content. People subscribe to your account because they like your content (works, artists, etc.).

There is an old philosophy that it is better to have more followers than accounts that you follow, but this is an outdated concept. Another practice that is debatable is the follow back, which consists of following subscribers to get them to follow your account. Often companies that do this will later unsubscribe from these new accounts, because all they were looking for was the follow back.

Online Sales

To have the swipe up option, it takes a minimum of 10,000 subscribers. However, this is an attainable number to reach if you invest in strong promotional campaigns. With the swipe up option, users are directed via stories to an external site. This makes it possible to make sales on another platform.

Paid advertising on Instagram is another way to access the swipe up feature, even if the number of subscribers is lower than 10,000. This means that for as little as \$10, you can place an ad with a link. This is what makes Instagram so different from all other platforms.

In the Instagram store (Shop) you can easily see who, in the accounts you follow, have online stores. It is now possible to sell on Instagram via an online catalogue hosted directly on the platform, without the need for a transactional website.

Is it good for a gallery to use the Instagram store? Absolutely! You are businesses, so sell on Instagram! Soon, the direct payment option will be activated in Canada. The operation is quite easy and unlike other sales sites, Instagram does not take any percentage on sales, because the goal is to offer a service for which they will then be able to sell you advertising to promote your products.

“ Users are developing the habit of buying on Instagram. So be ready, because the day your audiences are going to understand that they can shop on the platform, you will be there and be part of the potential buying options. ”

Nellie Brière

Frequency of Publications

There’s no point in publishing content simply for the sake of publishing content. The important thing is to have quality content for your followers. And if that means publishing twice a week instead of every day, that’s better. You have to do the calculation internally, to define what it costs in resources, versus the benefits, to see if the investment is worth it in relation to your objectives.

It is also recommended that you vary the type of publications you make. Whether that be photos, videos, exhibition views, live stories, etc., the goal is to offer rich content to your followers in order to capture their attention and to have them engage with your content.

When you publish content, the platform allows a maximum of 15 hashtags. Among these, you should use the hashtags used by your niche audience, but also broader hashtags that allow you to reach a larger audience. It’s all a question of dosage.

There is no advantage to creating a branded hashtag, it is a waste of time, because for a hashtag to be effective it must be promoted to everyone so that use becomes widespread. It is rather recommended to gather around a collective, such as the AGAC, to develop a hashtag culture and have a good advertising campaign to promote it in your networks. By creating a specific term for Canadian galleries, it will then be possible for subscribers to find all Canadian galleries in one place by following the associated hashtag.

Creator Studio

There are some interesting features with the Facebook Creator (Creator Studio), which is actually the production control room that allows to publish all video content and stories on both platforms (Facebook and Instagram). This is very useful if you produce content directly on your computer, rather than on your phone. The Creator Studio allows you to manage, among other things, messaging, monetization, creative tools for content, etc.

? What opportunities should galleries pursue on Instagram?

All of them! It depends on your goals and the means you have to reach them. It is up to you to choose the opportunities depending on who you are targeting.

But most certainly, you must use the store tool, because ultimately, that is what you want to do, sell!

Data, a source of knowledge for its audiences and a lever for action

Are you taking advantage of data on your audiences? This conference will shed light on the knowledge about audiences that data and analytical tools can provide, but also on the resulting strategies to develop your customer base. Éric Trépanier presented the types of data that different players in the art market can possess or acquire. And then he focused on usage data, i.e. data on audiences and their preferences, and the actions to be implemented according to its level of data maturity.

Presented by **Éric Trépanier**, Business Intelligence Director, Synapse C.



There are 2 types of data

→ Descriptive data: cataloguing data produced from information on a cultural object (artist, history, illustration, etc.)

→ Usage data (which the conference will focus on): data that generates information on markets, audiences and their preferences. This data comes from a relationship with an individual, for example a transaction, resulting in a series of information. From there, we can analyze behaviours and identify lists of actions.

There are two main trends for this usage data

→ The profile: who is the individual? What are the characteristics of their profile (gender, age, income, ethnicity, family status, etc.).

→ Behaviour: we will look for outside information in addition to the profile, in order to understand the individual (satisfaction surveys, interviews, etc.). What are their habits?

The different sources of usage data

- Checkout: resulting from a purchase transaction (collection of contact details, etc.)
- Website: movement of Internet users
- Social networks: exchanges and preferences
- Newsletter: customizable communication tool
- Advertising: traffic generated
- Mobile and cellular application, connected objects, etc.

From all these possible sources, it is important to create an information intelligence centre to collect this data that will allow us to know our audience.

Useful data to understand buyers

- Gender;
- Postal code: geographic key that allows you to know the characteristics of an individual, allows you to understand their influence and to target advertising. The postal code gives us information on demographics, to be used with data from Statistics Canada;
- Email: means of communication;
- Date: allows you to understand if there is a month or a more important year, essential in time to segment;
- Type of purchase: categorizing the type of purchase allows you to have a very good portrait of the buyer;
- Purchasing channel: web, external link, newsletter, advertising, etc.;
- Event: often at the base of a transaction because we create events to attract people, but these events (fair, special sale, etc.) are rarely linked to our daily lives, and it is very important to make this connection;
- Price: what are the most popular price brackets, etc.

Data sharing is a common practice, a good strategy to adopt by sector of activity. For example, a group of galleries in a given territory, facing similar dynamics and challenges, would do well to link their data, process them individually but then compare them to the whole group. This would make it possible to discover clients, put strategies in place and carry out benchmarks.

You have to be able to measure the actions that you put in place. Google Analytics is very useful to understand the reactions to actions that we have taken. Knowing your audience is essential at the start of the discoverability process.

It is therefore very important to target, to be able to set up strategies that will make the right people react to a product, a service, a new offer. Targeting facilitates our deployment, the tools we want to use, the means.

Segmentation is very important in order to manage distinct behaviours in a homogeneous group. It is the grouping of similar behaviours resulting from a mathematical analysis of several variables in order to define personas. It allows to:

- Categorize according to defined characteristics
- Define strategies specific to each group
- Push individuals to change level
- Target actions

Data analysis exercise

You have to ask yourself, as an organization, what is the challenge that I want to meet? What action do I want to take? Depending on what you want to achieve, you have to ask yourself what information do you have? How far do I want to go? From there, we'll get the information. What are the processes to be put in place to capture this information? Where to find it? How to assemble it? You have to be aware that this can be a very long process, a year at least.

6 tips from Synapse C

- Think about what you want to accomplish with your data
- Determine what data should be collected
- Centralize and pool your data
- Make sure of the quality of your data
- Identify customer segments focused on behaviours
- Target the right people, with the right message, the right product and through the right channel

Ressources

[Synapse C](#)

[Statistics Canada](#)

[Google Marketing Platform](#)

Innovative Digital Initiatives from AGAC Members

The pandemic has underscored the importance of our findings from the first edition of the Forum in 2019 which focused on innovation and the art market in the digital age. The events of the past several months have accelerated the implementation of these findings and forced cultural players to be more creative in their online offerings. Creation of audiovisual content, opting for virtual events, the development of new websites, etc. These are just some of the digital initiatives that four AGAC's members will be presenting during this discussion. This exchange was an opportunity for the gallery owners to revisit these projects and to give feedback based on multiple different experiences.

This discussion was moderated by **Benjamin J. Allard**, cultural worker and artist.

Guests gallerists

Martin Blais

Martin Blais is a communications professional. His studies in journalism led him to work in the newsroom of the daily newspaper Le Devoir for several years, then in the areas of board game publishing and human resources. In 2020, he joined Galerie Simon Blais, where his responsibilities include communications.

Gareth Brown-Jowett

Gareth Brown-Jowett is the Co-owner and Co-director of Patel Brown Gallery, Toronto with over 15 years' experience managing contemporary art spaces and curating exhibitions. Gareth Co-founded the /edition Art Book Fair that runs in partnership with Art Toronto. In addition to this, he currently and has previously served on numerous committees and boards throughout the city including The Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto, The Power Plant, The Canadian Art Foundation, SNAP!, CANFAR, the Royal Ontario Museum, and C Magazine.

Erika Del Vecchio

Erika Del Vecchio is the project manager, sales consultant and registrar at Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain. After working for four years at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montreal, she now sits on the Printemps du MAC as auction curator. She completed a bachelor's degree in Art History (Concordia University), a minor in Literature (UQAM) and a DEC in Commerce.

Emily Robertson

Emily Robertson completed a double major in Art History and Studio Arts and earned her Master's degree in Art History from Concordia University. After spending seven years as an Art Consultant and co-founding an urban art gallery in 2013, Emily returned to her love for contemporary art and opened Galerie Robertson Arès in July 2019 with François Arès. Having worked with major collectors and collections throughout Canada and the United States, Emily is actively involved in the Montreal art scene with extensive experience participating in international art fairs.



B.J.A.: From a digital initiative perspective, has the current pandemic precipitated things or are these changes that you have had in mind for a long time?

E.R.: I remember last year's edition of the forum where the issue of digital innovations was discussed. Among the participants, we didn't all agree whether price transparency and online presence were really the future of the art market. As a gallery, we want to put forward the passion for the work of artists, but our business depends mostly on sales.

For us, when we founded the gallery, innovations were fundamental to help us sell works. As a young company, when the pandemic arrived we were already in this survival mode, so it was okay.

G.B.J.: It is obvious that we had to make adjustments with the pandemic. We had originally planned to launch our gallery in April, and we finally postponed it to June. We tried to focus mainly on how to communicate with collectors. We had a solid platform and website with a strong social media presence, even before the pandemic.

M.B.: We had more time to devote to the design of the site. And it underlined the importance of having a complete platform. What's interesting in our case is that our database is directly connected to the site. If we make changes in our inventory, it will be reflected on the site. Also, we're slowly moving towards a transactional platform.

E.D.V.: With the changes made to our website, we can now present virtual viewings rooms, which are not necessarily exhibitions realized in the physical gallery. These viewing rooms allow us to share exclusive content with our collectors, by sharing private login links.

B.J.A.: When we talk about digital innovation, we mostly think about communications and social networks. How does that translate in your gallery?

E.D.V.: For several years, the gallery had a Facebook account, but not Instagram, due to lack of time. And shortly before the pandemic, we decided to create an account, since the visual arts lend themselves so well to this application that focuses on images. The key for us was really to produce original content. In fact, we post every day. We also put in place carte blanche initiatives with our artists, where we let them take control of the account for a week to create content, to talk about their practice.

E.R.: In our case, we had an Instagram account even before opening the gallery! It was important for us to create a buzz around our company in order to create a community around the gallery. A platform like Instagram allows us to connect with our extended community and showcase our artists. It also allows our community to stay connected to each other, and for us to connect with our clients, potential clients and the artistic community.

G.B.J.: My partner Devan Patel is agile on social networks. The gallery is very active, we regularly create content, share stories and republish our artists' accounts. Our Instagram account is connected to our online store and we receive purchase requests via this platform on a regular basis. Instagram has definitely become an important part of our business and our daily tasks.

M.B.: Hearing the initiatives put in place by my colleagues, I realize that their use of networks is well established and well thought out. For us, the management of social networks is rather spontaneous, but we would certainly gain by thinking about them better.

It must also be said that some of our collectors are not on social networks. In order to reach them, we had to share with them the content that we were publishing on our networks, such as videos of visits commented by Simon Blais. Collectors are used to coming to the gallery to exchange and discuss, it was a good way to maintain this link with them.

B.J.A.: Let’s talk about the international scene, or at least the United States. You are all on the Artsy platform. I’d like to hear what you have to say about it.

E.R.: Artsy is an incredible platform and tool. Users have access to an infinite number of works online, and it allows us to reach collectors internationally. However, it takes a lot of work for us as a gallery to update information, constantly add content and discuss with potential buyers through the platform.

The next person we hire at the gallery will have to be able to do this kind of administrative work, which consists of entering information on the different platforms, social networks and our site. And the pandemic has highlighted the importance of having an online presence.

G.B.J.: The number of platforms we must regularly engage with - whether it be Artsy, our database, email, social networks, or each of the personalized communications for our collectors, the media and institutions - represents a significant workload. It’s very difficult for a gallery to do this for each of the artists it represents and to do it consistently for each artist. At the gallery, we have structured our collaborations with artists so that we have both represented and collaborating artists. We represent the interests of all these artists, but at different levels and with different resources depending on their group.

M.B.: For our part, the gallery has been subscribed to Artsy for a few years - and it must be said that the subscription is very expensive. We had a sale via the platform for the first time recently, which was a secondary market work by an American artist, sold to an American collector. And even with this sale, we still wonder what is the best way to use the platform, because we realize that we know very little about the public that uses it.

E.D.V.: What I find interesting with Artsy is the SEO - search engine optimization - linked to the artist files on the platform. When searching on a search engine, it allows the Artsy page of our artists to appear among the search results, among others with the gallery’s site or the artist’s site. This way, it increases the notoriety of our artists.

B.J.A.: What about price transparency?

M.B.: We do not systematically post prices online, mainly because we have modern or secondary market works that are less suitable to this. But it’s not set in stone either and it’s something we are constantly thinking about. Right now on our site, only the prices of works under \$5,000 are posted, mostly contemporary works for which it works well. On the other hand, for Françoise Sullivan’s exhibition that was presented in connection with our participation in the Art Toronto fair, we made all of the prices available in the online catalogue, because it was in a fair context and that’s what we would have done in our booth.

B.J.A.: Do you use online platforms to facilitate the management of your gallery?

G.B.J.: We use the Arternal platform. It allows us a large number of options, such as creating virtual, public or private viewing rooms, it also provides us with data. It was a considerable financial investment, but in the end, it allows us to interact more efficiently and quickly with our collectors. The platform is really intuitive and works well on mobile devices, which is very handy when you’re at an art fair.

B.J.A.: Have the initiatives that you have put in place been successful? Have they had the desired effect?

M.B.: We have had good feedback on the initiatives put in place, namely the videos of gallery visits, our new website and online sales via Arsty. We notice that collectors are now more confident to buy works without having seen them in the gallery beforehand. Surprisingly, we have sold to a lot of customers who simply called us.

E.R.: As galleries, we have the chance to be in a privileged domain. Even when we had to close for several weeks, we still made online sales. I would have liked the media to cover more of this kind of news, which is very positive for our environment and our ecosystem.

B.J.A.: Would galleries benefit from collaborating and sharing their innovations?

G.B.J.: I am very much in favour of collaboration, both locally and internationally. And there are a lot of initiatives being developed right now, but I think they’re still at the trial and error stage. As a gallery, we are in a commercial industry, but we also have a responsibility to advance the ideas and practice of contemporary art. Through our initiatives, we have a duty to make the art world more visible.

E.R.: I agree with Gareth. We see an abundance of opportunities and partnerships emerging right now on different platforms, but it’s up to us as a gallery to decide what’s good for our business and our artists. It’s not all about visibility, being visible on a platform takes a lot of work, and you have to make sure that the partnership fits with the gallery’s brand and the artists.

B.J.A.: What lessons are you taking away from this pandemic? Will you continue these initiatives?

M.B.: Yes, because the videos were a way to give collectors a preview - before seeing the works in the gallery. Since the gallery has a team of several employees, it will be easy to maintain them, because they don’t take that much time.

G.B.J.: As a gallery, there are different ways to interact and collaborate with each other, and, especially in Canada, we really need to start working together. It’s a challenging sector and we need to support each other and make sure that all galleries are doing well despite the crisis.

E.R.: We often hear that galleries are in competition with each other. But I don’t think this is really the case. We target different clients, and even if they were the same clients, we don’t share the same artists or the same works. It’s totally different.

Is Your Cultural Content Searchable on the Web?

How to be understood by search engines and connect with your audiences? This training, based on demonstrations and explanations, offered a concrete approach based on improving the structure of information on websites. Different aspects were addressed, such as the importance of improving one's website in the age of artificial intelligence, the promotion strategy (objectives, target audiences), the cultural offer (information structure and metadata), the key elements of a website and the points of contact with your audiences.

Presented by **Josée Plamondon**, Consultant, Digital information



How to make your website talk in the age of artificial intelligence

Plamondon analyzed some websites of AGAC member galleries to identify good and bad practices.

Good tips to remember

- Having good tags on the different pages of your website so that these pages appear first in the search engines;
- Properly naming the image files with consistent logic and meaningful nomenclature;
- Writing sub-texts by section of 140 characters or less so that they appear on the recommendations page (Google search);
- It is important to insert links to other web pages, inside your website, but also outside your site (eg: artist's website, exhibition venue, from the public or private collection, from a periodical, etc.).

Things to avoid

- Textual information on an image is useless (eg the .jpeg file of your invitation card). The information is not discoverable by search engines;
- If we have to take an action to discover something, the search engine will tend to bypass it (eg if we have to drag the cursor over an image to find out the information) this is not optimal;
- Putting only images of the works on your website, without accompanying text or sub-text;
- Misnaming, or not renaming your .jpeg, on your website;
- Gathering all your information on a long scrolling page, it is preferable to create one page per work for example;
- If an event is over, don't remove it from your site! This supports the knowledge and notoriety of your site.

“Unfortunately, even today we build websites like the printing press.”
Josée Plamondon

→ Google Business

It is helpful to create and keep your Google Business Profile up to date, as this can increase the readability of your information on the Google search engine. Having a Google Business Account allows you to position yourself geographically and with other offers on the web.

→ PDFs on your website

PDFs are not readable on the web. It is not viewed by any search engine and it “loses” the space of a web page on which the same information would be quite recognizable.

Your strategy: measurable goals

Strategy is crucial because creating content doesn't drive more traffic to your site. Discoverability is not an end and it cannot be measured. It is the result of a set of strategies and means chosen to achieve a goal. Discoverability cannot be measured, but the objectives of the strategy can be.

Knowing your audiences allows you to differentiate your offer and facilitate connections with intentions and preferences. Your website is at the heart of your digital ecosystem, but it's your strategic thinking and actions that make it effective. A good promotion strategy requires realistic and measurable goals as well as targets and constraints specific to your organization.

Different means for a good strategy

Time-limited effect	Long-term enrichment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Enrichment over time→ Marketing and promotion<ul style="list-style-type: none">Social networksMedia placementPublic relationsEvents→ Referencing of web pages (SEO) Keywords : web page position in search results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Identifiable resource on the web→ One offer = one URL→ Provide the conditions that facilitate the interpretation of the offer in order to best meet the needs of users.

source : Josée Plamondon

An effective strategy is the result of decisions and activities that are codependent: people need to talk to each other.

Business decisions

- Target audiences (who are they, where are they, what are their preferences and behaviour)
- Measurable and realistic objectives (your opportunities, your constraints)
- Activities to be carried out internally (your business expertise) and externally (additional skills)

Knowing your audiences allows you to better determine the connection points: interests, preferred platforms, specific objectives.

Develop your links network

You can draw up a detailed inventory of the information disseminated, the frequency of the publications, the objectives and the responsibilities (if you are working in a team for example).

- 1. Determine what content to use, on which platforms and with what objectives to support your promotion strategy.
- 2. Plan and coordinate the activities of different specialists and partners.
- 3. Provide links that support the search engine with interpretation of your offer (what it relates to).

A website as a knowledge base

Point out pieces of information that are valuable to your audiences, about the content of a web page. Make it easier to process information to use in a response:

- Interpretation: what is this thing?
- Classification: what else will it end up with?
- Context: what other types of things does this relate to?

For a more “intelligible” website

Your website define who you are:

- Nomenclature: domain name, site name, page title, meta tags (title, description).
- About you and your gallery: biography, history, achievements (sections, sub-titles, links to sources that provide context).

Your artworks and collections: what is it all about?

- Comprehensive information: help search engines provide the best answer, tailored to the user’s profile.
- But above all: images!

Authority, expertise, reliability

Your website is what is authoritative on the Web, to talk about you, your artists, your works. Your site is at the heart of your digital ecosystem (discovery trail). It put the visitor experience entirely under your control. Your site represents a wealth of information, it serves as a context for interpreting visit statistics.

A reminder

- Clear and unique URL for each work
- Description: title, author, date, dimensions, distinctive attributes, etc.
- Image (see Google Images best practices)
- Internal and external links: entities (people, work, event), more explicit

Your cultural offer

→ **A work = an address (a URL)**

The page of an artwork is taken as a single element. You shouldn’t be afraid of being redundant and therefore assume that the search engine knows that a work is on an artist page that is on your website.

“ On the Web, an image is not worth a thousand words! ”
Josée Plamondon

Best practices for images on your website

- Use captions
- Fill in the alternative text boxes (alt text.)
- File nomenclature (eg keywords.jpeg)
- Mention of user rights

Metadata, identifiers: what is it for?

A metadata is a datum in front of a datum (it’s a datum that describes a datum. Ex. The name of the artist in front of the name of the work. The name of the work in front of the date, etc.). These are means of structuring information in a uniform way. They are pieces of information that describe a thing and are dependent on that thing.

There are different types of identifiers for different purposes and uses: ISNI, IIIF, IPTC, EXIF.

In conclusion, remember that:

- The digital is information above all. But what information? For who? Why?
- The right content, to the right audiences, on the right platforms, with the right objectives
- The best conditions for locating and using the information on your website for humans and machines (search engines)
- Do not wait for search engines to discover your offers
- Do not depend on an algorithm
- Structure the information on the page: facilitate the extraction of useful information elements for Internet users
- Use your website as a data source: create rich descriptions and hyperlinks to differentiate your offer and provide context for your visitors
- Prioritize social recommendation rather than wanting to outsmart algorithms: promote the flow of information by offering relevant content that also involves partners (photos, interviews, newspaper articles, related events, etc.)

Ressources
[Google Images best practices](#)

Keynote Lecture | Ebony L. Haynes

Having recently joined David Zwirner Gallery, Ebony L. Haynes will lead and run a new space in Manhattan. During her lecture, in addition to reviewing her career in the art market, she discussed her most recent projects.

“If you are interested in reassessing how the commercial gallery model is structured, you don’t need to just try but you can do it. Less trying. More doing.”

Ebony L. Haynes



Setting in Context

Excerpts from the press release published in the [New York Times](#) to announce the new position of Ebony L. Haynes’ director at the David Zwirner Gallery.

“While you could argue that strides have been made on the artist side, the art world acts almost shamefully on the employment side,” Mr. Zwirner said, speaking of equal opportunities for people of colour. “Something has to happen.”

At a time when the Black Lives Matter movement has raised awareness about the scarcity and struggles of Black-run galleries, the new Zwirner enterprise represents a strong commitment from a mega dealer.

Mr. Zwirner said he began talking in January with Ms. Haynes, a former director at Martos Gallery on the Lower East Side, about becoming a director at his Chelsea gallery. But when Ms. Haynes described her vision for a kunsthalle with an all-Black staff, Mr. Zwirner said he decided to give Ms. Haynes her own separate space. (...)

Mr. Zwirner said he wants the space to attract more young people of colour into the professional pipeline, a problem museums have so far addressed more actively than commercial galleries. “Hopefully people can join the space and get poached and work in the art world.” said Mr. Zwirner.

Career Path

Originally from Toronto, after completing her Master’s degree at the Ontario College of Art & Design University, she moved to New York City for an internship at Foxy Production, which at the time was still an emerging gallery. After her internship, she was hired and worked there for almost 5 years. It was in this gallery that she learned everything about the industry. She curated her first exhibition there in 2013.

In 2015, she joined the Mitchell-Innes & Nash gallery where she, among other things, curated Pat O’Neill’s first exhibition. In 2017, she joined the Martos Gallery, where she directed Shoot the Lobster, a more experimental space based in New York and Los Angeles.

Parallel to her career, in June 2020, as a visiting professor at Yale School of Art, she initiated the Black Art Sessions, which are free classes for African-American students interested in learning about the art market, in which she encourages reciprocity in exchanges between herself and students. In creating these courses, she wanted to address a frustration she had as a student and as a professional in the field: not seeing more people of colour in the community and not feeling comfortable enough to ask questions. In the future, she would like to continue these courses as long as there is a demand, even if the students who attend decide not to work in a gallery, because it is important for them to know that they have a choice.

Most recently, she was hired as a director at the David Zwirner Gallery. With this incredible opportunity came the idea of a new commercial space, which would operate on the model of a Kunsthalle with longer exhibitions of unrepresented artists, greater curatorial freedom and publications. As director, she now has the opportunity to recruit her employees, and she wanted them to come exclusively from the African-American community, in order to offer them access to these professions, opportunities, and to encourage her colleagues in the field to do the same.

→ Point 1 - The prospect of a brand new model of commercial gallery

In developing this new space, in other words this new model of commercial gallery, Haynes does not wish to get rid of the classic gallery model altogether. She wishes to continue to represent artists. But just as fairs were born out of a need expressed by galleries in a particular context, there is now an opportunity to create a new model that would allow some galleries to survive and some artists to flourish differently. With this space, Haynes would like artists to be able to simply live from their exhibitions and develop their practice in their studios, without being systematically forced to apply for grants or to take up residencies.

“We live with the legacy of systemic racism and oppression. To acknowledge is the first step and to recognize the ability to change it is the second step.”

Ebony L. Haynes

→ Point 2 - The need for a real change in our system that is based on white privilege

For Haynes, the reactions to the assassination of George Floyd represented as much hope as discouragement. Nevertheless, now that everyone is paying attention to the Black Lives Matter movement, she feels it is essential to collectively ask “what can we do?”. At the moment, nothing is concretely put in place for there to be real systemic change over the long term to address issues of accessibility and representation. Our society is still living with the legacy of a generation that put in place systems from the dominant white culture. Acknowledging this is the first step, and recognizing our capacity to change is the second.

It is therefore important to recognize that race often predetermines access, particularly access to the art world, which is a niche and elitist milieu. First, white people have privileged access to education in this sector. We cannot blame the students, but on the contrary, we can push those who offer scholarships, internships and jobs to do real diversity work.

