



## ArtSPay & Art Incubate Progress Report - May 1, 2020 to April 30, 2021

Challenges may be viewed as opportunities for positive change and there was certainly no shortage of challenges this past year!

With Covid-19 restrictions in place, many planned ArtSPay (AP) exhibitions, projects, partnerships, professional development and public outreach activities were postponed or cancelled. As the reality of the pandemic set in, AP began the shift to the virtual world and with creativity, resourcefulness and community support lots of great AP programs and events did happen in these past twelve months!

### ArtSPay Exhibition & Member Activities

Three fall Pop-Up Art Markets were held in the Art Incubate parking lot and AP hired local musicians to perform on the porch at 52 Regina St., satisfying the need to connect and experience art directly.

Given changing restrictions around gatherings, a decision was made to go virtual with the big November *ArtSPay Members Juried Show & Sale 2020*. This unique month long website event was a huge success, with 61 original works of art sold valued at \$24,543, thanks in part to the promotional help from over thirty local celebrities and VIP's. Partnering with the hardworking Mike Farwell from Farwell4hire, the artists donated a percent of all sales toward cystic fibrosis research.



Pop-Up Market promo



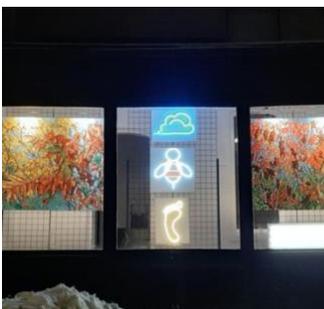
Mike Farwell promoting the exhibition. From [The Waterloo Chronicle](#)

As restrictions continued, AP provided members with pandemic information and on-line exhibition opportunities to counter the loss of gallery access to Gallery at 52 Regina St. The Artist Critique Group posted their annual show [Connect 20/21: Bridging](#) in January, followed by Ardea Thurston-Shaine's, [Folds and False Caves](#) in February and [Then & Now](#) by Ross Pritchard in March. The AP homepage features a changing bi-weekly series about artist members, their arts practice and work. The Window

Gallery at 56 Regina St. was a perfect venue for a pandemic-weary passersby to enjoy the changing art installations of the eighteen three-week exhibitions.



Ardea Thurston-Shaine  
*Folds and False Caves*



*Seasons Not Now* by Trevor Waurechen and Anne Filliatraut in the Window Gallery

*My Favourite Shade of You is Beetroot* by Christie Shen in the Window Gallery



AP has developed a reputation as a regional visual arts resource and advocate and as such, has been contacted by the public and private sectors for help, art consulting services and to source art & artists for a variety of purposes. For example, the Cambridge Memorial Hospital enlisted the help of AP to find the perfect retirement gift, AP artists were contacted by the City of Waterloo to participate in *Lumen 2020* and the *Create31 Challenge*. Oktoberfest, the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region and the WRUnited Art Fresco Picnic Table Project among other organizations contacted AP for participants.



*Sunday Drive* by Cathy Amos was chosen by CMH for a retirement gift.



*Art Fresco Table* by Andy McGeoch from [Explore Waterloo Region](#)

The community uses the AP Artist Directory to find talented local artists to teach classes and workshops, for special projects such as exhibitions, signage and murals and for art services such as art installation, graphic design, website design, and maintenance. AP assists private collectors and interior designers to quickly find the perfect pieces for homes and workspaces and facilitates those arrangements.

AP offers customized art rental and corporate art programs. New programs and the juried on-going exhibitions with the Center in the Square were put on hold in September. WalterFedy extended their 6-month exhibition *Staff Picks #2* through the shut-down and in March, AP installed a new juried inspirational exhibition, *Lifting Spirits*.



*Hibiscus Sunrise* by Laura Cook. Installed at WalterFedy as part of *Lifting Spirits*

AP works on behalf of visual artists and groups across the region, supporting, advocating, providing opportunities and strengthening the sector to create a strong visual arts continuum with connections to regional high schools, universities and other arts organizations. AP actively seeks to establish good working relationships with other sectors, hiring emerging and professional local musicians for events and offering meeting space for neighbourhood and community groups such as FlamencoFest and the Canadian Society of Decorative Arts'. As an associate member of the UpTown BIA, Art Incubate has participated in holiday activities and publications.

Monthly AP Meetups are a chance to talk with artists, develop professionally and stay connected. Topics are based on community need and have included art practice branding and marketing, eco-friendly studio practices, de-mystifying conceptual art, teaching methods for painting instruction, approaches to photography and art in the public sphere.



*Dancing Within Our Walls* (video still) by Heather Kocsis and Gary Kirkham

In response to the pandemic, AP purchased a Zoom Pro membership for members' use. In March 2021, AP held the first virtual Meet-up with a focus on the value of creative collaborations, featuring the beautiful and intriguing collaborative project *Dancing Within Our Walls* by AP artist Heather Kocsis and actor playwright Gary Kirkham.

## Art Incubate & the Incubator Project

Art Incubate began on May 1, 2019 when HIP Developments donated two adjacent buildings on Regina St. in Waterloo for AP to manage as a non-profit initiative, with two gallery meeting spaces and sixteen visual artist studio spaces.



*Art Incubate Studios and Galleries*

Five studios are in the sponsored Incubator program and the remainders are artists of all ages and backgrounds, happy to have an affordable, clean safe place to work. The sponsored studio program was a response to a lack of affordable studio space for recent grads and emerging artists. The program provides free studio space to five artists selected from a pool of applicants, and helps them network and collaborate with other local organizations through community engagement activities and sponsorship projects. Two Incubator artists Ioana Dragomir and Behnaz Fatemi were among the *Arts Awards Waterloo Region* recipients!



*work by Tyler Matheson in An Immense Sea, curated by Paula McLean for the developing curators pilot project*

AP identified a need and launched a pilot project for Developing Curators, selecting, hiring and mentoring four emerging curators to plan and install exhibitions in the Window Gallery.

To mark the first birthday of Art Incubate, a new logo was unveiled to brand Art Incubate as separate but connected to Art\$Pay. The logo, an expressive abstract drawing of eggs in a nest, symbolizes a nurturing, collaborative environment for bold and passionate creative expression.

Despite being interrupted by the coronavirus, progress exceeded expectations. The two Art Incubate galleries have been [programmed continuously since May 1, 2019](#) featuring work from the Incubator and Art Incubate artists, AP members, community arts organizations ADG, KWSA, the Artist Critique Group, students and visiting artists – twenty-four exhibitions during this second year while observing pandemic restrictions!



*Logo design was done in collaboration with Paul Kalbfleisch from PAUL Consulting inc.*

The Incubator artists rose to the challenge of engaging the public by producing videos for The City of Waterloo's *Lumen Lite* and offering



*Connection & Desire art pack from the Incubator cohort*

limited edition free art packs for contactless pickup at Art Incubate. Each artist contributed a piece of work around the themes *Connection & Desire* and *Space & Distance*. Individually, they partnered with The Region of Waterloo Libraries, Joseph Schneider Historic House, the City of Waterloo and the Uptown Waterloo BIA to create collaborative public art works, public installations and a zine fair, respectively. Collectively they found employment and volunteer work with Button Factory Arts, CAFKA, Inter Arts Matrix, The City of Waterloo and Kitchener, AP, KWSA, KW Article Club, and were hired for arts-related work by the private sector.

In reviewing what has been learned and accomplished in this short time, it is clear that this project fills an enormous gap and is of great benefit to many individuals and organizations. These three reports summarize the accomplishments of the first year at Art Incubate:

[2019 Art Incubate Fall Progress Report](#)

[2019-20 Incubator Project Progress Report](#)

[2019-20 Art Incubate Progress Report](#)

## The LAF Project



AP has been the catalyst in the creation of *Local Art for Local Walls (LAF)*, a regional umbrella organization encompassing [AP](#), [Kitchener-Waterloo Society of Artists](#), [Riverside Print Group](#) and [Uptown Gallery](#). This collaborative initiative provides increased support for these artist-run organizations and additional opportunities and promotions for their collective 325 artist members. LAF remained a central focus this past year for Art\$Pay, providing alternative ways to help members exhibit and sell their work.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, LAF quickly launched an online presence in May 2020 to streamline the sale and promotion of local art and artist members. The new [LAF on-line art store](#) is a non-profit effort to 'Support Local', making members' paintings, prints, photographs, sculpture, jewellery, fine crafts accessible to the public in a Covid-safe way.



Paintings by [Barbara Mcleod](#), LAF Artist

In February LAF began expanding beyond Waterloo Region to include affiliate visual art organizations in other areas. A Wellington County chapter was launched with the help of the [Elora Fergus Arts Council](#), with a common goal, to promote the visual art and the artists of our organizations. Throughout this first year the LAF store has grown to include the art and fine craft of almost 90 artists.



Earrings by [Carolyn Young](#), LAF Artist

February 2021 also marked the start of LAF's charity partnership initiative. LAF artists have the option to participate in a special exhibition and donate 20% of



Hand-Printed Tea Towels by [Ginny Carnevale](#), LAF Artist

their sales to that month's charity partner organization, raising money for worthy causes while promoting the talented local artists in the LAF roster. Partners include Habitat for Humanity Waterloo Region, Grand River Hospital Foundation, Cambridge Memorial Hospital Foundation, St. Mary's Hospital Foundation, Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region, Kidsability, Waterloo Region Children's Safety Village, Food4Kids Waterloo Region and the WMCA.

In response to recent feedback from the LAF charity partners, LAF will be celebrating a first birthday by making local art even more accessible with the launch of a new directory featuring original work under \$200.

## AP Changes & Plans going forward!

An important chapter in the AP story is sadly coming to a close. Our time with Art Incubate and the Incubator Project at 52 & 56 Regina St. N. in Waterloo ends April 30, 2021.

With exhibition space at a premium, the two Art Incubate galleries were fully booked by the visual arts community. As the virus lingered, there was decreasing interest shown by exhibitors and attendees alike so unfortunately many of these exhibitions were cancelled.

Despite the measurable successes and value attached to the Incubator program, continued sponsorship is not viable given these difficult budget-cutting times and short-term studio rental space is problematic at any time, obviously more so during a pandemic. Covid undermined the Incubator program for the first and second cohort, however those selected artists will attest to the importance of this opportunity, and to their ability to stay and work in our region.

A most sincere thanks to the many wonderful [Art Incubate](#) sponsors, donors, partners and community supporters for the important role you played in making this 'Grand Experiment' possible and successful, with a special note of gratitude to [HIP Developments](#) and [Createscape Waterloo Region](#). It's truly amazing what can be accomplished in very short time when people care and contribute.

Important to note here is that the organization Art\$Pay (AP) is not shutting down, just the Art Incubate facility! AP is busy on all fronts, planning future Meet-ups, a new personal art rental program, solo virtual exhibitions, corporate art rental and a revamping of the AP organization, ready to meet new challenges ahead.

Plan to join the next AP Meet-ups! May will feature a presentation by artist [Catherine Mellinger](#) and [Christie Shen](#). [Register for free tickets here](#). Plans for June include the talk *What Artists Want to Know* by [Joanne Poluch](#), [Remarque Art Consulting](#) and more TBD.

Visit [artspay.org](https://artspay.org) for up to date information and please share our social media posts. Help is needed for your arts community stay alive and well. You can also [sign up for our mailing list](#) to stay up to date on all future exhibitions and events.

Stay safe and stay connected!

Cathy Farwell, AP & Art Incubate General Manager  
Lauren Prousky, AP Communications & Website Manager

