



Alberta
Foundation
for the **Arts**

Collection Development Plan: 2026 - 2031

Alberta 

Board Approved: December 2025

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About the AFA Art Collection Development Plan

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) is committed to enriching lives through visual arts. As outlined in the *Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act* (1991), its mandate is to collect, preserve, and provide access to artworks by Albertan artists, while promoting the appreciation and enjoyment of art.

Building on this mandate, the AFA's mission is to strengthen relationships with artists and audiences and deliver programs that ensure the AFA Art Collection is properly stewarded and reflective of Alberta's artistic communities and stories so as to bring Alberta's visual art to audiences everywhere.

The AFA Art Collection Development Plan provides a strategic framework to uphold the AFA's mission and mandate. It aligns current and proposed acquisitions with the approved [2024–2027 AFA Strategic Plan](#) and takes into account how artworks are used in the AFA's outreach programming. The AFA also carefully considers the care required to maintain each artwork, recognizing its long-term responsibility to store, exhibit, document, and preserve artworks.

Relationship to Other Policies

The Collection Development Plan nests within the larger [AFA's Collection Management Policy](#) (under "Care and management of the collection"); they work in tandem to ensure the thoughtful growth and responsible stewardship of the AFA Art Collection. The Development Plan guides what is added to the collection, while the Management Policy describes how all artwork, new and existing, are preserved, shared and managed with integrity and professionalism.

Relationship to AFA Programming and Other Organizations

The AFA enhances accessibility to Albertan artists and communities through its [Travelling Exhibition Program](#) (TREX) and the [AFA Art Collection Virtual Museum website](#), making the collection available to communities across the province.

The AFA Art Collection functions as a key lending resource, providing artworks to public galleries, institutions, Government of Alberta officials, agencies, organizations, and not-for-profits through its [Exhibition Loan Program](#) and [Art Placement Program](#).

AFA Art Collection Positioning

The AFA will consider the collecting mandates and policies of other Alberta-based arts organizations, galleries, and museums, particularly those with overlapping mandates, when acquiring artworks to avoid unnecessary duplication and competition.

Strategy for Collection Development

Sound curatorial reasoning must be established before any artwork is considered for acquisition into the Collection. All decisions on acquisitions are made through group consensus using the *Criteria Governing Acquisitions* within this Plan to ensure transparency, accountability and protection from undue influence or bias. This consensus, is achieved through discussion, critical evaluation and the participation of members as part of the following committees:

Acquisitions Working Group

The Acquisitions Working Group is an internal committee consisting of Arts Branch staff members with diverse expertise and perspectives in visual art. Regular meetings are held (usually every 4 weeks) to review all potential acquisitions for alignment with the Collection Development Plan. The Acquisitions Working Group reviews available information on artworks for potential acquisition using the Collection Development Plan *Criteria Governing Acquisitions* as a guide. All recommendations for acquisition are presented for review and ratification by the AFA Board of Directors.

Contracted Curators

The AFA periodically hires external curatorial experts to provide guidance on underrepresented areas of the AFA Art Collection and to recommend priorities for future acquisitions.

Expert Panel Peer Juries

All artworks submitted to the Art Acquisitions by Application Program are reviewed, adjudicated and selected by an external three-person, peer jury (expert panel). Expert panelists provide the AFA with independent, informed perspectives and encourage excellence within the Alberta arts community.

Acquisitions Overview

The AFA is committed to collecting and showcasing the full breadth of Alberta's artistic heritage over time. Through intentional and varied acquisition methods, the AFA Art Collection is developed to be inclusive, diverse, and responsive to Alberta's evolving social and cultural narratives, and emerging artistic voices.

Acquisition Methods

Artworks are acquired for the AFA Art Collection through three primary methods:

Direct Art Purchase Programs

A direct art purchase constitutes an acquisition where an artwork is obtained in return for a monetary payment. The AFA purchases artworks only when a reasonable fair market value can be determined for the artwork, such as through previous sales, third party appraisals, or auction records. The AFA's Direct Art Purchase Programs include:

[Art Acquisitions by Application Program](#)

[Curatorial Purchase Program](#)

Donation Program

Donations include all acquisitions in which artworks are acquired without a monetary payment including bequests, testamentary dispositions, deeds of trust and unencumbered gifts-in-kind, as well as transfers and exchanges. The AFA is under no obligation to accept any offered donation. All accepted donations must include transfer of legal ownership of the artwork without any attached, legally enforceable conditions. For more information, please visit the [AFA's Donation page](#).

The AFA can apply for cultural property certification by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board for donated artworks on behalf of a donor at the determination of the Manager, Art Collections. The AFA adheres to the guidelines and requirements of the [Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board](#), as outlined in the *Cultural Property Export and Import Act*.

Transfers

Transfers refer to the transfer of artwork ownership between the AFA Art Collection and other public or private collections, including collections internal and external to the Government of Alberta. Art transfers typically do not involve monetary exchange but are related to ownership and stewardship of the artworks. Transfers help clarify and broaden the AFA Collection and provide rare opportunities to acquire historic artworks

unavailable on the open market. These generally account for only a small proportion of new acquisitions.

Criteria Governing Acquisitions

When developing the AFA Art Collection, the Foundation must balance its mandate and priorities with the practical and curatorial requirements of maintaining an accessible, sustainable public art collection. Clearly defined acquisition assessment criteria are applied across all acquisition methods, ensuring a rigorous and consistent evaluation of both the artist and the artwork.

The AFA considers the following when deciding to acquire any artwork:

1. Artist Eligibility

The AFA may review the following materials and publicly available documentation amongst others, to determine an artist's eligibility including:

- An artist's website, social media, or internet pages.
- An artist's biography or artistic statements (written or verbal), artistic resumes, or curriculum vitae.
- An artist's documented exhibition history, awards, and other public recognition.
- Records of artist's artistic holdings in public and private collections.
- Articles and/or publications written about an artist's practice.
- An artist's past AFA funding submissions and records.

To be considered for inclusion in the AFA Art Collection, all artists must:

- a) **Be in good standing with the AFA, with no outstanding reporting obligations.**
- b) **Demonstrate their Professional Artist Status:** Artists must demonstrate a dedication to their art practice as a professional artist to be considered for the AFA Art Collection.

An individual's status as a professional artist is demonstrated by meeting one or more of the mandatory criteria:

- i. **Specialized training:**
This can include formal education, apprenticeships, or self-taught expertise (in a manner appropriate to their art tradition).
- ii. **Peer recognition:**
They are acknowledged by other artists within their field as skilled and professional.

- iii. **Public presentation:**
They have a history of exhibiting their work in public, professional contexts, such as galleries, exhibitions, or other public spaces.
 - iv. **Professional practice:**
They engage in artistic activities with the intent of creating and selling their work, often as their primary or a significant source of income.
 - v. **Commitment to their craft:**
They dedicate significant time and effort to their artistic practice, treating it as a serious profession rather than a hobby.
- c) **Demonstrate their Connection to Alberta:** The AFA is mandated to collect, preserve and display works of art by Alberta artists. An artist must therefore demonstrate their connection to Alberta to be considered for acquisition by the AFA.

An individual's connection to Alberta is demonstrated by meeting one or more of the mandatory criteria:

- i. **Alberta Residency:**
The artist is currently a resident of Alberta and has had an artistic practice in Alberta for one year or more.
- ii. **Connection to Alberta:** If the artist has created a body of artwork in or about Alberta and/or places the province's visual art history into a broader geographical context, or in the case of artists who self identify as Indigenous, if they reference family, cultural or treaty ties to Alberta.
- iii. **Notable Contribution to Alberta's Visual Arts:**
If an artist is not currently residing in Alberta or is deceased, they must have made a notable contribution to Alberta's visual arts culture as demonstrated by their resumes or curriculum vitae, exhibition record, or other written justification.

2. Artwork Eligibility

Once an artist's eligibility has been determined, all artworks are reviewed to determine if the artwork meets the following criteria:

- Is an original work of art.
- Is in good physical condition, meaning it is clean and in the best possible state of preservation.
- Is made of materials that can withstand display, storage and travel.
- Is free of any conflict regarding legal title or conflicts regarding history of ownership.
- Is priced at fair market value:

- Fair market value is established by the record of sales of the artwork of the specific artist and comparable artwork by other artists who are peers working in similar media.
- The AFA may request proof of past sales, commissions or insurance values, or other documentation to support the purchase price requested.
- For donations or transfers, the AFA will hire an independent, professional appraiser to determine the value of the artwork.

The following artworks are **not** eligible for consideration by the AFA:

- Artworks that were created during formal art-training programs (student artworks).
- Applied arts such as gaming, architecture, interior design and commercial photography.
- Graphic arts and design and/or fashion design.
- Giclée's, copies or mechanical reproductions of an original artwork.
- Film, moving image, digital media or time-based media.
- Published books (photography or artwork images).
- Artworks depicting Indigenous imagery, themes or stories without evidence of respectful engagement or consideration of appropriate community protocols, permissions or connections with Indigenous Peoples. Such works constitute appropriation, and therefore do not comply with CARFAC's [Indigenous Protocols for the Visual Arts](#).

3. Artwork Assessment Criteria

Once both the artist and artwork are confirmed as eligible, each artwork will be individually assessed for its relevance to the AFA Art Collection based on the following criteria:

a) Public Access:

- Is the artwork in a size and a medium that can be easily shown and shared with the public in the AFA's TREX Program or Art Placement Program (ex: Can the artwork be handled and set up by 1-2 people)?
- Is the artwork able to withstand extended travel and display in non-traditional spaces?
- Is the artwork likely to be selected for use in the TREX Program, Art Placement Program or AFA's Exhibition programs?

b) Care and Conservation:

- Is the artwork fragile or will it require ongoing conservation?
- Will the artwork require specialized storage and significant long-term maintenance and care?
- Will there be additional costs to transport, frame, or maintain the artwork?

c) Curatorial Considerations:

- Is the artwork relevant to Alberta's history and the visual arts in Alberta?
- Does the artwork show original ideas, artistic excellence or material skill?
- Has the artwork been exhibited or made available to the public?
- Has the artwork received any formal awards or other public recognition?

d) Development of the AFA Art Collection:

- Is the artist new to the AFA Art Collection?
- If the artist is already included in the AFA Art Collection, does this artwork address a chronological, curatorial, or gap in medium within the Collection?