

**For Immediate Release - The Visual Arts Open their Doors to Canadians
Ottawa, September 20th, 2011**

This past weekend in Kingston, Ontario, the Canadian visual arts sector held a colloquium in the spirit of the 1941 Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists. While seventy years ago the goal concentrated on aligning artists with nation building and advocating for an arts council, the present-day group focused on re-visioning the future, examining the visual arts in light of public engagement, the Canadian economy and society as a whole.

Following group discussions and panels, the colloquium articulated its priorities. Recognizing that the fiscal environment has taken a downturn in recent years, it is evident that audiences for the visual arts continue to grow, and artists continue to practice and produce. Museums and galleries continue to exhibit, and markets, while shaky at the moment, are still an important economic force. The sector has weathered previous tempests both economic and political, and has bounced back. It will continue to exist and to strive for increased public awareness, greater freedom, and a more positive place within our country's culture.

The bedrock of the sector is the love that artists bring to the creative process and their dedication to connecting it with the public, which is complemented by the love of the public for art and the inspirational experience it offers. Participants resolved to develop a common agenda, to push for more awareness of the importance of the visual arts and to address other structural and perceptual problems.

Equipped with the cogent advice of the participants, the Visual Arts Alliance (VAA) is preparing to instigate an awareness campaign that will speak to Canadians about the role of artists and arts institutions, the importance of visual literacy and the primacy of art education to reach all ages and foster a lifelong pattern of creativity and engagement with visual art.

The VAA is an association of national visual, media and craft arts service organizations comprised of artists, curators, art museums, artist-run organizations, educators and art dealers.

The VAA is grateful to the following organizations for their valued support for this colloquium: the Canada Council for the Arts, Aeroplan, the Department of Canadian Heritage, ASSURart, and the Agnes Etherington Art Centre.

The VAA will provide an archived version of the colloquium's opening session, which was a live webcast. Please contact the website: visualartsvisuels.ca for further information.

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English contact: Pat Sullivan 613-533-6000 x.77053
French contact: Lise Leblanc 613-244-9584

pat.sullivan@queensu.ca
lleblanc@agavf.ca