



**Independent
Media Arts Alliance**
**Alliance des arts
médiatiques indépendants**

April 19th, 2012

The Honourable James Moore
Minister of Canadian Heritage
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Moore,

The Independent Media Arts Alliance is a national member-driven non-profit organization, working to advance and strengthen the media arts sector in Canada. Media art includes film, video, audio and new media. Independent means that the artist initiates and is the driving force behind the work and maintains complete creative control over their work.

We are encouraged that the federal government has maintained funding to the Canada Council for the Arts in the 2012 budget, especially during a time when deficit reduction is prioritized. However, current funding levels at the Canada Council for the Arts are inadequate. Media Arts is one of the lowest funded sections at the Council even though this is a rapidly growing field with more young artists turning to video, film and digital technology as a form of creative expression. In its 2012 pre-budget submission, the IMAA recommended that the federal government increase funding to the Canada Council for the Arts over three years to reach \$300 million. We stand behind this position and will continue to do so until this goal is reached.

We are very alarmed that the 2012 federal budget included cuts to the NFB, Telefilm, Library and Archives Canada and the CBC. While a large portion of the NFB and Telefilm funds go towards industry productions, we must ensure that programs supporting independent works are strengthened, not eliminated as what is unfolding currently. There is an inter-dependence of all components within the global media arts ecology and the impact and role of the independent sector is being ignored. The loss of key programs in recent years such as the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund have been devastating. We are now witnessing even greater loss to programs that support independent media art. This sector acts as a research and development laboratory for the larger industry. Innovation, research and creative development in the arts stimulate ideas, concepts and approaches that would otherwise not be developed.

The cuts to programs affecting the media arts are strongly felt. Funding is extremely limited for artists and organizations working in film, video, audio and new media. By cutting programs that are key to the growth and development of this cultural sector the federal government is restricting our ability to develop into a healthy, sustainable segment of the creative economy.

Additionally, media art collections in Canada are at risk. Many organizations that house collections are not adequately resourced to implement preservation strategies. Canada lacks preservation programs that specifically target media art collections. Library and Archives Canada is one of the few institutions that maintains a national collection, however with the cuts they are facing, it will be impossible for them to take on a media arts acquisition plan to address this preservation crisis. Independent media art collections

include pivotal artworks, films and videos that document aspects of Canadian culture from the past several decades. These collections also hold the documentation of the performing arts from the past century. These works are deteriorating rapidly and a new fund must be created to address this.

The CBC is valued by the media arts sector, as the national public radio and television broadcaster it is vital for disseminating and communicating influential media art works while providing support to the non-profit organizations that produce, exhibit and distribute them. The direction that the public broadcaster is forced to take in order to generate new revenue streams will impede on the dissemination and promotion of artworks that might not be as attractive to a commercial investor. These works must be promoted and made available to the Canadian public which has been a key part of the CBC mandate.

We acknowledge that the 2012 economic action plan tabled by the Government of Canada on March 29th 2012 outlines how federal funds will be allocated for the coming year. The two recommendations listed below are objectives that reflect the shared goal of job creation, growth and long-term prosperity for Canada. The current funding systems would benefit by targeted investments to the Canada Council for the Arts and the Department of Canadian Heritage in support of media art preservation, research and development, emerging practices and new models that will encourage this vital and prevalent cultural sector to flourish.

- 1. Invest in the Canada Council for the Arts:** In congratulating the government on the vision that has brought the Council's annual appropriation to its current level of approximately \$181 million, we suggest that the federal government increase funding to the Canada Council for the Arts over three years to reach \$300 million.
- 2. Invest in the Department of Canadian Heritage:** Telefilm and the NFB largely support industry productions, however, their programs for emerging artists and independent works are invaluable. Maintain Heritage programs that support independent film, video and new media practices. In addition a fund must be made available to support the preservation of audio, video, film and digital forms of art.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to talk about what independent media art is today, how it has evolved over the past decades and what changes must happen within the Department of Canadian Heritage to reflect this.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Dorner, National Director

Cc: **Robert Sirman**, Director of the Canada Council for the Arts; **Tom Perlmutter**, Government Film Commissioner and Chairperson of the National Film Board of Canada; **Carolle Brabant**, Executive Director of Telefilm Canada; **Daniel Caron**, Deputy Head and Librarian and Archivist of Canada; **Hubert T, Lacroix**, President and CEO of CBC Radio Canada

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