

National Gallery of Canada
Musée des beaux-arts du Canada
Job Profile

Position: Vice President, Curatorial Affairs
Reports to: Director and CEO
Profile date: March 2025

The Opportunity

The National Gallery of Canada (Gallery or NGC) is seeking a Vice President of Curatorial Affairs (Vice President) to lead a dynamic and experienced team responsible for acquiring, researching, documenting, and sharing historic and contemporary works of art. This pivotal position plays a key role in celebrating and showcasing Canada's rich artistic heritage in the context of global art history. Reporting directly to the Director and CEO, the Vice President will provide strategic leadership in acquisitions, collections, national engagement, library and archives and research. In addition, they will inspire and guide a dedicated team, collaborate across departments to support the Gallery's broader institutional and departmental goals, and contribute to scholarly advancements in the field.

With a vision to significantly expand the Gallery's presence, role, and profile both throughout Canada and internationally, the Vice President will ensure that the institution embraces and elevates a wide range of cultural voices, particularly focusing on diverse and underrepresented perspectives.

National Gallery of Canada

Located in the heart of Ottawa, Ontario, the NGC is one of the world's most respected art institutions. Established in 1880, its role as the country's premier art institution was formally cemented with the passage of the *National Gallery Act* in 1913.

In 1990, the National Gallery became a [Crown corporation](#) under the *Museums Act*, which also serves as its governing legislation. The *Museums Act* empowers a board of trustees appointed by the Governor-in-Council on the recommendation of the [Minister of Canadian Heritage](#) to oversee its operations. The eleven (11) trustees represent diverse regions of Canada and the NGC reports to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage. The Board provides strategic direction, while the Director and CEO manages the Gallery's daily operations.

The NGC welcomes 325,000 to 450,000 visitors annually in its iconic building and around 1.2 million visitors engage with its projects, including the pavilion in Venice. The National Gallery of

Canada's building was designed by renowned architect Moshe Safdie and opened in 1988. The Gallery stands on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation with a stunning view of the Parliament Buildings on Parliament Hill.

The Collection

The Gallery is home to over [90,000 works of art](#) by artists from America, Asia, Canada, Europe, and Indigenous communities, along with a robust photography collection of 500,000 images. Encompassing works from antiquity to the present, the Gallery also holds one of the world's finest collections of Indigenous and Canadian art, alongside masterworks in painting, sculpture, installation, video, new media and decorative arts, and is further enriched by an extensive [library and archival collection](#).

The Gallery's collection has grown through purchases and donations. In addition to showcasing pieces from its collection, the Gallery organizes and hosts traveling exhibitions. It is the largest lender of art in Canada, sending out approximately 800 works a year. The collection is further presented through publications, the Gallery's website, social media channels, and other international outreach platforms. Collections and programs are supported by a mix of federal funding and private donations, fostering a vital public-private partnership that has been key to the Gallery's ongoing development and success.

The NGC seeks to foster connection and understanding across time, place, and communities. It envisions a future where art unites people, strengthens relationships, and contributes to a more just society by creating transformative experiences that challenge perspectives and deepen understanding. Amid a push to better represent Indigenous culture in art institutions worldwide, the Gallery in 2022 committed to reimagining its collections and programs from a decolonized perspective. Today, the institution has a [Department of Indigenous Ways and Decolonization](#). The vision behind this department is to deepen the Gallery's relationship with Indigenous communities, locally, nationally, and internationally, and lead the work of reconciliation through all the Gallery does.

Library, Archives & Research Fellowship Programs

The National Gallery of Canada's library and archives house an extensive collection of literature on Canadian and international art. Established alongside the Gallery in 1880, the library and archives also feature materials on Western art from the Late Middle Ages to the present and include a wide range of books, exhibition catalogues, periodicals, documentation files, and microforms.

Serving as the institutional archive for the Gallery, the library and archives also offer special collections, including auction catalogues, slides, and research photographs. Among its

Exceptional materials and notable subject collections are rare imprints, books, and bookplates on Canadian artists, as well as materials related to the historians of Canadian art.

The National Gallery of Canada offers [fellowship opportunities](#) to support research. These fellowships provide financial support, access to the Gallery's extensive library and archives, and collaboration with curatorial and academic staff. Fellows are encouraged to explore topics related to Canadian art and contribute to the advancement of art historical scholarship.

National Engagement

In 2024, the Gallery introduced the role of Director of National Engagement to address two key goals: identify community-driven needs, explore how the Gallery could better serve them, and increase the visibility and accessibility of art across the country's provinces and territories. Beyond traditional methods of sharing the Gallery's collection—such as traveling exhibitions, digital programs, and the successful Loan Program—the National Engagement initiative is intended to foster innovative collaborations, including commissions, long-term loans, and co-stewardships.

By engaging in meaningful dialogue with community members, the Gallery creates opportunities for people to connect with art that reflects their own stories, voices, and experiences. This initiative focuses on building regional relationships and expanding cultural engagement nationwide. Over multiple years, it will highlight both Canadian and international artists, featuring major commissions and innovative projects.

Leadership Today

In July 2023, [Jean-François Bélisle](#) became the Director and CEO of the National Gallery of Canada. Prior to this role, he served as the Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Musée d'art de Joliette (MAJ), one of Canada's leading regional museums. Jean-François has held various roles in museums, art publications, international NGOs, auction houses, galleries, and universities across eight countries and has organized more than a hundred highly acclaimed art exhibitions and projects worldwide.

Responsibilities of Vice President of Curatorial Affairs

The Vice President of Curatorial Affairs will work closely with the Director and CEO of the National Gallery of Canada as well as with the Senior Management Committee to define the exhibition program and lead the Gallery's efforts in developing and implementing comprehensive exhibition and collection programs that advances the Gallery's visibility and reputation in Canada and internationally.

This position will lead and motivate a talented and dedicated team of museum professionals who manage and oversee a broad range of mission-focused projects, programs and activities.

The primary responsibilities of this role are:

Leadership and Strategic Planning

- In tandem with the Director and CEO, imagines and builds an exciting program of exhibitions and projects throughout Canada and internationally.
- As a member of the Gallery's Senior Management Committee, participates in weekly meetings and advises on all curatorial and archival matters.
- Reports quarterly to the Board of Trustees' Acquisition Committee on prospective acquisitions and donations. Provides rationale for recommended acquisitions and guidance on price, terms, and conditions of purchase or donation.
- Provides a strategic overview of the Gallery's Library and Archives to sustain its operation as the pre-eminent center for the study of the history of visual arts in Canada.
- Works closely with the Director of Exhibitions, Conservation, and Production to ensure practices align with current innovations in museological and curatorial practice.
- Develops and executes strategies to support the Gallery's strategic objectives.

Management

- Directs the activities of staff reporting directly to the position, including assigning and monitoring work, hiring, training, and evaluating work performance.
- Oversees museum professionals within the department. Direct reports include Director of Curatorial Initiatives; Director of National Engagement; Senior Manager of Library, Archives & Research Fellowships Program; Senior Curator for European, American & Asian Art; Senior Curator of Canadian Art; Senior Curator of Photographs Collection; Interim Senior Curator of Contemporary Art; Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings; and Executive Coordinator.
- Provides mentorship and coaching using performance-driven strategies focused on growth and development.
- Builds a collegial, focused department that works collaboratively and cross-departmentally, particularly with Exhibitions and the [Indigenous Ways and Decolonization](#) teams.
- Approves departmental budgets, allocates financial resources, and approves expenditures.

Curatorial

- In accordance with the Gallery's Acquisition Policy, oversees the research to verify the authenticity, provenance, quality, and historical importance of proposed acquisitions in accordance with corporate objectives.
- Directs research, both on objects and on cultural, historical, and theoretical context. Oversees the documentation and cataloging, presentation, interpretation, and accessibility to local and national audiences.

- Promotes a culture of digital innovation and transformation that leverages technology to educate and inspire audiences.
- Acts as curator for exhibitions, working directly with staff, artists, and partner institutions.

Communication and Relationship Building

- Creates a culture that promotes respect, equity, inclusion, and innovation.
- Works closely with the Director and CEO and the National Gallery of Canada Foundation to provide expertise and research on proposed donations and planned gifts.
- Develops and maintains relationships with donors and the art community.
- Leverages new and existing networks and partnerships to engage audiences locally, nationally, and internationally in the Gallery's content.
- Represents the National Gallery at public functions as a spokesperson; disseminates information through lectures, publications, and openings.
- Provides expert advice both internally to curators and committees and externally to art collectors, other art institutions, and the public.

Qualifications

Candidates will be highly accomplished and experienced professionals who bring executive leadership and team management. Deeply passionate about art with strong curatorial expertise, they are held in high regard by members of the field and their peers. They will engage, motivate, and collaborate with colleagues and Museum leadership, a diverse set of external partners, and the general public. The Vice President of Curatorial Affairs will thrive at an institution that operates within and for the public. Ideal professional experience and personal attributes will include:

- PhD in Art History or knowledge similar or equivalent to what is gained by post-graduate training and education.
- Senior-level experience in leading curatorial initiatives within an art institution.
- Experience managing a curatorial department.
- Experience working with Boards of Trustees and Foundations.
- A compelling communicator in prepared speaking and ordinary conversation.
- Outstanding writing skills, with the ability to direct oneself to both general and professional audiences.
- A team player committed to collaboration and mutual kindness, generosity, and respect among colleagues.
- A diplomatic and friendly demeanor, with a talent for engaging and connecting with a variety of stakeholders, including trustees, artists, art dealers, and professional colleagues worldwide.
- Firm grasp of current trends, museum standards, and curatorial best practices.
- Understanding of business metrics, managing finances, and human resources.

- Ability to communicate proficiently in both official languages, English and French, and/or learn.

Compensation

This is a permanent, full-time, on-site position in Ottawa, Canada, with a salary range of \$160,000 to \$229,000 CAD.

In addition to the salary for the role, there are also additional benefits and a pension plan that represents an added value of 28.5% of the salary.

Applications, Inquires, and Nominations

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with a letter of interest should be sent in confidence to:

Rebecca Swartz, Kristin Benoit, Sarah James, Harley Bartles
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/national-gallery-canada/vice-president-curatorial-affairs>

The National Gallery of Canada is dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment that values and celebrates the diverse life experiences, voices, and histories of all individuals. We encourage applications from individuals belonging to Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities, women, persons with disabilities, and members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

If you require any accommodations to submit your application, please contact Kristin Benoit at kbenoit@imsearch.com.