



Chief Curator
The Art Gallery of Ontario
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

THE SEARCH

The [Art Gallery of Ontario \(AGO\)](#) is one of the largest art museums in North America with a staff of over 600 and a collection of more than 130,000 works of art. The AGO presents wide-ranging exhibitions and programs, including solo and thematic exhibitions and has a robust acquisitions program of art from around the world. The AGO is an architectural masterpiece significantly designed by the Canadian architect Frank Gehry with over 120,000 sq feet of gallery space. Currently the AGO is expanding by building the Dani Reiss Modern and Contemporary Gallery, which will create an additional 40,000 sq feet of exhibition space to present art after 1900. With the expansion, which opens in the Fall of 2027, the AGO will be the largest art museum in Canada. The expansion has been designed by Annabelle Selldorf Architects, Diamond Schmidt Architects, and Two Row Architects. The AGO attracts between 700,000 and 1M visitors a year and is notable for the diversity and youth of its audiences. With over 200,000 members and annual pass holders, the AGO has a passionately engaged public. The AGO is proud that it is one of the most affordable and accessible attractions in the Greater Toronto Area with all Ontarians under 25 eligible for a sponsored annual pass. The AGO is driven by the values of Respect, Openness, Collaboration, and Accountability as well as clear operating principles: Be inclusive, accessible, and relevant to visitors; Strive for artistic and operational excellence; Achieve financial equilibrium and sustainability.

The AGO seeks a visionary, dynamic, and experienced Chief Curator to lead the Gallery's artistic, curatorial, collections, and publishing direction. It is paramount that the successful candidate has a track record of creating dynamic and culturally relevant programs that attracts significant audiences. The Chief Curator will engage artists and audiences and strengthen the Gallery's local, national, and international visibility, engagement, and contribution. They will also have a passion for developing relationships with collectors and donors in order to support the continued growth and dynamism of the AGO.

The AGO has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in identifying its next Chief Curator. Applications, nominations, and inquiries should be directed as outlined at the end of this description.

ROLE OF THE CHIEF CURATOR

In partnership with the AGO's Director and CEO, the Chief Curator shapes and leads the curatorial, exhibitions, collections development, and publishing vision of the institution, overseeing the development

of compelling exhibitions and the building, care, and preservation of the collections. As a key member of the Leadership Team and an Officer of the Gallery, the Chief Curator works collaboratively with fellow members to achieve the AGO's strategic goals and institutional success.

Reporting to the Director and CEO, the Chief Curator provides overall team leadership, direction, coaching, advice, and counsel to department staff, maintains professional curatorial and collection management standards, and oversees succession planning. Direct reports include:

- Curator, European Art
- R. Fraser Elliott Chair, Prints & Drawings Council
- Fredrik S. Eaton Curator, Canadian Art
- Carol and Morton Rapp Curator, Modern & Contemporary Art
- Curator, Photography
- Curator, Indigenous Art
- Curator, Arts of Global Africa and the Diaspora
- Senior Manager, Curatorial Affairs
- Rosamond Ivey, Special Collections Archivist and Head, Library & Archives
- Curator, Special Projects and Director, Publishing
- Interpretive Planner
- Administrative Assistant

Externally, the Chief Curator is expected to engage visibly with artists, scholars, donors, and the broader public, and to participate in programs including lectures, symposia, art fairs, and scholarly meetings.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHIEF CURATOR:

The Chief Curator participates in and is accountable for the institution's senior leadership and performance and contributes to the development and effective communication of strategic goals, planning initiatives, policies, and resource allocations. Additionally, the Chief Curator will:

- Develop strategic direction for the collection's development, in collaboration with the Director and CEO and the Chief, Exhibitions, Collections and Conservation. The Chief Curator sets, communicates, and promotes the overall plan with input from curators and collection care professionals, for collection development, collection growth, and elective de-accessioning initiatives.
- Lead the creative concept and planning processes with curators and colleagues (internal and external to the AGO) to develop prospective annual and long-range programming including temporary, in-house, and travelling exhibitions, permanent collection presentations, publications, film, live performances, awards and prize programs, and related events projects that achieve programmatic excellence and align with the AGO's vision, objectives, and revenue/admission goals.

- Contribute to Board of Trustee meetings, and related meetings of curatorial and education committees, by providing regular updates and rationale on the strategic growth and positioning of the Gallery's exhibitions and programming plans.
- Lead all personnel directly concerned with the creative, artistic elements of each project, balancing the need for engaging external talent with the development of internal creative staff.
- Direct the development of the collections, art support, and the curatorial support management processes in library/research, conservation, and curatorial administration for Gallery operations. The Chief Curator ensures accuracy and efficiency of the collection information and art support for exhibitions and publications.
- Ensure adherence to professional standards of excellence for collection care, exhibition design, graphic design, production, collection information management, and donation documentation, including ensuring that Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board (CCPERB) applications are in effect and maintained, and addressing issues as required.
- Work collaboratively with the Chief, Education & Public Programming and division to integrate the development of intergenerational educational programs, public programming (talks, openings, performances, and in-gallery activations), and interpretive strategies both in galleries and related public spaces that enrich the visitor experience.
- Develop and nurture relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and participate in our national efforts for Truth and Reconciliation.
- Develop and maintain relationships with local, regional, national, and international institutions, curators, and artists to develop projects collaboratively, place AGO-organized exhibitions in other institutions, identify exhibitions of possible interest to the AGO, and commission new works (in consultation with Director).
- Provide articulate written information about programming, creative artistic direction, exhibition, and publication standards and methodology for all internal and external communications and publications.
- Engage actively in fundraising initiatives for the AGO, particularly with individuals, government agencies (e.g., the Canada Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage [DOCH]), corporations, and foundations with interests in Toronto. Build strong relationships with collectors that result in gifts of art to the AGO collection.
- Provide expert advice and act as a resource on leading visual arts and museum programming trends and practices, both internally to curators, program/project teams, and committees, and externally to other art institutions, trustees, donors, and the public.

- Collaborate with other functional areas in developing strategies to educate and encourage public visitation and increase access to works of art and programming.
- Develop and implement an exciting vision and strategic plan for the Curatorial Affairs Division that includes a service mindset for all divisional functions while balancing exhibition programs, art support, and collections development with initiatives that promote the importance of the overall institution's programs and the collection.
- Direct development of and ensure compliance with established budgets and schedules for division functions and services, and all Gallery operations, including approving annual resource needs, project budgets, major expenditure proposals, and service procurement contract agreements.
- Select, orient, train, develop, and manage the work performance of departmental staff, ensuring that the Gallery's mission, vision, and core values are integrated into all development activities and informed by the strategic plan.
- Develop a succession management plan for the ongoing development of the division to identify gaps in skills and experience and to provide training and opportunities for growth for new and existing staff.
- Manage delivery of services in accordance with department systems and procedures, applicable collective agreements, and AGO's policies and procedures on security, administration, human resources, and department manager/supervisor responsibilities for workplace health and safety.
- Represent the AGO at public functions in Toronto and elsewhere, as a spokesperson, advocate, and champion; disseminate information through lectures, publications, conferences, and openings.
- Direct the development and implementation of policies and procedures for the preparation, approval, and management of contracts and grant submissions.
- Liaise with government representatives, agencies, and other cultural institutions (national and international) on matters related to funding, partnerships, joint ventures, loans, exhibitions, etc.
- Perform other responsibilities as required.

RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS, AND EXPERIENCES:

While no one person may embody all, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal qualities.

- Advanced degree in Art History or equivalent related experience in exhibition and program planning and production and a passion for the mission of the AGO.

- At least 10 years of museum experience at a senior management leadership level in exhibition and publication planning and development, project management, art support production, collections care, and management.
- Broad curatorial experience gained in museums that have sought and achieved imaginative ways of engaging with their visitors and which have met targeted results.
- Broad knowledge of art history and respected connoisseurship in a dedicated area of expertise. While expertise in contemporary art is not required, the ability to passionately engage collectors of contemporary art is important.
- Track record of significant exhibitions and publications that are both scholarly and accessible.
- Demonstrated experience/ability to partner with the Director in developing the artistic vision of the institution, developing exhibition projects, positioning the institution externally, and realizing financial support and works of art from donors.
- At least five years of demonstrable experience managing, mentoring, and retaining talent, and discipline in managing curatorial staff to reach for excellence in ideas, project execution, and goal achievement.
- Experience in setting and managing performance benchmarks and creating a team-oriented culture of performance and accountability. The ability to hold staff accountable to performance goals is important.
- Demonstrated experience working successfully with senior leaders of an organization to achieve both their own and their peers' objectives. Peers include the Chief of Brand and Business, Chief of Collections, Exhibitions and Conservation, Chief of Education and Programming, Chief of People, Chief Finance and Operations Officer, Chief Development Officer, and Chief of Strategic Initiatives. The ability to give and garner respect of members of the Leadership Team is important to be successful in this position.
- Demonstrated experience serving as a visible member of the broader community and public face of an institution.
- Superior communication (verbal and written), interpersonal, and presentation skills both internally and in the media.
- Effective comprehension and application of confidentiality and diplomacy.
- Experience managing in a unionized/volunteer environment is an asset.

- Superior judgment and demonstrated experience managing multiple and competing priorities, pressure related to deadlines, productive conflict, and management of professional personnel across various fields of expertise.
- This role will require travel, evening, and weekend work.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

This is a permanent, full-time position based in Toronto, with a targeted starting salary range of \$185,000-\$210,000 CAD, commensurate with experience.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/art-gallery-ontario/chief-curator>.

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Isaacson, Miller

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