



## Ontario Museum Association Awards of Excellence 2022 Recipients

### Distinguished Career Award of Excellence

*The OMA Distinguished Career Award of Excellence is presented to individuals who, over an extended period of time, have created a lasting and meaningful legacy in the Ontario museum community.*

#### **Sarah Quinton**

Curatorial Director (Retired), Textile Museum of Canada

With a career spanning over 38 years, Sarah Quinton has been dedicated to the advancement of Canada's local, national, and international art scene. She has curated over 30 national and international exhibitions, all designed towards accessibility, cultural inclusivity, and social awareness. Her curatorial practice is based in community outreach and education and has focused on challenging the divisions often placed between art, design, and craft.



Sarah's involvement in the Textile Museum of Canada began as a volunteer in 1989, and from there, she would become an integral part of the museum. In 1994, she was hired as the Exhibition Coordinator and Contemporary Gallery Curator and would continue to move upward into her most recent position of Curatorial Director. Sarah is known for her mentorship of and commitment to emerging makers, artists, and museum workers. She has played an active role in mentoring staff members across different departments. She was particularly instrumental in the formation of the museum's Melissa Levin Emerging Artist Award, which directs funding and recognition to emerging Canadian artists.

Her innovative work both as a curator and mentor is ultimately grounded in her long and active participation in Ontario's textile and crafts community. She was raised by a dressmaker and has been a practicing textile artist for her entire career, exhibiting and gaining much recognition for her work across Canada and the United States.

*“Sarah Quinton’s innovative curatorial practice has established dominant cross-disciplinary discourses in the fields of art, craft, and design with a focus on the Canadian context. Her work stands out because of its theoretical sophistication and rigor, its academic and applied relevance to makers, scholars, and Museum studies, and its accessibility across communities emphasizing cultural inclusivity and social awareness.”* – B. Lynne Milgram, PhD, Professor Emerita and Adjunct Faculty at OCAD University

## Promising Leadership Award of Excellence

*The OMA Promising Leadership Award of Excellence is presented to emerging professionals, of any position or institution, who have shown promising leadership within the museum community.*

### Nahed Mansour

Senior Manager of Gallery Engagement, Royal Ontario Museum

Nahed Mansour is committed to decolonizing and democratizing the museum sector, building in place of its colonial practices spaces that are truly equitable, accessible, and affordable for everyone, especially those who have been traditionally excluded. She particularly believes that programming and education play a key role in this process.

As an emerging professional, Nahed has already developed an expansive repertoire of experience and skills. She began her career as an independent curator and community arts administrator, leading in the development of various programs, exhibitions, residencies, and events with a community- and equity-oriented approach. She would translate this experience and perspective to museums, specifically in the development and execution of programs, educational activities, and community building. Beginning in 2017, she worked as the Constituent Curator: Communities and Engagement at the Museum of Contemporary Art and then as the Curator of Programs and Education at the Gardiner Museum. In 2022, she became the Senior Manager of Gallery Engagement at the Royal Ontario Museum. Throughout her programming, Nahed centres and supports BIPOC and other marginalized artists and community members in their exploration of social, economic, political, and cultural issues, and more broadly, in their active participation in the visual arts.



*Gardiner Museum’s Gardiner Goes Outside Series, inaugurated by Nahed Mansour*

Nahed’s commitment to inclusive artistic practices is reflected in her leadership. She approaches her work through collaboration, partnership, mentorship, and creative problem-solving. In the future, she hopes to join more local, national, and international organizations in order to further advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in the museum sector; an effort

that she has already begun with her inauguration into the Toronto Art Council's Leader Lab in 2020.

*"As a hands-on advocate for marginalized artists, Nahed's comprehension of the Toronto arts ecology is unparalleled, giving her a unique ability to see the ways that equity mandates are employed and the gaps left behind. This exceptional holistic perspective guides the way that she envisions the sector as a whole with equity as a guiding principle for her leadership style."* – Indu Vashist, Executive Director at the South Asian Visual Arts Centre

## Promising Leadership – Honourable Mention

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### **Madeline Smolarz**

Office, Operations, and Financial Manager, Oakville Galleries

Madeline Smolarz has spent much of her career not only leading institutions and organizations through significant and meaningful changes, but also supporting other emerging museum professionals in their careers. In order to further her mentorship and advocacy of museum workers, she has actively worked to gain experience in as many areas of museum work as possible, ranging from collections care and digitization, exhibition development, programming, operations, finances, to facilities management.

Her involvement and leadership in the museum field began in her university studies, through volunteer work, editorial positions in publications, and student ambassador positions. It is here she would begin to support future museum professionals and develop her skills across all areas of museum work.



She would bring and continue to expand upon her wide-ranging skills to her positions at various museums and heritage sites, where she helped developed successful efforts to revamp operations, and even reopen entire facilities, to their full capacity. Alongside her paid work, she has consistently volunteered her time for different committees, conferences, and publications, and more broadly, keeps herself active on social media and blogs, all continuously to advocate for emerging professionals and advance the prospects of museum workers and the museum field as a whole. Most recently, she founded the Emerging Museum Professionals Canada Collective, in order to fill the need for a strong emerging museum professional community on the national level.

*“Throughout Madeline’s decade long professional career, she has actively exercised innovation, self-motivation, is constantly learning new skills and gaining new knowledge and accepts new challenges ... Truly and completely, Madeline is a ‘promising leader’ of our all-important museum field. She represents and is the future of Ontario’s and Canada’s museums, galleries, science centres, and archives.” – Robin C. Etherington, Principal at Etherington Consulting and former Executive Director at Musee Bytown Museum*

## **Volunteer Service Award of Excellence**

*The OMA Volunteer Service Award of Excellence is presented to individuals who have made a significant contribution to a museum or museums through volunteer work.*

### **John Caldwell**

**Volunteer, Lang Pioneer Village Museum**

John Caldwell has been a core individual of the Lang Pioneer Village Museum for decades. He began to volunteer at the museum in the early 2000s, after being a regular visitor with his family since the mid-1990s. Between 2015 and 2020 alone, he has contributed more than 6000 hours of volunteer work. John is a remarkable example of a volunteer who is not only passionate about his work but is able to effortlessly share and inspire his work and interests in others.



He is an interpreter who is immensely involved in various aspects of the museum’s operations, from grounds maintenance, education, recruitment, training, sales, to even modelling for event advertisements. He is able to connect with a diversity of visitors and audiences, fostering their curiosity by having them ask questions and trying things out for themselves. He is always having visitors engage with the history of the Peterborough County and directly participate in the museum’s demonstrations.

His most substantive contribution and display of leadership is in the Power and Equipment Club, who have completed many restoration projects. John and the other members have restored various objects and structures, allowing for a more immersive and interactive visitor experience at the museum. The club’s successes and longevity is a direct result of John’s continuous efforts to check in and keep the volunteers informed and involved, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*“Because of the work that John has done, we don’t just get to see an authentic piece of farm equipment, we get to see an authentic piece of farm equipment work in the way that it would have when it was built. Not only are we seeing genuine pieces of our history, we’re seeing them restored to their original glory, allowing the visitor a fully immersive experience. This is why Lang is amazing – and a volunteer like John is so needed.” – Jennifer Crilly-Glover, Volunteer Coordinator at Christian Horizons*

## **Excellence in Exhibitions**

*The OMA Award of Excellence in Exhibitions recognizes the creation of an exhibit. Examples may include permanent, temporary, traveling or virtual exhibitions.*

### **Oil Museum of Canada Exhibition and Building Renewal Project**



The Oil Museum of Canada’s building was last renovated in 1992, and its permanent exhibition only received minor changes over the last 60 years. The museum staff understood that their permanent exhibition grew into an overwhelming collection of loosely connected artefacts, as objects came into the collection but were placed on display due to lack of storage space. When their 2018 building condition assessment revealed several issues, the museum staff began the process of renovating their building.

The museum staff used these renovations as the opportunity to completely re-evaluate and reinvent their approach to displaying their permanent collection, since it required them to empty out all of their exhibition and display spaces. They not only found the means to create new storage space, but also had the time to reflect upon the museum’s history. They decided to draw upon its original 1960 building and exhibit design as their main source of inspiration for re-creating their permanent exhibition, while also updating it to contemporary audiences and circumstances. The final results are a thematically focused and technological interactive exhibition space that embrace the museum’s original design to honour its own history, enhance the visitor experience, and ensure the preservation of their artefacts simultaneously.

The Oil Museum of Canada's renewal project exemplifies how exhibits and the sites which house them can work together to enrich the overall museum experience, and how small community museums can update their exhibition spaces efficiently.

*"The Oil Museum of Canada's project is something that I believe all museums can aspire to. It was a project completed with an eye to utilizing space, developing welcoming and interactive exhibits for visitors, and preserving artifacts in a fiscally responsible manner."* – Kayla Goodwin, Executive Director at Canadian Energy Museum

## Exhibitions – Honourable Mention

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### Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery *Disruption*



The Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery presented the exhibition, *Disruption*, from February 5 to May 15, 2022. As the name suggests, it brings together four BIPOC women artists to disrupt the dominant art historical narrative, which is the white, male, and Eurocentric perspective, through the practices and traditions of ceramics. The exhibition contributes to a larger project to deconstruct society's racist and sexist structural underpinnings, and in its place, build a new foundation that embraces the multiplicity of history and lived experience.

This effort to build a foundation of multiplicity is embodied in all stages of exhibition development. The four artists, Natalia Arbelaez, Magdolene Dykstra, Habiba El-Sayed, and Heidi McKenzie, shared the gallery space and curated the exhibition themselves, with only the gallery's curatorial staff providing logistical support. The artists worked together to present a collection of art narratives that not only brings into focus histories and traditions that has not been effectively explored and addressed, but also examine their own position and those of other marginalized peoples within the world at large.

*Disruption* serves to have the four BIPOC women artists find and make their place within the broader discourse of ceramic history. The exhibition demonstrates that the deconstruction of the Western art narrative means the empowerment of marginalized voices, and through that, the development of an egalitarian and inclusive art historical canon.

*“Rather than presenting a particular theme or look into an artist’s individual practice, Disruption raised the stakes by working toward affecting substantive change in the world. This kind of programming is important, because it helps to unlock the power of visual art to change people’s minds and lives, yielding greater impact.”* – Sequoia Miller, Chief Curator and Deputy Director at the Gardiner Museum

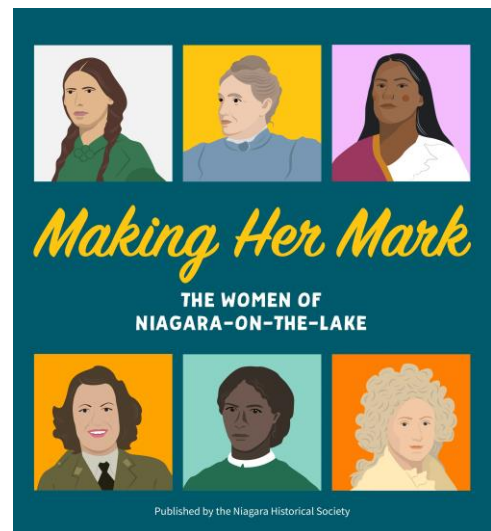
## Excellence in Publications

*The OMA Award of Excellence in Publications recognizes the creation of materials that are distinguished by their design and content. Examples may include books, catalogues, blogs, brochures, posters, and other printed or digital materials.*

### Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum

#### *Making Her Mark: The Women of Niagara-on-the-Lake*

The Niagara-on-the-Lake region has a strong political, military, and industrial history, but such histories tend to be dominated by white men. So when the Museum Boards’ Publications Committee and museum staff came together in 2017 to decide on the theme of the organization’s next book, they realized the under-representation of women in their history books. From there, the project evolved into the publication of *Making Her Mark: The Women of Niagara-on-the-Lake* in July 2021 – a deliberate, collaborative effort between the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum and local historians, authors, and experts to further advance the dissemination of women’s history.



The book focuses on the lives of women who have participated in the history of the region, specifically highlighting women of various racial and class backgrounds and exploring the ways in which they navigated the social, economic, and political world of their time. The museum staff recognized that representing an accurate and inclusive history of women’s contributions to their community necessitated going beyond the stories of white, middle-class women and collaborating with community authors consisting of women with diverse backgrounds themselves.

Despite its local scope, the book has garnered national attention and sales, demonstrating the public interest in recognizing and representing women's contributions to Canadian history, but the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum does not plan to have the publication's run end here. As the histories of women become more accessible, they will expand upon *Making Her Mark* through reprints or additional volumes.

*"The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum is one of the town's most respected cultural institutions and this publication illustrates their care and appreciation for not only the town's history but the voices of women that have been marginalized in the past. Overall, this book is a celebratory look at the value of women's roles in our community's past which, within the field of local history, has often been overlooked."* – Sarah Bowers, Technical Services Coordinator at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library