

# PAARC

THE PACIFIC ASSOCIATION OF ARTIST RUN CENTRES

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[www.paarc.ca](http://www.paarc.ca)  
[www.arcpost.ca](http://www.arcpost.ca)

221A	Vancouver
ACCESS GALLERY	Vancouver
ALTERNATOR	Kelowna
ARNICA	Kamloops
ARTSPEAK	Vancouver
BALCONE	Vancouver
CINEWORKS	Vancouver
DECOY MAGAZINE	Vancouver
DYNAMO ARTS ASSOCIATION	Vancouver
GALLERY GACHET	Vancouver
GRUNT GALLERY	Vancouver
GROPP'S GALLERY COLLECTIVE	Vancouver
KOOTENAY SCHOOL OF WRITING	Vancouver
LIVE BIENNALE	Vancouver
LIVED SPACE	Vancouver
MALASPINA PRINTMAKERS	Vancouver
MEDIANET	Victoria
MINISTRY OF CASUAL LIVING	Victoria
MIXED USE	Vancouver
NEW FORMS FESTIVAL	Vancouver
ON MAIN	Vancouver
OPEN SPACE	Victoria
OR GALLERY	Vancouver
OTHER SIGHTS' FOR ARTISTS PROJECTS	Vancouver
OXYGEN ART CENTRE	Nelson
PROJECT SPACE	Vancouver
PROJECTILE PUBLISHING SOCIETY/FILLIP REVIEW	Vancouver
UNIT/PITT PROJECTS	Vancouver
VIVO MEDIA ARTS CENTRE	Vancouver
WESTERN FRONT	Vancouver
XCHANGES ARTISTS' GALLERY & STUDIOS	Victoria

## About PAARC

PAARC was established in 1988 as an association representing artist-run centres in British Columbia. PAARC currently counts 31 member centres, all of which are artist initiated and artist controlled non-profit arts organizations. The primary mandate of the society is to work towards the benefit of the practicing artist, within the context of artists' self-determination. Members of PAARC coordinate their opening receptions and events, and collaborate on programming initiatives and advocacy work. PAARC has a permanent membership of British Columbia ARCs and represents them regionally, provincially and nationally. PAARC was active during the 1998-99 reevaluation by the Canada Council of artist-run centres and consults regularly with funders on issues vital to the centres. PAARC is a member of the Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference/Conférence des collectifs et des centres d'artistes autogérés (ARCA), which represents artist-run centres at a national level. As part of its mission, PAARC advocates on behalf of artist-run centres and artists to local, provincial, and federal governmental and funding bodies. BC artist-run centres who are members of PAARC advocate for livable incomes for artists and a commitment to the principle that artists deserve to be paid for their endeavours; stand against censorship and for the rights of artists to organize, work and advocate on their own behalf; and promote the meaningful inclusion of diverse voices, origins and abilities in the arts. Members support these rights as advocates of non-profit, critical, marginal, difficult and transgressive artistic expression.

## What is an Artist-Run Centre?

Artist-run Centres (ARCs) are non-profit organizations, run by and for artists that support new and innovative practices in the arts. With a rich history that spans over thirty years, ARCs have had a significant impact on the cultural ecology in Canada and around the world. Generally, these centres exhibit contemporary art that parallels the larger public institutions and private commercial galleries – offering an alternative to artists in determining how to represent their work.

In the past 40 years, ARCs have played a determining role in the development of contemporary art practices in Canada. By providing a framework in which to showcase experimental and non-commercially driven art, ARCs have been vital to the development of practices such as performance art, video, and new media. ARCs have also been fundamental to the expansion of critical discourse about contemporary art through the creation of a framework to analyze emerging practices. ARCs have formed a pan-Canadian network of artists, curators, critics and arts administrators, as well as regional, national, and international alliances. Sharing the mandate of serving the artistic community and expanding contemporary art practices, artist-run centres and organizations in Canada and in BC form an autonomous network of galleries, presentation spaces, artists' studios and production facilities, collectives, archives, publishing houses, magazines, bookstores, and festivals.

ARCs are self-organized, which means that they are governed by artists and that their mandates follow the principles of artistic self-determination. This includes validating the production and presentation of art through peer-assessment rather than catering to the market or institutional priori-

### Artist-Run Centres stand for:

- **Non-profit, critical, marginal, and radical artistic expression**
- **Artistic autonomy and self-governance**
- **Livable incomes for artists and cultural workers**
- **Diverse voices, origins, and abilities in the arts**

ties. Accordingly, ARCs provide resources to disseminate and articulate experimental, critical, marginal, difficult and transgressive artistic expression. Through their support of socially engaged work, emerging artists and practices, and artistic innovation, ARCs constitute key structures of the Canadian visual art system. Through their activities, they expand the boundaries of contemporary artistic production, foster critical discourse, and create a support network for members of the artistic community. Most of Canada's best known and internationally recognized contemporary artists, curators and cultural practitioners have come out of the artist-run centre movement.

## Artist-Run Centres in BC

PAARC counts 31 member centres, located in Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, Kamloops and Nelson. There are also multiple self-organized artists' galleries, studios, and initiatives across the province. Over the years, the BC artistic community has greatly contributed to the development of the Canadian artist-run centre network, notably with the foundation of the first ARC in Canada, Intermedia Society, in 1967 in Vancouver. While in operation for only a few years, Intermedia inspired artists throughout the country to self-organize and found ARCs in their communities. Today, some of the oldest Canadian ARCs are still in operation in BC. 2013 marks the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Western Front and VIVO, and the 30th anniversary of the Or Gallery's foundation.

Here are a few current initiatives of PAARC members, which demonstrate the breadth of activities and public engagement that BC artist-run centres engage in:

**221A** is a Vancouver-based ARC with a focus on design in contemporary art. 221A is located in Chinatown, and in the past few years, has transformed vacant commercial spaces in the neighbourhood into artist-run gallery cum studio spaces. The 3 buildings that 221A's community has renovated in the Vancouver Chinatown neighbourhood are home to 3 artist-run centres (**221A**, **Access Gallery and UNIT/PITT**) and a to community of artists, independent curators, writers, designers and DIY publishers that rent the converted studio spaces. This growing community of artists and cultural workers is able to work in Downtown Vancouver thanks to the affordability of these studio spaces.

The **Western Front** (Vancouver), **VIVO Media Arts Centre** (Vancouver) and **Open Space** (Victoria) have all recently celebrated their 40th anniversaries; they are amongst the oldest artist-run centres in Canada. All 3 centres have pioneered the integration of new media, music, and performance as part of visual arts programming activities. This has largely contributed to the development of innovative practices in visual arts in Canada in the past 4 decades.

Artist-run centres maintain a growing archive of published material, pamphlets, posters, artists' videos, exhibition catalogues and audio-visual documentation of exhibitions, performances and discursive events. **VIVO Media Arts Centre** (Vancouver) maintains Western Canada's most extensive media and video archive; **grunt gallery** (Vancouver) has developed an online archive documenting the gallery's past endeavours, with a focus on contemporary aboriginal artists; the **Western Front** (Vancouver) has produced an extensive online catalogue of their archives; and more than 20 hours of audio-visual documentation of the Institutions by Artists Conference, a three day, international event co-organized by **PAARC**, **Fillip** and **ARCA**, is accessible online via PAARC's website.

Artist-run centres located in smaller cities provide essential services to members of the artistic community, promote the development of innovative and non-commercial artistic practices in rural areas, and participate in developing local arts and culture through community-engaged programming. **Alternator** (Kelowna) has developed an incubator program through which they offer space and administrative resources to emerging arts-driven community groups to develop their organizational structure and plan activities. **Arnica** (Kamloops) and **Oxygen Arts Centre** (Nelson) both offer workshops and training opportunities for local artists and community members.

Artist-run centres provide access to specialized production equipment and facilities. **MediaNet** (Victoria), **Cineworks** (Vancouver), **VIVO Media Arts Centre** (Vancouver) provide access to film, video and new media equipment and production space to members of the artistic community. **Malaspina Printmakers** (Vancouver) provides access to printmaking facilities. In addition, artist-run centres often pool resources to facilitate the presentation of multi-media work in centres that would not otherwise have access to technology-specific equipment.

Artist-run centres act as stepping-stones for emerging artists to showcase work in professional contexts. However, artist-run centres also show the work of internationally recognized artists and often are the only venues through which Canadian audiences can access these artists' works. **Artspeak** (Vancouver), the **Or Gallery** (Vancouver), the **Western Front** (Vancouver), **LIVE Biennale** (Vancouver), **New Forms Festival** (Vancouver), and **Open Space** (Victoria) are examples of centres that the work of national and international artists, while also supporting local emerging practices.

## The Situation of Artist-Run Centres in BC

Lack of adequate access to operational funding and the chronic instability of project-based funding prove difficult on the daily operations of non-profit arts organizations like artist-run centres. Organizations operate with less paid staff than required, and often have to shut down due to lack of financial resources. Increasing and stabilizing funding to arts organizations would not only ensure that current jobs in the cultural sector be maintained, it would also enable the creation of new jobs in the sector. Increased subsidies to individual artists, obtained through grants and increased working opportunities in the province, could alleviate the gap existing between the earnings of artists in British Columbia and the overall labour force.

In recent years, British Columbia has systematically ranked last of the provinces in average per capita funding to the arts. 2009-10 statistics indicate that British Columbia's per capita governmental funding to the arts was more than \$100 under the national average. Comparative statistics after 2010 are currently not available, but recent funding allocations do not seem to discredit this trend.

Currently, less than half of the ARCs in Canada (and in BC) receive operational funding from the Canada Council for the Arts. Organizations operate with less paid staff than what is needed, and often have to shut down due to a lack of financial resources. The last evaluation round of the Council's Assistance to Artist-Run Centres Program, found that funding requests deemed "very reasonable" amounted to \$6.3 M. The total funds allocated through this program (for one year) amounted to \$4.1 M, which represents only 65% of requested funding. Increasing the Canada Council for the Arts' core budget would allow for increased subsidies to centres that currently receive the program's minimum level of assistance, which is capped at \$20,000. This measure would increase the minimum level of assistance to \$40,000 and support centres that are currently not receiving operating assistance, many of which are located in mid-sized cities and regions.

## Interesting Stats and Data:

- Less than half of the organizations in PAARC's membership received operational funds from the BC Arts Council in 2012-13.
- In the 2011-2014 Operating Cycle, only 9 ARCs in BC received funding through Canada Council Operating Assistance to ARCs Program (11% of funded organizations).
- On average artist-run centres in BC receive on average \$11,238 less public sector revenue than the Canadian average (based on 2010 statistics).
- Approximately half of employed staff in artist-run centres are under 35 years old.
- The average earnings of working artists are 37% below the Canadian labour force average
- The median annual income for artists in Vancouver is \$12,900, 57% below the median of the city's overall labour force.

PAARC supports the Canadian Coalition for the Arts' recommendation to stimulate job creation and local economic development by increasing the annual Parliamentary allocation to the Canada Council for the Arts by a minimum of 10% in 2014-15.

## For more information on BC Artist-Run Centres:

[www.paarc.ca](http://www.paarc.ca) & [www.arcpost.ca](http://www.arcpost.ca)

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<sup>1</sup> Flat-Lined But Still Alive: Analysis of the Provincial and Territorial 2012-13 Budgets from the perspective of Arts, Culture and Heritage, Analysis by Alison Beale, Commissioned by the Canadian Conference of the Arts & Centre on Governance, University of Ottawa, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Mapping Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Large Cities, Hill Strategies, February 2010. Table 1, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> British Columbia's cultural climate: Understanding the arts in BC's Economy and Society, Hill strategies, Presentation commissioned by the Alliance for Arts and Culture Society, June 21, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> "British Columbians' Arts, Culture and Heritage Activities in 2010," Provincial Profiles of Arts, Culture and Heritage Activities in 2010, Statistical insights on the arts, Hill Strategies, Vol. 10 No. 3, March 2012. Table 4, p. 12.