

## INTERPRETIVE BRIEF | Film Topic #1

- The AFA Art Collection, its history, where it comes from - essentially the story of visual arts in Alberta.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) Art Collection, formerly the Alberta Art Foundation (AAF) collection was established by legislation in 1972. Initially the AAF was focused on building an art collection for the people of Alberta. Over time, numerous board governed foundations were formed to represent all the art disciplines: Alberta Art Foundation (visual arts), Performing Arts Foundation (performing arts), and Film and Literary Arts Foundation (media and literature). In 1991 all the Foundations were placed under one umbrella and renamed *The Alberta Foundation for the Arts*. At this time, the AAF art collection became the AFA Art Collection

The mission of the AFA's Art Collection is to foster an appreciation and awareness of the visual arts in Alberta by collecting, managing, preserving and providing public access to the AFA's Art Collection (referred to as the principles of *Collect, Care and Share*). This provincial treasure consists of more than 9,000 artworks, showcasing the creative talents of more than 1,700 artists with a total monetary value for the Collection of more than \$17 million. The AFA's Art Collection reflects the development of the vibrant visual arts community in the province and has become an important cultural legacy for all Albertans.

The video will focus on the history and development of the AFA's Art Collection using photographs, select artworks and interviews with individuals sharing their stories of the AFA. The interviewees will include artists, board members, staff and other key people involved with the AFA's development. Names and contact information for recommended interviewees will be supplied by the AFA staff as will suggestions on illustrative artworks to feature. It is important that the video showcase a wide range of perspectives on the AFA and a minimum of four artist interviews is recommended.

- Sharing the AFA collections with the public through its use, research, exhibitions, education, loans and access.

The AFA collection is a cultural asset of ever-increasing value to Albertans, artists, students and scholars, government, and national and international audiences and partners. The Collection serves two distinct functions:

- It is a legacy collection intended to represent the breadth and depth of visual art practice in Alberta over time.
- It is also a working collection which makes artwork available for use in non-gallery spaces such as the public offices of the Government of Alberta, agencies and non-profit organizations, extended loans and public art commissions, and through loans to public galleries and exhibiting institutions.

As identified in the *Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act* (1991) updated in 2000, <https://www.canlii.org/en/ab/laws/stat/rsa-2000-c-a-19/latest/rsa-2000-c-a-19.html> the AFA will collect, preserve and *display artwork, and foster and promote the enjoyment of artwork by Alberta artists.*

This video will focus on the AFA's efforts to responsibly maximize opportunities for public access to artwork in the Collection by supporting and encouraging programming that makes the Collection appropriately accessible. It is essential to showcase the range of ways artwork is shared at various stakeholder sites across the province including representation of 2-D and 3-D artwork loans in both indoor and outdoor settings. This can be achieved by highlighting the following programs;

- The TREX program which assists in making the collection available to Albertans via four regional organizations that coordinate the program for the Foundation. These partners include [The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie](#) - Northwest Alberta, the [Art Gallery of Alberta](#) - Northeast and North Central Alberta, the [Alberta Society of Artists](#) - Southwest Alberta and the [Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre](#) - Southeast Alberta. These partners offer a wide range of exhibitions to communities across Alberta. Annually, more than 600,000 visitors enjoy exhibitions in more than 150 venues. The program also offers educational support material to encourage visual arts exhibitions in the school curriculum.
- The AFA Art Placement program – 102 loan locations throughout Alberta including the AB Legislature, Edmonton Federal Building, and various government and non-profit locations including libraries, post-secondary sites, and AHS facilities.
- Exhibition loans to public galleries
- Public Art and Extended loans - 45 locations throughout Alberta (indoor and outdoor).
- Research collection visits from artists, art students and academics

As well the video should also highlight the AFA's efforts to sharing art through digitally presenting collections such as the AFA virtual museum <http://alberta.emuseum.com>. This could focus on some of the benefits of being able to increase the accessibility of the collection.



It is important that the video showcases the different ways of sharing elements of artistic diversity such as its geographic location in Alberta, settings (indoor/outdoor/digital as well as rural /urban) and medium (such as sculpture, painting, ceramics) as well as the diversity of the featured artisans themselves (such as age, ethnicity and gender). A minimum of four artist interviews is recommended. Names and contact information for interviewees will be supplied by AFA staff. A recommended list of possible artworks and locations to feature will also be provided.

## INTERPRETIVE BRIEF | Film Topic #3

- The AFA's stewardship role in preserving and protecting the collections and the professional staff undertaking collections management activities.

The Alberta Foundation of the Arts Collection was established in 1972 to preserve the work of Alberta artists as a legacy for the benefit of future Albertans. Since that time, the collection has grown to include over 9000 pieces of artwork in a range of mediums including painting, printmaking, photography, drawing, fibre, ceramic, glass, new media, sculpture and installations. It also represents Alberta's visual artists at various stages in their careers from those in their initial stages through to those who are internationally recognized. Artwork is acquired through a number of ways including donation, purchase, commissions, and transfer from other organizations.

As the steward of the collection, the AFA is responsible for the proper management and on-going care of the artworks entrusted to its care as well as proper intellectual control. Effective stewardship ensures that the artworks are available and accessible to present and future generations. The critical activities of organizing and managing a collection through such tasks as researching, cataloguing, documentation, labelling, photographing, preparing condition reports, conservation, ensuring proper handling and storage are necessary to keep artworks safe, accessible and in good condition. While these tasks are important, they are often invisible and not well understood by the general public.

This video will document the journey of an artwork through the collections management process from its acquisition on through to its permanent storage in an environmentally controlled location. Along the way various collections staff will shed light on the necessary steps of the collections care and the tasks they undertake in caring for the collection. A brief discussion of the task of packaging artworks up for shipment for loans and exhibitions will also be discussed.

It is recommended that the featured artwork be a recently acquired 3D Indigenous art piece that has yet to be processed. Staff would be working in 'real time' making for an authentic, compelling video experience. The artwork is also three-dimensional and presents some unique considerations and challenges to ensure safe and appropriate storage. Additionally, the focus on a piece of Indigenous artwork reaffirms the AFA's on-going focus on the importance of representing diversity.

The bulk of the identified interviewees are AFA staff. Names and contact information for two additional interviewees – the artist and external conservator - can be supplied by AFA staff.

- **Significant AFA Collection Milestones**

This video will focus on significant AFA Collection milestones to illustrate how AFA loans extend provincially, nationally and internationally. The narrative will trace these events from 1975 to the present day, and explore how the growth of the collection in the 1970's, and the circulation of works within the Province, led to opportunities for the collection to be shared with a larger audience outside of Alberta.

The video will include the AFA's first international exhibition at Alberta House in England in 1975, which marked the start of a European tour. Another significant historical milestone was the 1978 Commonwealth Games. Artists were commissioned to make artwork for the event and many of the artworks that were exhibited were later acquired into the collection. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foundation in 1997 can also be featured, as five AFA exhibitions were curated and travelled across the province to celebrate the event.

Other significant exhibitions to be featured include the exhibition *Studio Ceramics in Alberta*, which documented Alberta ceramic artists from 1947 to 1984, and built the holdings of ceramic works in the AFA Collection. The exhibition *Spaces and Places: Eight Decades of Landscape Painting in Alberta*, will also be featured as it captures the history of the formative years of painting in Alberta during the first three decades of the century. The exhibition toured throughout Canada in 1986, and then to Japan in 1990, to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1980 twinning of provinces Alberta and Hokkaido. *Narrative Quest* was a significant exhibition that featured contemporary Indigenous art acquired through a special curatorial initiative in 2008 and 2009. In celebration of Culture Days in 2009, the exhibition was displayed at the Arts Branch and then travelled to four venues across Alberta. In 2014, a selection of artworks from *Narrative Quest* were loaned to the Embassy of Canada, Prince Takamado Gallery in Japan and was met with critical acclaim.

Additional milestones to be presented in the video include the AFA's partnerships with borrowing institutions. This includes loaning artworks to the Glenbow Museum for *Made in Calgary*, a series of five exhibitions that presented a survey of visual arts in Calgary from the 1960's to the 2000's. The AFA also loaned artworks for the National Gallery of Canada's exhibition *Alex Janvier: Modern Indigenous Master* and the 2020 Esker Foundation *Katie Ohe* exhibition. In 2017 and 2019, the AFA partnered with the Friends of University Hospitals, McMullen Gallery to display two exhibitions entitled *This Art Makes Me Feel...* These exhibitions demonstrate how the AFA collaborates with galleries and museums to promote Alberta artists and understand the impact that art has on the public.

There are a number of publications and digital images and possibly some video footage available to develop the story visually and as a narrative. Resources have been identified and can be provided by AFA staff.

Staff can also provide names and contact information for recommended interviewees which will include past and current board members, AFA staff and a minimum of four artist interviews.

## INTERPRETIVE BRIEF | Video #5

- The diversification of the AFA Art Collection and its ongoing evolution to represent and serve Albertan artists from all communities. This includes outreach to and acquisition of artworks by Indigenous artists, acquisition of new media into the collection, and the Art Acquisitions by Application (AAA) program.

This video will use the AFA's online artwork database, the physical AFA artworks and interviews with Albertan artists to explore how the AFA collecting practices have changed to reflect larger cultural and societal changes in the province.

In the early days of the AFA, artworks came in through donations from private individuals and AFA Board purchases. The juried Slide Acquisition Program (now the Art Acquisition by Application Program) began in 1981. Through its collecting programs, the AFA has refined collecting practices to include multiple curatorial voices and seek out under-represented artists and art forms and to address curatorial gaps in the collection.

Some examples of the AFA's changing collecting focus is the development of the Emerging Curator Fellowship program, the Joane Cardinal-Schubert Indigenous Curator Fellowship and the AFA's Collections Development Plan and Curatorial plans.

The video should highlight the AFA's recent adoption of an overarching pluralism art policy intended to provide an overarching philosophy that addresses issues of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in the on-going management and development of the AFA's business. Finally, the video could briefly touch on a shift in the societal perception of artists' value represented through the introduction of Alberta's Arts Professions Recognition Act which acknowledges artists' contributions and encourages fair compensation.

There are a number of photographs, publications and artworks identified as possible resources to develop the video. This video should also include a minimum of five artist interviews with consideration of diversity in artisans (age, gender, cultural, geographic, etc) and in media (sculpture, ceramics, painting, etc.). The names and contact information for potential interviewees will be supplied by AFA staff.