

Oakville Galleries launches *Thank You For Coming!*, a new community arts initiative

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OAKVILLE, ON – Oakville Galleries is pleased to announce the official launch of *Thank You For Coming!*, a series of arts initiatives that will be held throughout Oakville and the greater Halton region.

Exploring the potential of art to increase social and civic engagement, *Thank You For Coming!* will see Oakville Galleries partner with community organizations to offer a range of free or low-cost programmes for local audiences, including teens, seniors, people living with disabilities, and new-generation Canadians.

Thank You For Coming! includes participatory public art projects, lectures series, collaborative media arts programmes, and special events such as zine fairs and off-site exhibitions. These programmes will be held in spaces such as library branches, community centres, assisted-living facilities, parking lots, places of worship, farmers' markets, and seniors' residences. Oakville Galleries has also formed a Youth Council as part of this new initiative to facilitate sustainable youth engagement with the Galleries while contributing to the development a youth-led art scene in Oakville.

"We could not be more pleased to be connecting the community to contemporary art and visual culture in this way. *Thank You for Coming!* not only fosters engagement between new audiences and partners, but it also advances an expanded understanding of how art can function in personal, social and political contexts," says Catherine Sicot, Director of Education and Public Programmes at Oakville Galleries.

A pilot of this initiative ran in summer 2009 with the support of the Oakville Community Foundation. The Ontario Trillium Foundation has since provided Oakville Galleries with a three-year grant to continue the project.

Sarah Febbraro, an artist whose practice frequently engages with participatory, community-focused projects, has been hired as the Galleries' Community Arts Programmer to work with the Galleries' education team and community partners to coordinate the project's development. Partners to date include the Oakville Public Library, Oakville Senior Citizens Residence, Art House, the Oakville YMCA and the Harbourside Organic Farmers Market.

Oakville Galleries is supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Corporation of the Town of Oakville, along with our many individual, corporate and foundation partners.

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