

A PORTRAIT GALLERY FOR CANADA



Master Plan Concept Report



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Lord Cultural Resources is a global professional practice dedicated to creating cultural capital worldwide.

We assist people, communities and organizations to realize and enhance cultural meaning and expression.

We distinguish ourselves through a comprehensive and integrated full-service offering built on a foundation of key competencies: visioning, planning and implementation.

We value and believe in cultural expression as essential for all people. We conduct ourselves with respect for collaboration, local adaptation and cultural diversity, embodying the highest standards of integrity, ethics and professional practice.

We help clients clarify their goals; we provide them with the tools to achieve those goals; and we leave a legacy as a result of training and collaboration.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unlike the United States, the UK, Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, India and Russia, Canada does not have national portrait gallery. To date, aspirations for such a gallery in Canada have not yet materialized, even as portrait galleries in our peer countries continue to grow and evolve, reaching new heights of popularity and impact.

But hope for a uniquely Canadian version of a portrait gallery lives on. The nature of the medium has much to do with this: portraiture has power, relevance and even mystery. Portraiture tells stories. Sometimes comforting, sometimes fascinating and sometimes infuriating, it remains a widely accessible art form. As such, portraiture is an ideal vehicle by which to engage people from all walks of life in discussion and debate, not only on the content of the portraits themselves, but also on what they can teach us about the very nature of Canada: our past, our present and, perhaps most importantly of all, our future.

Recognizing the need and the opportunity, in 2017 a group of passionate and committed Canadians created an Advisory Board with the goal of developing a world-class, 21st century portrait gallery for Canada. In 2018 the Board joined forces with the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and the Canadian museum planning firm Lord Cultural Resources, the largest and best-known organization of

its kind in the world, to develop a formal study for a portrait gallery that will be innovative, creative and engaging for all Canadians wherever they may live. Planning is currently in the feasibility stage: preliminary concept development is now complete, with detailed operational, facility and business planning as the next phase.

A UNIQUE NATIONAL MUSEUM

Canada has a rich array of national museums that explore and interpret topics as diverse as science and technology, human rights, immigration and settlement, and of course history and art. Each one tells an important part of Canada's story, and each makes an invaluable contribution to Canadian society.

A portrait gallery offers an opportunity to complete this constellation of museums. Here the emphasis will be on the Canada of today and tomorrow – a place for Canadians to explore not only who we were then, but also who we are now, and what we can become in the future.

The gallery will enable Canadians to engage in civic discourse – a kind of “town hall” where portraits, and the personal (and particularly Canadian) stories they represent, become the platform from which to launch conversations about our country, its accomplishments and its people. The Canadian project is a dynamic one, and the portrait gallery can be a museum that fosters introspection and understanding.

A DYNAMIC CONCEPT

This museum is by, for and about all of Canada's people, prominent or unknown, multi-generational or newly-arrived, with portraits as the vehicle for exploring Canadian stories. Through constantly changing displays and innovative public education programs, the gallery will explore questions around who we were, who we are, and who we are becoming – while allowing visitors to contribute to an ongoing conversation. The concept is therefore inherently dynamic, allowing for an infinite variety of perspectives and interpretations around the key aspects of Canadian identity.

The concept for the portrait gallery is succinctly articulated in its mission:

The portrait gallery engages Canadians and our visitors with the hard realities, inspiring challenges and difficult choices that individuals from all walks of life have addressed in their Canadian lives. Technologies of paint, sculpture, augmented reality, and digital information make possible an ongoing civic conversation within Canada, as well as between Canada and the world. We will be a place of healing and celebration where people can share their own sense of personal identity.

Achieving this mission will require a highly innovative and creative approach. This can be summarized with three powerful verbs:

- **Express:** The gallery be highly interactive, inviting visitors to participate in the interpretation, to react to the portraiture and

to contribute their own expressions of Canadian identity.

- **Explore:** Visitors can explore the question of identity and the infinite ways it can be represented and expressed, as well as negatively misappropriated, within the context of Canadian history and contemporary issues.
- **Enter (into dialogue):** Visitors will be encouraged to interact with the personality behind the portrait and enter into discussion with other visitors – as well as with themselves. Their stories will inspire provocative questions and stimulating interactions using both analog and advanced digital techniques such as augmented reality. Inviting visitors to engage with questions like these makes the experience of those being portrayed relevant to the lives of those engaging with the portrayal.

The visitor experience that arises from this framework will necessarily be highly discursive and participatory. A wide array of technologies and visitor engagement techniques will bring the portraits to life and stimulate deep engagement with the artworks.

A HOME FOR THE BEST OF CANADIAN PORTRAITURE

The portrait gallery's own collection will be the main resource upon which its exhibitions and public programs will be based. Canada currently has a collection of portraiture, with new works being created on a daily basis that tell us about the Canada of today and look ahead to the country of tomorrow. Partnerships with private collectors and organizations (such as the Kingston Prize for Portraiture or corporate collections) for loans and donations, as well as with artists themselves for newly-commissioned works, will

ensure that the gallery will have a wealth of new and interesting material to interpret.

Moreover, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) holds a portrait collection that is conserved in its Gatineau, Quebec storage facility. LAC currently provides public access to the collection via loan programs and online exhibitions; a partnership with the new portrait gallery could enhance accessibility to the collection to a higher degree than ever before, and is a signal opportunity to serve the needs of both organizations.

A MANDATE TO SERVE ALL CANADIANS

As a national-level museum, the best location for the portrait gallery's main facility is the National Capital Region. But its reach, programs and impact will extend much further. The main facility in the National Capital Region will act as the central hub of a "hub and spoke" model. Outreach throughout the country will be facilitated by the portrait gallery's "spokes", enabling it to engage many more Canadians in expression, exploration and discussion than any other museum before or since.

The "hub-and-spoke" model suggests a network of partners that can help the portrait gallery achieve its mandate while benefiting from its professional staff, collections and stature. But it will also utilize an advanced online capability beyond simple digitization of artworks. Opportunities for innovative web-based, interactive exhibition and educational programs, for both students and the general public, will be built into the gallery's digital infrastructure and operations from the outset, while ensuring sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing technology.

A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The portrait gallery will be operated as an independent not-for-profit charitable organization in partnership with the Government of Canada.

A public-private partnership ("3P") is the ideal vehicle to enable the gallery to flourish: its private governance model will ensure a dynamic, innovative approach to presenting and interpreting portraiture while retaining opportunities for public sector involvement, both from a governance and a philanthropic point of view. But, while some level of government support will be required, the independent charitable status of the organization and its broad scope will unlock contributed revenue streams from private-sector sources and lessen the burden on the public purse.

FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY

Planning continues to advance. While the first stage is complete and has established its basic conceptual parameters, detailed visitor experience, operations, facility and business planning is now required, after which discussions with key partners and stakeholders will continue and architectural and exhibition design work will proceed. Each step brings us closer to the realization of a longstanding dream: a new kind of portrait gallery that connects Canadians to each other and serves as a beacon to the world.