

OSAC

OSAC
Organization of
Saskatchewan
Arts Councils

Adjudicators Handbook

2024-2025

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SASK LOTTERIES

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Introduction to OSAC

The Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils (OSAC), a Provincial Cultural Organization (PCO), funded by Saskatchewan Lotteries, was founded in 1968 by a group of volunteers representing eight arts councils across the province. It has grown since its formation into a vital network of OVER 50 volunteer run arts councils extending throughout all of Saskatchewan.

OSAC provides both Performing Arts and Visual Arts Programs to the communities it serves. Performing Arts and Performing Arts in Schools help arts councils in organizing performing arts "series" for both adults and children by assisting with funding, negotiating and contracting performers.

The Arts on the Move touring exhibition program provides arts councils with visual arts exhibitions accompanied by education materials which work within the new Saskatchewan Arts curriculum. These exhibitions tour throughout the province for three years, to a maximum of twenty-four communities. Artists whose work tours with OSAC's programs receive artists' fees in accordance with a negotiated CARFAC fee schedule.

Visual Arts Program Grants offer funding for classes, workshops, artist development seminars, exhibition extension and exhibition tour guide training.

Throughout the province of Saskatchewan, local adjudications are hosted and funded partly by arts councils, and by the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils (OSAC) through Sask. Lotteries and the Saskatchewan Arts Board. These programs promote the growth of culture by providing opportunities for visual artists and craftspeople to exhibit their work, participate in informational and hands-on workshops and develop critical skills through participating in group and individual critiques with adjudicators. Individuals that are noted to be accomplished emerging artists at the adjudications by the adjudicator/s are invited to submit exhibition proposals to OSAC to be considered for a touring exhibition.

OSAC gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance received from:
Saskatchewan Lotteries, SaskCulture, and Department of Canadian Heritage.



OSAC's Visual Arts Program Aim

The aim of the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils visual arts program is to assist arts councils in presenting visual arts exhibitions that are diverse, moving, thought-provoking, contemporary, educational, and historically relevant by Saskatchewan and Canadian artists, and to develop awareness and appreciation for the visual arts in the province of Saskatchewan.

1. To provide quality exhibitions to Saskatchewan communities that will enhance awareness and appreciation of Saskatchewan artists.

- Develop and maintain the touring program *Arts on the Move* consisting of OSAC curated exhibitions and exhibitions developed by outside organizations
- *Arts on the Move* exhibitions are subsidized to reduce financial barriers for arts councils
- OSAC handles insurance, artist fees, shipping fees, promotional materials, education guides, routing, packing, and crating

2. To enhance art appreciation and education through assisting arts councils to develop visual arts programming.

- Provide educational resource material for touring exhibitions in the form of curriculum focused Education Guides
- Develop and support docent (tour guide) training programming in arts council communities
- Support arts council's efforts to develop visual arts programming through the *Visual Arts Program Grant*

3. To assist in the creative and professional development of Saskatchewan Visual artists.

- To provide funding to arts councils for Local Adjudications, which provide opportunities for artists to exhibit their work and develop critical skills through participating in group and individual critiques with adjudicators
- To tour the work of emerging and professional Saskatchewan artists to OSAC's arts council member audiences through its touring network

4. To collaborate and partner with visual arts organizations and institutions that share a similar aim.

- Keep an active dialogue with organizations such as the SKArts, CARFAC SASK, U of R and USask, AKA artist run, Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery, Sâkêwêwak, etc
- Tour exhibitions developed by partner organizations and institutions

Responsibilities

The adjudicator will:

1. Be contacted by an arts council, and upon agreement to adjudicate, be informed of the date, place and time of the event.
2. Arrange for their own transportation, lodging (if necessary) and meals. Request that the arts council make a hotel reservation on your behalf, as they are familiar with the facilities).
3. Sign an Adjudicator's Letter of Agreement (which is meant to protect both parties).
4. Inform the arts council of all activities as discussed such as slide lectures, etc., and materials to be brought or that may be needed such as projector, etc.
5. Will be provided with a list of works in the exhibition and in which category they fall:

Category A - must have a series of five artworks
-wish to submit an exhibition proposal to OSAC to be considered for a touring exhibition

Category B - less than five works
- would like a critique and an opportunity to exhibit

6. Select an artist or artists to be recognized as accomplished, emerging artists. Based on each arts council's individual approach to awards at the Local Adjudication, these artists may be awarded first place, second place, third place and honorable mention. These artists will be invited to submit an exhibition proposal to OSAC to be considered for a touring exhibition. Artists chosen should have a goal of pursuing a professional career as an artist or want to further their artistic practice and endeavors.
7. Give lectures and/or workshops for the participating artists. This is optional and is to be decided upon between the adjudicator and the arts council. Arts councils should realize the time added on to the adjudicator's day is significant, such that they may be charged extra especially if travel distance is significant.
8. Give individual and/or group critiques that are meant to be helpful and positive to the participating artists. It is the adjudicator's right to choose the format for the critiques, and this must be discussed prior to the event.
9. Return the expense form to the arts council and the evaluation form (Adjudicators Comments) to the OSAC office upon completion of the adjudication. Payment for the adjudication and additional expenses will be the responsibility of the host arts council.

Critique Guidelines

1. Emerging artists are sensitive and apprehensive about exposing their work to others. Create a comfortable zone in which to communicate with each person you approach. This may be done with a simple question, such as: "Which piece in this exhibition do you find most interesting, and why?" Their answer may give you a lead into who this person is, and how comfortable or uncomfortable they are in the critique situation.
2. Establish yourself as an approachable and accessible person. Each adjudicator brings their own experience and bias to each critique. Inform the artist (briefly) of your position (as an artist {type of activity you are engaged in}, gallery educator, gallery director, etc.).
3. OSAC has not provided specific criteria. Simply keep in mind the elements or ingredients which, when working together create a strong piece (drawing, colour, light, form, composition, perspective, concept, skillful and creative manipulation of materials, etc.). Inform the artist of your criteria for evaluating their work. They need to know your guidelines!
4. Always begin by acknowledging all the best features of the artist's work. Ensure that they feel good about what they have done. The act of making art is important for them and you never want to discourage this.
5. Once you have established a comfortable rapport with the artist, move on to how they may improve their work. Ask them: "What are the strong and the weak aspects of their work". They usually have a sense of this. By asking questions, you develop their critical skills, rather than providing answers and "brushstrokes". You are there to assist them in developing critical skills that they may employ back in their studios.
6. End a critique with a brief capsule of your discussion - a few important points they will easily remember. Make the last statement positive, so that you have opened rather than closed potential doors of visual perception and action.
7. In group critiques, begin by addressing the audience, briefly outlining who you are and your criteria for evaluation.
8. The artist is often not just sensitive but hyper-sensitive in a group critique, so offer positive and constructive observations from which not only the artist, but the entire group can benefit. This may be an opportunity for instruction. Encourage critical thinking by soliciting questions and discussion from the audience.
9. In fact, there are really no winners or losers in adjudications. This event is a forum for critiques, questions and growth. Each artist is a winner in that they have participated in a winning and life affirming creative activity!

On Location

Since this adjudication is not taking place in New York, London, Toronto, or even Regina or Saskatoon, you, as the adjudicator must bear this in mind. There are admittedly, universal standards and guidelines for critiquing a work of art and determining excellence. This is a given factor. Another factor is location.

The critic from New York might bring his/her New York eyes to the Toronto art scene and dismiss much of the art as passé or provincial or not up to the New York standard! But, Toronto is not New York, and will consequently produce a different sensibility in the art it creates. The critic from Toronto may in turn, do the same in Regina and Saskatoon. Might the critic from Regina or Saskatoon do the same in rural Saskatchewan?

Be aware of, and acknowledge the validity of the rural experience, environment and sensibility. Critique the work both according to the universal criteria and the location in which you are adjudicating.

Your expertise is valued. You provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the visual arts and to enrich the artistic community which you are serving.

Adjudication Process

Throughout the province of Saskatchewan, local adjudications are hosted and funded partly by arts councils, and by the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils (OSAC) through SaskCulture/Sask. Lotteries.

These programs promote the growth of culture by providing opportunities for visual artists and craftspeople to exhibit their work, participate in informational and hands-on workshops and develop critical skills through participating in group and individual critiques with adjudicators. Individuals that are noted to be accomplished emerging artists at the adjudication by the adjudicator/s (first, second, third place and honorable mentions) will be invited to submit exhibition proposals to OSAC to be considered for a touring exhibition.

Exhibition proposals submitted by artists will be juried by a committee of arts professionals. The committee may choose artists' works based on a solo, duo, trio or group show. Artists' works that are chosen by the committee will tour throughout the province in OSAC's **Arts on the Move** program for three years. The touring artists will receive exhibition fees based on a negotiated CARFAC minimum fee schedule.

For the best presentation of the participating artists' work, we encourage artists to keep these things in mind when entering the local adjudication:

1. Choose only your best work!
2. If you work in several different mediums, don't enter one of each. Submit work that has a sense of continuity to show a sense of maturity in the art making.
3. Choose a grouping of works that have a similar theme. This will show the adjudicator that you have a creative direction in your work.

Criteria for Selection

*Notes on the adjudication process
for artists and adjudicators.*

Since visual art is visual communication, your instincts will be alert to which works communicate to you. Note this, and then inquire how much this communication has to do with the work and how much has to do with your personal vision. If you are a single adjudicator, this is the most challenging aspect of your job!

The process of adjudicating works of art is much like the process of teaching art - each adjudicator, as each educator, brings to this process their own experience and bias. Whether we admit to a bias or not, this is simply a human trait. In order to fully address each work you are presented with, begin by addressing your own position, recognizing and laying aside your personal bias.

Many adjudicators are artists who have spent many years developing a personal vision. They also have, through the study of the history of visual art (visual communication), acquired an **aesthetic judgment**. Both **personal** and **historical vision** are skills which serve the adjudication process!

In approaching an adjudication, both the **heart** and the **mind** work together. It matters little from which point you begin. The marriage of the two can create an equitable decision.

Technically, works are assessed on their demonstration of **technical skill**, adept **manipulation of the media** and of the **visual elements** and **principles of design (colour, light, space, composition)**. Note in which pieces these skills and elements **work together** to create a strong communication. These are the works to keep in mind in the final analysis.

It is not necessarily the mastery of skills that is the mark of excellence in a work of art. It is essential to keep a balanced eye - one which considers skill as a vehicle towards expression, and not the expression itself. Keep an eye open for what may at first appear simple or naive but may contain the heart of what matters - **communication**.

Each artist who has exhibited and joined the critique process furthers their development, recognizing that art is not only a product but also a process!

The adjudication process is a learning process. In *working together* both artist and adjudicator expand their visual perception and their critical and creative skills.

Evaluation Criteria

Artistic Excellence

Balance of idea and technique

Visual Resolve

Personal Vision

Something present that defies words

Metaphoric content

Passion, commitment, compulsion

Intellectual and emotional balance

Incidental personal response of the adjudicators

*The above criteria were cited by Provincial Adjudicator John Noestheden at the opening of the 1996 Visual Arts Showcase. Each adjudicator injects some of his/her own criteria.

Adjudicators Notes from a 2000 Local Adjudication

Artistic Merit

* Quality of Artistic Elements

* Use of colour, medium, technical skill

Balance of intent in work

Originality / innovation

Uniqueness of vision

Imagery is direct & fresh

Entry Requirements for Local Adjudications

1. Participants must be considered emerging artists, meaning that they are at the beginning of their careers, that they must not yet have received widespread recognition of their work by Saskatchewan art/ craft galleries and not be solely supporting themselves through the sale of their work. **Artists can be considered emerging and professional.** (For further clarification, see the handout "Definition of a Professional Artist.")
2. Participants must provide 5 works completed within the past 3 years to be considered eligible. Previously adjudicated works may be entered. Each 2-dimensional artwork must be ready for hanging.
3. There is no size restriction on works entered, although adjudicators should be conscious of suitability of touring.
4. Participants are encouraged to enter in the Local Adjudication nearest them. It is left to the arts council's discretion to decide whether an artist may register in **more than one adjudication per year** or in a local adjudication **which is not nearest** to the artist's residence. Arts councils should keep in mind that artists may wish to have their work critiqued by more than one adjudicator or have a preference of one adjudicator over another. For the latter reason, **the name(s) of the adjudicator(s) must be advertised prior to the event.**
5. Artists whose work was chosen to tour in the past may still enter a Local Adjudication. However, they are not eligible to submit an exhibition proposal to OSAC to be considered for another touring exhibition until 2 years following the completion of their tour.

Artists selected to tour their work in a group exhibition of more than 3 people (4+) are exempt from this clause.

6. OSAC follows the standards for craft entries as defined by the Saskatchewan Craft Council. We hope that the following excerpt is useful:

All the basic concepts of design should be considered and all pieces should be well executed and well finished. While the items are primarily hand manufactured (ie: by hand, hand tools or hand-controlled processes), ready-made components are acceptable where their use is clearly appropriate to the nature and design of the work.

Articles made from molds are acceptable only where the mold is subordinate to the product of the

craftsperson or where the mold is subordinate to the craftsperson's creativity.

Any article in any media using a commercial kit is automatically disqualified.

Traditional items such as Ukrainian tablecloths, Venetian lace, etc. have a greater emphasis on craftsmanship rather than innovations and exploration of material. Both approaches are equally valid and all pieces should be judged on the overall success of the design.

7. OSAC encourages participation by both visual artists and craftspeople at local adjudications. We hope that the combination of different media will enhance the touring exhibitions which travel Saskatchewan.

8. Arts councils may decide to have different entry categories for the participants. For example:

Category A – must have 5 artworks

-wish to submit an exhibition proposal to OSAC to be considered for a touring exhibition.

Category B – less than 5 artworks

-would like a critique and an opportunity to exhibit.

-would not like to submit an exhibition proposal to OSAC to be considered for a touring exhibition.

Definition of a Professional Artist:

The term artist can be broadly interpreted. CARFAC, for the purpose of membership, uses the definition of the International Association of Art.

An artist may be considered professional not only if they earn a living through art, but also by any one of the following criteria:

- if they possess a diploma in painting, sculpture, or graphics, or in other areas considered by the cultural criteria of the country, to be within the domain of the fine arts.

- if they teach art in a school of art or applied arts

- if the artist's work is often seen by the public or is exhibited frequently or regularly in group shows or individual exhibitions, in the country or abroad.

- If the person is recognized as an artist by the consensus of opinion among other professional artists in the country, even if the person possesses none of the preceding qualifications.

And furthermore,

- the word "artist" signifies any person who devotes a qualitatively important part of their life to expressing and communicating an aesthetic vision of the world and who is or asks to be recognized as an artist within the society in which they live, whether or not they are bound by any relations of employment or association (UNESCO).

Definition of an Emerging Artist:

There is no standard definition of an emerging artist. OSAC refers to an artist that is emerging as one that is at the beginning of his/her career, one that has not yet have received widespread recognition of his/her work by Saskatchewan art/ craft galleries and is not solely supporting him/herself through the sale of work. Artists can be considered emerging and professional.

The Saskatchewan Arts Board defines an emerging artist, to determine eligibility for their "C" grant category, as:

- Artists or individuals working in the arts striving to achieve a professional level in their discipline, and who:
- can demonstrate their commitment to the development of specialized skills or knowledge in their discipline
- can demonstrate their commitment to the achievement of a professional level in their discipline through training, mentorships or peer recognition; and
- are producing a growing body or repertoire or body of work.

Adjudicator Comments

Feedback on local adjudications is an essential part of our ongoing evaluation of visual arts programming. Please complete the following form and send it to the OSAC office.

Name of Adjudicator: _____

Name of Arts Council: _____

Date of Adjudication: _____

Please make general comments on the following items:

1. The reception of the host arts council towards you was:

2. The adjudication was organized in conjunction with other events:

Yes _____ No _____

3. Comment on the quality of work, both art and craft:

4. Was the local adjudication organized and set up upon your arrival?

Yes _____ No _____

5. Comment on the display of the work and the facility used for the adjudication:

6. Were the participants receptive to the critique?

7. Did you conduct a group or individual critiques?

8. Did you find adjudicating difficult due to the work entered being too varied in medium and quality?

9. Other comments:

10. How can OSAC improve its adjudication system, information to artists and adjudicators? We value your input!

Please complete and send this form to OSAC's office at:
Visual Arts Program Manager Zoë Schneider, zoe@osac.ca