

Walls for All Action Plan

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Project partners:



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ABOUT WALLS FOR ALL

Organizations like Mural Routes and East End Arts have had countless conversations with women and gender diverse street artists over the years who have shared concerns about the barriers they face: they are offered smaller and/or less visible walls or projects; there is a lack of opportunities to connect and learn from other women/gender diverse folks who have developed a successful career; they continue to assist male lead artists but lack opportunities to lead the projects themselves; and they have to individually advocate for themselves (including in terms of equal payment), perpetuating the stereotype that women are difficult to work with.

Working in public spaces is also a challenge for women and gender diverse artists: available data suggests that the vast majority of these artists have experienced some form of unwanted sexual attention or sexual harassment in public spaces. And finally, mural artists who identify as women of colour, Indigenous, disabled, and/or queer face additional barriers not just in career advancement but to simply enter the field, resulting in many deciding not to pursue mural art as a viable professional career.

Since October 2022, Mural Routes and East End Arts have worked on a project that challenges the status quo in the street art world called Walls for All. This project aims to build a more equitable, accessible, and inclusive street art sector for all gender marginalized artists, while also helping to build a network and/or support group of muralists who share similar experiences and struggles.

Our main goal was to engage the artistic community to provide the content (or action items) to be included in this Action Plan you are now reading, rather than having organizations and/or institutions speak on behalf of the artists. For this endeavour, we collaborated with artists Fiya Bruxa, Claire Browne, Danielle Hyde, and Jacquie Comrie, who led the conversation internally and in community, while holding space for women and gender diverse street artists to share and discuss commonly faced issues whilst producing murals in the public realm.

As part of this project, we hosted three community consultations:

Part 1 consisted of a panel and brainstorming jam where women and gender diverse street artists joined us online to discuss barriers and different issues.

Part 2 shared a Draft Action Plan based on the findings from our first session. We then discussed the following pillars:

- Safety
- Funding
- Street Art Culture
- Career Development
- Copyright and Contract Law

Part 3 was our first in-person event which was very special. Following a brief presentation to set the tone for the evening, participants were all given an opportunity to contribute their own ideas and comments to our revised Draft Action Plan, while networking and brainstorming with other Street Artists and Arts Workers. The feedback and input provided by participants was reviewed and incorporated into this Action Plan.

Our intention is for this Action Plan to be a useful resource to organizations, festivals, independent mural producers, funders, and/or municipalities across the country to inform and guide short-term actions, future strategic plans, and any evaluations and/or decisions between now and then. We expect that you will find this document as helpful as we do as the mural/street art sector continues to evolve and grow.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who participated in this process! Our most sincere gratitude to artists Fiya Bruxa, Claire Browne, Danielle Hyde, and Jacquie Comrie who agreed to share their own frustrations and lived experiences with the larger community. It takes a lot of effort, courage, and commitment to show up to every community consultation session willing to engage in difficult conversations publicly.

WALLS FOR ALL – ACTION PLAN

Organizations/institutions collectively recognize the importance and purpose of relationships and partnerships with Indigenous artists, communities, and cultural organizations, and for these to be grounded in reciprocity, respect and protocols. In striving to honour those relationships we commit to involving Indigenous peoples in all levels of leadership and at all points of engagement. We commit to working together with Indigenous communities in non-extractive ways to dismantle barriers impacting the full implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, including Calls 57 and 92.

These commitments should inform the ways that the following action items are read, understood, and implemented.

STREET ART CULTURE (LARGER BIG PICTURE)

- Organizations/institutions commit to building a culture of collaboration and care versus mass production and competition.
- Organizations/institutions commit to listening and working with the community to address sector needs on an ongoing basis.
- Organizations/institutions commit to making tangible steps towards meeting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) objectives and to accommodating requirements as per the Canadian Human Rights Commission.
- Organizations/institutions commit to following culturally safe, relevant, and socially anti-oppressive practices. Organizations/institutions commit to addressing and to dismantling unsafe and hazardous assumptions about public mural/street art work that don't serve artists, communities, and/or goals of DEI, such as "the buddy system is just for mentorship or inexperienced artists" or "when working with the public, you will be interacting with the public and those interactions are not always agreeable".
- Organizations/institutions commit to addressing barriers at the individual and community level, with a focus on intersectionality.
- Organizations commit to involving people with lived experience and knowledge in positions of paid consultation and in leadership opportunities.
- Organizations/institutions commit to providing more opportunities with freedom for artistic self-expression.
- Organizations/institutions commit to working on expanding the network of mural artists for creative exchange and mutual support.

SAFETY

- Organizations/institutions commit to acquiring health and safety training and implementing best health and safety practices in projects they undertake, including having safety plans in place. Organizations/institutions commit to taking more responsibility regarding onsite safety (i.e. leading sidewalk closure processes, covering hydro wires, etc.) and a more proactive role regarding planning and response to safety-related issues, such as conducting site visits with artists to identify safety concerns and their potential mitigation, providing points of contact for artists and project coordinators should any safety issues arise or checking in with artists on an ongoing basis.
- Organizations/institutions commit to providing artists with training on health and safety best practices, de-escalation, biohazard management and disposal, overdose management, dealing with street involved neighbours, etc., including safety training that is specific to issues that women and gender diverse folks experience onsite.
- Organizations/institutions commit to maintaining ongoing communication regarding safety with their artists throughout project planning and execution and to developing processes for reporting safety issues/concerns (prior, during and post production) that are accessible to the artists they engage in their projects.
- Organizations/institutions commit to providing artists with lists of resources for issues they may experience on the job site, including location specific considerations like local traffic, community elements such as people or environmental noise, ensuring a good understanding of what to expect from the work site and surrounding area.
- Organizations/institutions will support the artist community in exploring ways for self-organizing and building a network of fellow artists who can support at job sites. Organizations may help to support via creating and facilitating online networking spaces (Facebook groups), helping to create shared communication channels (WhatsApp groups), or whatever the artist community sees most fit and beneficial.

- Organizations/institutions commit to developing Privacy Policies that include:
 - 1) informing artists about what personal information will be collected and how it will be used/disclosed, and 2) consent regarding artists' personal information, where artists' privacy is established as default and organizations/institutions must seek the consent of artists on the use and/or disclosure of any collected personal information.
- Organizations/institutions commit to considering privacy throughout the development and implementation of projects and to abiding by any legislation in place regarding this matter.
- Organizations/institutions commit to discussing and working with artists on establishing protocols for collecting, using and disclosing personal information. Organizations/institutions commit to including the agreements reached during these discussions on artist contracts for reference and compliance.
- Organizations/institutions commit to creating resources for artists to engage in conversations around privacy and consent when working individually and/or with other artists.

FUNDING

- Organizations/institutions commit to providing clearer transparency about mural/street art opportunities and selection processes. They also commit to documenting and publicly reporting on funds distributed and meeting set mandates and objectives (i.e. DEI objectives)
- Organizations/institutions commit to adjusting funding opportunities to allow for:
 - Paid peer-to-peer/staff support and/or security services on project budgets
 - Flexible production timelines that allow for enhanced safety and accessibility for all members of the artistic community
 - Individual and group support in project budgets, discussed with artists, particularly for artists with disabilities.
 - Project management/production support that accounts for the production coordination and administration needed from the beginning of a project (i.e. sourcing walls, prepping surfaces, site clean-up, meetings, booking equipment like lifts, wire wrapping, emails etc.) to post art production wrap up
 - Certifications such as Working at Heights or elevated platforms training
- Organizations/institutions commit to advocating for the elimination of the percentage (%) cap for project management/coordination and/or administration line items on funding opportunities' project budgets. They also commit to educating and supporting artists in addressing the issues this cap poses.
- Organizations/institutions commit to working with artists to collectively develop a street/mural art-specific fee schedule, that captures the working conditions of this particular art practice, as an educational tool for artists to use as they see fit (with a commitment to collaboratively update the fee schedule annually). Organizations/institutions also commit to doing advocacy and communicating the value of this fee schedule for paying artists properly to the public and stakeholders when doing their own projects.

- Organizations/institutions commit to developing budgets in conversation with artists, to ensure each individual's professional fees and support needs are included/covered.
- Organizations/institutions commit to creating/developing funding opportunities for artists at different stages in their careers, including new mural artists of ALL ages.
- Organizations/institutions commit to creating more funding opportunities that allow for mentorships between experienced/seasoned artists and emerging/new artists.
- Organizations/institutions commit to reducing bureaucracy and simplifying funding application processes, including offering supports for developing mural project budgets. Also commit to providing education to other organizations and mural producers around best practices and fair wages.
- Organizations/institutions commit to setting budget limitations without/excluding HST, to ensure ALL artists, regardless of whether they charge HST or not, can access the same amount of funds.
- Organizations/institutions commit to creating/developing accessible funding opportunities that specifically address unforeseeable/unanticipated safety/security issues on mural sites and to building quick turnaround/decision-making processes to navigate these circumstances.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Organizations/institutions commit to developing entry-level/entry-point opportunities created with safety and care in mind for new/newer mural/street artists.
- Organizations/institutions commit to taking an active role in ensuring these entry-point opportunities are meeting their objectives, mandates and stated goals, such as percentages of first-time artists, new mural artists etc.
- Organizations/institutions will prioritize hosting and facilitating more programs that focus on networking, knowledge sharing, and collaborating for artists, while allocating financial resources to compensate artists for their time and knowledge.
- Organizations/institutions commit to allocating dedicated funding to developing and offering training that supports artists in expanding their careers and improving their business skills (i.e. financial management of projects, Tax filing and implications.)
- Organizations/institutions commit to pursuing a strategic approach to mentorship and apprenticeship and developing facilitated opportunities for emerging/mid-career artists to assist, apprentice, and/or be mentored by established artists.
- Organizations/institutions commit to working with the mural/street art community to identify training needs and make those resources accessible for the community (i.e. hands-on spray painting and design transfer onto wall; copyright infringement; grant writing and public/private funding; outreach; negotiation; certifications needed; first aid; social media, branding, and digital literacy; arts facilitation; addressing/dealing with media;)
- Organizations/institutions commit to providing training on the history of mural/graffiti/street art in Canada and internationally, including background, key players, and their roles.
- Organizations/institutions commit to making their opportunities more accessible and discoverable through outreach partnerships and to actively communicate market opportunities.
- Organizations/institutions commit to hiring artists and instructors that represent a diversity of lived experiences and artistic practices/mediums.
- Organizations/institutions commit to ensuring open, fair, and equitable hiring and engagement practices on all artistic leadership, curatorial, and/or instructor positions and/or opportunities.

COPYRIGHT AND CONTRACT LAW

- Organizations/institutions commit to providing artists with accessible training and educational tools around copyright and copyright laws in Canada.
- Organizations/institutions commit to establishing fair, equitable contracts that honour artists inherent rights under the law and to remove any clauses that make exploitative, unjust, and/or unreasonable demands including, (but not exclusive to) the surrendering of artist's rights.
- Organizations/institutions commit to making contracts more accessible by providing contract/legal literacy, using plain/simple language (or removing unnecessary legal terminology) in contracts, and providing further context and/or clarity on contract clauses as needed.
- Organizations/institutions commit to proactively engaging in active discussion and negotiation around contracts to ensure the artists' needs and wishes are met.
- Organizations/institutions commit to complying with copyright laws in Canada and to reviewing artist contracts on an as-needed basis to account for updates/changes in copyright law.
- Organizations/institutions commit to supporting artists when dealing with third parties who pursue the waiving of artists' moral rights and copyrights.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Organizations/institutions commit to adhering to the Human Rights Code (HRC) and the prohibited grounds for discrimination included within the Code. They also commit to actively working towards prohibiting discrimination that results from requirements, qualifications, or factors associated with open call processes that may appear neutral but have adverse or negative effects on artists, especially those within the Code or identified as vulnerable within the realm of public art (i.e. new artists). Organizations/institutions commit to conducting external and internal audits in instances when discrimination takes place.
- Organizations/institutions commit to examining barriers with respect to all aspects of public (mural) art processes, from open calls to project completion and future follow-ups.
- Organizations/institutions commit to reducing undue hardship and unreasonable requirements in all aspects of public (mural) art processes.
- Organizations/institutions commit to acknowledging existing power structures and systems of oppression and working towards dismantling them.
- Organizations/institutions commit to being transparent in all aspects of public (mural) art processes, from available open calls to how project implementation processes are carried out.
- Organizations/institutions commit to holding their leaders accountable for following through with organizational/institutional commitments in all aspects of public (mural) art processes.
- Organizations/institutions commit to adhering to mandates around equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to delivering on and sharing evidence of their impact.
- Organizations/institutions commit to both external (i.e. community consultations) and internal analysis and reviews of current approaches and practices in public (mural) art and to evaluating public programs to ensure they address and meet the needs of the artistic community being served.

- Organizations/institutions commit to facilitating spaces where unheard voices can lead, instead of speaking on their behalf.
- Organizations/institutions commit to listening to the community and being open to receiving criticism and feedback. They also commit to acknowledging oversights, grievances, and transgressions and to then taking responsibility and action, making appropriate changes, and issuing genuine apologies.
- Organizations/institutions commit to developing responsive, meaningful community engagement processes and to employ their best efforts to include marginalized voices throughout these processes.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Organizations/institutions commit to engaging artists in reflection and review of the prior mural season on a yearly basis, with the goal of evaluating/assessing approaches and practices in order to improve and/or rectify these as needed.
- Organizations/institutions commit to seeking and encouraging third parties (artists, producers, community members, etc.) to provide input and feedback.
- Organizations/institutions commit to developing and implementing a transparent set of policies and processes that uphold and protect the privacy rights of artists, providing any form of feedback at every point said feedback is given. These policies/processes should establish that it is the artists' sole discretion to reveal any identifying information, as it relates to feedback or concerns expressed.
- Organizations/institutions commit to ensuring the input/feedback received is documented, reviewed, and reported when appropriate and that any documents/reports created to that end are made available for consultation. They also commit to taking actions in the short and long term based on the input/feedback received.
- Organizations/institutions commit to maintaining open communication and following up with artists on necessary steps and actions taken to address input/feedback received and to reporting to the larger mural/street art community on these actions' impact/accomplishments.