

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIT: VARLEY ART GALLERY

Description of Organization

Opened in May 1972, we are a municipal gallery named after Frederick H. Varley, a member of the Group of Seven. Like most galleries, the backbone of the Varley Gallery's permanent collection has been built by a generous donor, her name is Kathleen Gormley McKay. Another goal of the Varley Gallery is the preservation of works that celebrate the history of Canadian art, while also launching exhibits of contemporary art that reflect the diversity of the city of Markham.

Highlights in Recent Years

In 2018, we launched an exhibit called "Witness: Canadian Art of the First World War," featuring paintings on loan from the Canadian War Museum. The Varley Art Gallery chose to mount the exhibition to commemorate two events: the centenary of the very first Armistice Day, which took place on Nov. 11, 1918, and also F.H. Varley's service as a war artist.

[For more information](#)

Social Media Presence

We have built an audience that averages 2,500 followers on our main social media channels - Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Our curatorial team places a focus on showcasing exhibits that reflect the diversity of the Markham community, and the rich heritage of art historical painting in Canada. With an emphasis on quality over quantity, our main gallery will display an exhibit for the duration of one year, with smaller exhibits changing pace more quickly. We have the most followers on Twitter and post approximately once per week. But, since we have low engagement, there is opportunity to grow our audience. We repurpose the same content across all three media channels.

Funding

In 2018 and years previous, we received a grant from the Ontario Arts Council, but this is not enough funding to meet our objectives. We continue to be proud of our education programming that range from exhibition-based programs for school aged children to art workshops for adults and seniors. In addition, the Varley-McKay Art Foundation has an endowment for education programs and art acquisitions, and runs two main annual fundraising events: Vintages at the Varley in April and Rouge: Varley Gala in October.

Mission Statement & Target Audiences

- To inspire local and national audiences to engage with art, both historical and contemporary
- Present well researched exhibitions, education programs that are relevant to the Markham community
- Share and celebrate the life and work of F.H. Varley, a founding member of the Group of Seven
- Produce and circulate exhibitions that support the work of contemporary artists that are relevant to the communities we serve.
- Specifically, we support artists from York region and we seek to broaden access to the arts for diverse artists and communities.
- Actively participate in the Unionville Mainstreet Revitalization project

- Members of the community who attend lunch and learns, lectures, art workshops, art openings
- Education programs benefiting schools – part of mandate and requirement for funding from Ontario Arts Council
- Varley McKay Foundation Board Members and volunteers in positions ranging from interns to animators who assist with program delivery
- Gallery patrons with membership who help support the museum and enjoy the benefits of membership, such as discounted rates on programs
- Artists in the GTA, including individuals who are art enthusiasts, and meetup group organizers who help promote events and special programming
- Varley as a community hub, including parents who join their children in family friendly programming and enroll their children in art camps and P.A. Day activities

Art Education for Children, Family Centred Programming, and Programs for Adults to Retirees

Parents who prioritize art enrichment for their children as an extracurricular activity. The Varley runs summer camps and after school programs. Programs on the weekends also involve the entire family, inviting parents to collaborate in art making activities with their child(ren). Members of the gallery and the community who take lessons to learn art skills and techniques as a leisure activity.

Potential Donors

In 2017, we received a sizeable donation of 22 works of art, representing all original members and later members of the Group of Seven. The collector, Jack MacQuarrie, decided to bequeath his collection to the Varley based on an agreement the works would be kept together in one art museum.

Part of our strategic plan is to nurture relationships within the private art community to position ourselves for potential and future donations.

Prospective Visitors

The area of Markham is headquarters for IBM, Toyota, General Motors, and Huawei, among other 1,500 tech Companies – the City of Markham even pitched themselves to be the next HQ for Amazon. There is potential for partnerships with these companies in terms of fundraising events.

Brand Messaging Ideas

To start off our holiday campaign to drive more traffic to our social media channels, we plan to dig through the archives and highlight Frederick Varley's war paintings to commemorate Remembrance Day. For visual interest, we would like to feature some posts on his portraiture paintings. Currently, our social media feed places a focus on promoting ourselves as a contemporary art gallery supporting emerging artists with connections to the Markham community. However, for our upcoming campaign, we would like to follow a strategy to highlight specific themes in Canadian art historical painting.

VALUE OF GALLERY MEMBERSHIP

Information regarding our membership program is provided in a downloadable PDF on our webpage. An annual individual membership is \$55 and an annual student membership is \$34.

MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES:

Reciprocal admission to 70+ galleries as part of Ontario Association of Art Galleries, and includes Art Gallery of Ontario

Discount at gift shop, workshops and lectures
Free lunch n' learn
Invites to openings and events

Analysis

Our gallery's strength is in the quality of our programming. However, attracting repeat visitors remains a challenge since the gallery only has one major exhibit per year.

While our social media presence reflects an understanding of how to leverage features such as Instagram Stories, but overall our strategy at the moment lacks a clear focus. We attempt to engage all target age groups and audiences. On all social media channels, we promote programs for school aged children, art enthusiasts, and retirees. There is also a lack of clear brand messaging that tells a story about our origins and the direction where we're headed.

Our communications team uses the same photographs and posts across all active social media platforms. I would highly recommend adding variation in terms of visual language starting with different images and in terms of text, a tone of voice suitable for our specific chosen audience persona. This includes developing a style guide for our unique brand as a contemporary and historical art gallery and museum – consider consistent and pointed messaging with chosen font type, colours, and visuals. Content can still be repurposed, but with slight tweaks to the look and feel of the post.

Our marketing team needs to focus on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook analytics. For example, having separate hashtags for specific campaigns, might not be effective, unless our team finds out the best time of day to post on Twitter. Since Twitter is read like a news feed, and the average Tweet only stays active for 18 minutes, timing of tweets is crucial. From Twitter analytics, we can find out whether people are looking at tweets during their commute or during working hours, and plan accordingly. We could also take a look at the profile of followers who retweet our posts and study the particular demographics of that person's followers.

Analytics for Instagram tell us that posts with short videos get 10x the views of regular posts. Our engagement rate for one of our more popular posts on the platform is 5%. The post received 71 likes and the rate was calculated by dividing the

MOST LIKED POSTS: CURATED CONTENT

- Video Burst
- Behind the scenes post of "treasures to uncover"
- Visit of the Vault post shows Curator talking to visitors
- Exhibit related programming where young children participated in a workshop led by Arabesque Ballet
- Aerial view of installation process of upcoming exhibit
- Post about bidding battles at silent auction
- Post about staying open late on Thursdays 2017 December
- Highlights #mainstreet Unionville

number of likes by total number of followers 1,410 and then multiplying by 100. Even though we use Instagram Stories, hash tags and backlinks, we struggle with engagement due to a lack of compelling imagery in our visuals and photographs.

Social Media Goals

More strategic planning is needed to leverage an understanding of social media analytics for each platform. The proposed strategy is to post tailored content with distinct brand messaging and content to target a specific audience on each platform.

The following are recommended target audiences:

- **Instagram** – Art enthusiasts and members of the art community in the City of Markham and GTA
- **Facebook** – Learners who participate in the Varley’s art workshops and art competitions, ranging in skill level from beginner to intermediate
- **Twitter** – Latest happenings at the Varley gallery, content promoting the latest exhibits and related programs, fundraising galas – short videos could accompany tweets when appropriate, to create more engagement
- **Pinterest** – 70% of Pinterest users are women, 64% are under the age of 35, and 15% of all web users share videos and images on this platform. It is the ideal channel to show visual imagery and pin treasures from the Varley’s permanent collection. Also, Pinterest users spend an average of 88 minutes on this platform, usually searching for items to purchase. This would be an ideal platform to feature items from the Varley Gift Shop.

Suggestions for Social Posts

Suggestions for posts on Instagram:

- **Art quotes** that are inspirational, funny, possess “hip factor”
- **Action shots** of visitors interacting or observing art work
- **Art work created in workshops** could be highlighted
- **Spotlight on business partners** and community initiatives
- **Links to discussion topics** around art and its benefits
- **Memes that poke fun** at art historical paintings created from the Varley’s permanent collection
- **Highlights and quotes from news media** who have reviewed the exhibit, or interviewed the artists

Suggestions for Images for Social Posts

Frederick Varley War Paintings

Example #1



Left:
Varley, "The Sunken Road" (detail), 1919,
Oil on Canvas, Height:
132.7 cm (52.2 ");
Width: 162.7 cm (64 ")
Beaverbrook Collection
of War Art.

Example #2



Below:
Varley, "For What?" (detail), 1917-1919, Oil on Canvas,
Height: 147.4 cm (58 "); Width: 180.6 cm (71.1 ")
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art

Frederick Varley Portraiture Painting
Example #1



Portraits of Alice Massey
1924-1925



Example #2



[More Information Frederick
Varley Portraiture Exhibit 2007](#)

Figure 1: Girl in Red

Social Media Content Calendar

NOVEMBER 2019						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 Twitter: Share highlights from Fundraising Gala in October	5 Facebook: Post article "Benefits of Art for Kids" with a CTA to enroll children in Winter Break Art Camp	6 Twitter: Thank corporate partners/ supporters from Gala	7 Pinterest: Create a board with the theme "Canadian War Painting" Pin images from the Beaverbrook Collection paintings by Canadian women war artists, such as Mabel May	8 Instagram: Posts of Dutch still life paintings from the 17th century that feature cheeses and rotting food #BoldFoodDay	9 Art Museum Day Facebook: Encourage gallery goers to post photos and get a chance to win a membership
10	11 Twitter: Post an image of a war painting by Frederick Varley and include verses from the poem, "In Flanders Fields" Varley was appointed official war artist and sent to	12 Twitter: Post article "8 Mental Health Benefits of Art" with a CTA calling on adults to enroll in an 8-week art workshop or weekend workshops	13 Twitter: Post a photo of Annette Mangaard's, "Come into My Kitchen" video	14 Instagram: Include a short clip of an artist's film from Elegoa Cultural Productions #Elegoa	15 Instagram: Start a post with a few art works painted by participants in Varley Gallery's workshops	16 Facebook: Post about "197 Main Street" exhibit, highlighting Frederick Varley's studio spaces – Include photos of 2 different spaces – one of the domestic interiors that features original furniture used by Frederick

	France to paint in 1918					Varley and the other a deconstructed studio space –
17	18 Facebook: Post photos of the “En Plein Air” Competition	19 Instagram: Post images side by side of a collage, a photograph, an illustration, from the Varley permanent collection with caption, “Varley offers workshops in different types of media.”	20 Facebook: Post an abstract painting from Canadian painter Jean-Paul Riopelle with CTA “Sign Up for Our Acrylic Pouring Workshop”	21 Twitter: Post an abstract painting just painted black with tagline “We Are What We Buy” for Buy Nothing Day coming up	22 Pinterest: Start a board and pin images with the theme historical painting and portraiture – pull images of Frederick Varley’s portraits of women	23
24	25 Instagram: Create an Instagram Story of 5 posts highlighting items from the Varley Gift Guide – include volunteers displaying these items and “Double Discount for Members” in a tagline	26 Twitter: Highlight benefits of Gallery Membership include a photo of two viewers engaging with an art work	27 Instagram: Create an Instagram Stories Series to highlight Christmas programming: Old Thyme Christmas Unionville, Markham Santa Claus Parade, Markham Festival of Lights	28 Twitter: Tweet accompanied with photo that captures a simple written description of the “Tout-Monde” exhibit. “See this exhibit before it ends on January 5th, 2020”	29 Black Friday and Buy Nothing Day Instagram: Post an image of a contemporary art work – all black painting by Sol LeWitt along with the message “Black Friday is here” and another black painting with the message “Nothingness” #ContemporaryArt This hashtag has 31 million posts	30