



Why should we support Arts and Culture?

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In 2012, the Tom Thomson Art Gallery initiated a five year, collaborative project called **“Canadian Spirit”** which celebrates various anniversaries and themes leading up to 2017 (the 100th anniversary of Thomson’s death, the 50th anniversary of the Gallery and the 150th anniversary of Canada’s confederation). This year’s theme **“If It Weren’t For the War”** looks at the influences of historical wars and battles (especially The Great War) on the homefront and how they effected us as a nation. For example, Canada established its sense of national identity, women got the vote, and the Canadian National Railway was completed.

You may have seen the movie *“Monuments Men”* which came out earlier this year. It’s based on a true story of men and women (mostly museum directors, curators, art historians and artists) who formed a special division to save artworks in Europe under threat of destruction by Nazi troupes during the Second World War.

Although they managed to save many iconic and historically significant pieces (including Jan van Eyck’s *“Adoration of the Mystic Lamb”* also known as *“The Ghent Altarpiece”* and Michelangelo’s *“Madonna”*), lives were lost in the process, as were many other valuable works of art. There’s a scene in the film of a huge warehouse of paintings, which were lit by a torch and left to burn. I can’t tell you how painful it was to watch; I literally had to cover my eyes in horror. And it’s not because of the monetary value. There’s a reason certain pieces of art are labelled *“priceless”*. A quote by Frank Stokes (the film’s protagonist) just about sums it up:

“You can wipe out an entire generation, you can burn their homes to the ground and somehow they’ll still find their way back. But if you destroy their history, you destroy their achievements and it’s as if they never existed.”

I think this sentiment touches upon the importance of art and culture to us as a society. Try and imagine our world; our lives; without it. Imagine a world without paintings like Thomson’s *“Canoe Lake”*, without

Klimt's "*The Kiss*" – without Beethoven, Baryshnikov, the Beatles (Imagine!) – a world without dance, without design, without song. Imagine a world without joy. Isn't it profoundly beautiful that a piece of music or a painting can make your hair stand on end, make you cry, fill you with a feeling of ecstasy - people of different ages, from different countries, from all walks of life? Not only does art stir basic human emotion and is a vehicle for making sense of one another and our surroundings, it also acts as a historical and cultural reference point. Art is like a time capsule.

For these reasons alone, isn't it important; essential to support artists and art organizations? And yet funding for the arts has been trimmed from government spending and programming from school curriculum. Most arts organizations, like the TOM are non-profits which means they have to raise a significant percentage of their budgets year after year, just to keep the doors open. Programming, exhibitions, education and events are all dependent upon fundraising. The TOM offers quality, award-winning educational programs such as free, family Make Art sessions the third Sunday of every month. In 2012, we waived admission fees and admission is now by donation. Exhibitions at the TOM change regularly and showcase the best of contemporary Canadian art. **Canadian Spirit** and other projects seek to engage and collaborate with community partners and organizations as well as create public art installations throughout the City of Owen Sound. We could not provide any of this without support.

We're fortunate and extremely grateful at the TOM to receive operational funding from the City of Owen Sound, Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. This support provides a solid foundation from which we can build upon. But what I don't think most people realize is that we still have to raise over **70% of our annual budget** through other government grants, sponsorships, foundations, donations and fundraising events.

The Tom Thomson Art Gallery was established in 1967. We are a national, historic site dedicated to the work, life and spirit of Tom Thomson. We house one of the largest collections of his work. The TOM offers a top-notch and revolving program of contemporary and historical exhibitions, lectures, school tours, forums, films, concerts and workshops. Author Roy Macgregor referred to the Gallery as a "national treasure". RIGHT HERE IN OWEN SOUND!

There are many ways you can support the TOM. You can become a Friend of the Gallery, volunteer, sponsor a program or exhibition, participate in our donor and patron programs such as **Fifty for Fifty** or attend one of our great fundraising events like **Art & Architecture at Cobble Beach** on September 28 or **Bonhams Antique Appraisal** on October 4 and 5.

Thank you to all the individuals, businesses and organizations who support the TOM; who support the arts. If you would like to support the TOM, please contact the Gallery at 519-376-1932.