

# Call for Proposals: Atrium Commission

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa ON

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Deadline for Submissions: April 30, 2026, 11:59 PM EST

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## **Atrium Commission:**

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery (RMG) is excited to announce a Call for Proposals for a new installation commission to be suspended in the atrium, located in the lobby of the gallery. The commissioned artwork will be on display for a two-year period.

For this inaugural program, the RMG invites artists, designers and collectives to propose a site-responsive artwork that will be suspended in the atrium for two years, from February 2027 to February 2029. The commission is intended to bring contemporary art into the heart of the gallery, animating the space and creating a dynamic and welcoming first encounter for visitors.

The RMG is particularly interested in proposals that respond to the specific conditions of the site, including the architectural character of the atrium, the gallery's civic and cultural role in downtown Oshawa, and the histories and landscapes that shape the region. The selected work should reflect a contemporary art approach, prioritizing conceptual rigor, material experimentation, and strong visual impact, while remaining accessible and engaging for a wide public audience.

Ontario-based artists are welcome to submit an expression of interest and design proposal.

## **Proposals should respond to the following goals and parameters of the commission:**

### Contemporary Artistic Vision

Proposals must be grounded in conceptual clarity, material inquiry, and a distinct artistic voice. The RMG is interested in ambitious works that challenge conventional expectations of public-facing installation, and that can hold both visual presence and intellectual depth within a civic setting.

### Site-Responsiveness and Local Conditions

Artists are encouraged to respond to the specific conditions of the RMG and its surrounding context, including the architecture of the lobby, the gallery's location in downtown Oshawa, and the layered histories of the region. As the gallery approaches its 60th anniversary, artists are also invited to consider the institutional history of the RMG itself as a site of artistic production, collection building, and civic engagement. Proposals may engage local materials, narratives, labour histories, ecological realities, or community knowledge, while remaining open-ended rather than illustrative. Artists may also draw inspiration from the RMG's permanent collection, which holds a significant history of Canadian abstraction, and consider how contemporary practices might extend, challenge, or reinterpret this legacy.

### Material Experimentation and Environmental Responsibility

The RMG welcomes proposals that demonstrate thoughtful experimentation with materials, process, and form. Works may incorporate unconventional or hybrid approaches, provided the work remains structurally feasible, durable, and professionally executed. Proposals should also reflect sustainable thinking where possible, including environmentally responsible material choices, low-waste fabrication approaches, and consideration of the full life cycle of the work. Please note that the artwork will be returned to the artist after the duration of exhibition.

### Light, Space, and Atmosphere

The atrium's height and natural light are defining features of the site. Proposals should engage the spatial and atmospheric qualities of the atrium—such as shadow, reflection, transparency, illumination, or seasonal variation. The work must be feasible for installation in the atrium, including weight and mounting considerations, and should be designed with visitor safety and long-term stability in mind.

### **About the site:**

Located in downtown Oshawa on the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, the RMG is situated on the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg and was stewarded by various communities belonging to the Haudenosaunee and Wendat confederacies. This land is covered under the Williams Treaties and the Dish with One Spoon Wampum. Each year, the RMG presents exhibitions drawn from its nationally recognized Permanent Collection alongside special exhibitions of contemporary art. With more than 4,700 works focused on the continuing story of Canadian abstraction, the

gallery welcomes approximately 38,000 visitors annually and engages over 10,000 participants through exhibitions, education programs, volunteer initiatives, event spaces, an artist-in-residence program, and digital offerings. Admission is always free, and the RMG presents over 100 free public programs each year, ensuring broad public access to art and cultural experiences.

The original Robert McLaughlin Gallery was built in 1969 on its present location under the guidance of architect Hugh Allward of Allward & Gouinlock. It was a square, stone, modernist structure allowing for 6000 feet of exhibition space. In 1987, a large expansion was commissioned, which secured architect Arthur Erickson, to add 36,000 square feet to meet the growing needs of the RMG and the community. Erickson, renowned for his love of natural light and materials, built his design around the existing structure, incorporating the original stone façade into the dramatic lobby design, which is flooded with natural light, skylights, and soaring 35 foot ceilings. Through this expansion and redesign, the lobby was intended to be used as a site of gathering and exhibition.

The architect, Arthur Erikson, is known for his buildings that ingrate natural elements into their design. His museums, galleries, public buildings, and homes, often respond to surrounding landscape elements like waterways and light, using natural materials including glass, wood, and metal to enhance the interior space. At the RMG, the glass atrium is an architectural element that adds natural light to the building, and allows visitors to view the sky from indoors, integrating the sightlines of the building with the landscape.

### **Design Specifications and Technical Requirements:**

The commissioned artwork will be installed in the lobby atrium of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, within the open vertical space beneath the glass skylight, and between the two upper-level walkways. Proposals should be designed to activate this central volume and be visible from multiple viewpoints throughout the lobby and walkways. Please note that no part of the work may be anchored to the stone wall on the west side of the atrium. Works may be suspended from anchor points on either side of the atrium's upper wall (see images). The total weight of the artwork(s) should not exceed 400lbs.

All proposals must maintain safe clearance for public circulation. The lowest point of the artwork must end **no lower than 12 feet above the lobby floor**. Installation methods must be structurally sound and will require review and approval by RMG staff and external contractors. All materials used in the installation must be fire resistant. Due to light exposure in the atrium, the materials used in the artwork should not be compromised by UV exposure. There will be two standard 120V outlets, which can be used to power

electrical components. Any electrical components must be CSA certified and voltage must not exceed 120V. All artworks must be delivered with their own mounting hardware.

### **Timeline and Important Dates:**

The successful applicant will be contacted by mid-May to sign contracts and conduct site visits as needed. The artist's production will begin independently in June and culminate in December of 2026. Regular studio visits (which can be virtual) will be conducted between the artist and The RMG to ensure deadlines are met. The artwork will be installed onsite by the RMG staff from the 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 2027. The successful applicant must be available to coordinate logistics throughout the installation and production period, though is not required to be onsite throughout.

### **Who Can Apply:**

We welcome proposals from artists, designers, and collectives residing across Ontario, who are excited by an opportunity to engage with the local histories and material realities of Oshawa through a suspended installation work. Applicants must demonstrate a strong contemporary art background and have previously displayed their artwork in an exhibition or public presentation. The RMG is committed to acting as a positive force by committing to a strategic process that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. We believe that structural change can only be achieved with the active and meaningful involvement of people who reflect our community. The RMG encourages applications from visible and invisible minority group members, women, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ identifying people, racialized people, and others with the skills and knowledge to productively engage with diverse communities. We welcome applicants to self-identify in their proposals.

### **Budget:**

The total budget for the project is **\$35,000 CAD** (HST inclusive). The project budget includes all costs directly associated with the artwork: including artist fees for design, fabrication, shipping, exhibition fees, travel, installation, and any other incidental and production expenses. Insurance will be provided for the work while it is onsite and one install technician provided during the installation period.

### **How to Apply:**

- 1. Expression of Interest** – a maximum of two (2) written pages in response to the following questions:
  - Why you are interested in creating work for the lobby atrium at the RMG

- How you would approach the commission if selected. Please provide details about the work you would like to produce, including the concept and a description of the design.
- Provide a brief description of your artistic practice and the relevant skills you would bring to this commission

**2. Design Proposal** – a maximum of ten (10) images that demonstrate the site specific concept through drawing, mock ups and tests. Designs can be drawn over the images provided of the atrium.

**3. CV** – PDF format, no more than five (5) pages maximum

**4. Work Samples** – detailed information on 2-3 relevant projects, in development or completed. Please include the following information for each project included: project title, location, project overview, role on team, team members (if applicable) budget and duration (max 1 page).

**5. References** – Please provide the name and contact for two references who can speak to your ability to complete this project on time and on budget.

All proposals should be formatted as a single PDF and submitted to greta hamilton, TD Assistant Curator, at [gghamilton@rmg.on.ca](mailto:gghamilton@rmg.on.ca) by 11:59pm on Friday 30 April.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Applications will be adjudicated by the RMG curatorial staff. Expressions of Interest and Design Proposals will be evaluated upon the following criteria:

- Strength of artistic vision
- Feasibility and logistics
- Availability of selected candidate to meet timeline
- Alignment with the themes and goals of the commission
- Alignment with RMG strategic vision and curatorial program
- Proof of ability to execute
- Applicant's previous engagement with public art or art displayed in a civic setting

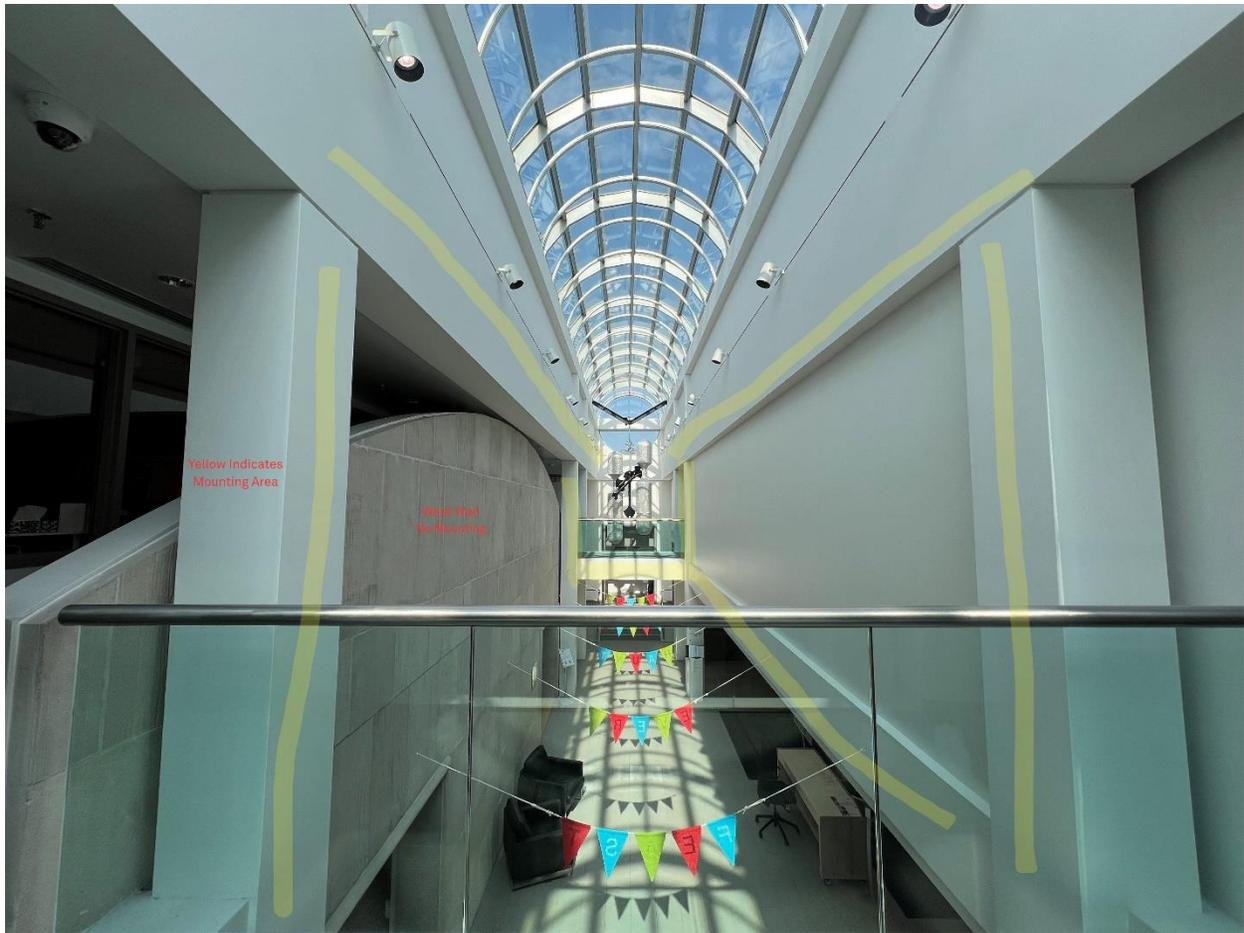
Contact:

greta hamilton, TD Assistant Curator

[gghamilton@rmg.on.ca](mailto:gghamilton@rmg.on.ca)



Measurements and mounting area for a suspended installation in the atrium, 2026. Image courtesy of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



Verso, mounting area for suspended installation in the atrium, 2026. Image courtesy of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

