

# Awards of Excellence

The purpose of the Ontario Museum Association Awards of Excellence is to

1. Recognize outstanding contributions to the Ontario museum community, with emphasis on innovation;
2. Advance the museum profession in Ontario;
3. Encourage high standards of excellence in the museum field.

The OMA is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2013 Awards of Excellence!

## Distinguished Career Award of Excellence Ruth Freeman

The OMA Distinguished Career Award of Excellence is presented to individuals who, over an extended period of time, have created a lasting and meaningful legacy in the Ontario museum community.

Over a thirty-year career, Ruth Freeman has been a core participant in more than 125 exhibition and interpretation projects, most of them created for cultural organizations in Ontario. From her first exhibition project in the mid-1980s (the ROM Discovery Gallery) to today (Giant Pandas at the Toronto Zoo), she has worked towards the highest standards of interpretive planning. From the beginning, she valued the experience and opinions of visitors, and the expertise of the specialists on project teams as both essential ingredients for creating successful exhibitions. She also willingly shared her expertise with museum clients, with students enrolled in her courses, and in two books that explain how exhibits are created. She taught courses, gave dozens of workshops and lectures, wrote papers for publication and volunteered for museum committees (e.g. OMA Quarterly Committee). She also mentored individuals who sought her guidance and supervised graduate students.



“Not only has Ruth raised the bar in museum exhibit interpretation and promoted democracy for museum visitors, but she has happily shared her dedication for creating meaningful exhibits. She has encouraged us all to strive for museum exhibit excellence.”

- Dave Hollands, Head of Creative, Royal Ontario Museum.

**Promising Leadership Award of Excellence**  
**Laura Gibbs, Executive Director, Ottawa Museum Network**

The OMA Promising Leadership Award of Excellence is presented to emerging professionals, of any position or institution, who have shown promising leadership within the museum community.

Laura Gibbs has demonstrated strong potential for leadership as an emerging professional. Laura entered the museum field in 2007 as an intern at the Australian Tennis Museum, while working towards her Master of Museum Studies. Since that time, she has demonstrated strong promise as an emerging leader, taking on increasing responsibility and advocating the value of museums, heritage and culture to partners, visitors and key stakeholders. Laura demonstrates confidence in herself and others, inspires respect and trust and motivates others to perform well. Laura also recently became a member of the OMA Emerging Museum Professionals Advisory Committee.



“[Laura’s] hard work, dedication and commitment as an emerging professional, paired with her willingness to learn, participate and partner with more experienced museum professionals place her as a promising leader within the museum community.” - Robin Cushnie, Museum Manager, Osgoode Township Historical Society and Museum

**Promising Leadership Award of Excellence –  
Honourable Mention**

**Aneesh Murali Mohan, Acting Curator, Lucan Area Heritage &  
Donnelly Museum**

Aneesh has spearheaded a number of initiatives that have greatly improved the Lucan Area Heritage & Donnelly Museum; this in turn has had recognizable benefits to the larger community and their patrons. Margaret Paul, President of the Lucan Area Heritage Society wrote in the nomination, “Aneesh has been a breath of fresh air to our museum! His imagination and creativity has not only boosted the morale of the heritage membership, but has given us inspiration to aspire to greatness.”



**Museum Benefactor Award of  
Excellence - Organization**  
**The W. Garfield Weston Foundation** for  
a pattern of giving that has had a  
transformative impact on Ontario  
museums.

**THE W. GARFIELD WESTON**  
FOUNDATION

The OMA Museum Benefactor Award of Excellence will be presented to individuals or institutions whose transformative gifts have demonstrated exceptional leadership, continued support and outstanding commitment to Ontario museums

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation is a private Canadian family foundation first established in the 1950's. In recent years, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has made not only major and high profile donations to prominent museums in Ontario, but also to a selection of smaller museums outside the GTA. Through these donations, large and small, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has demonstrated outstanding commitment and support to Ontario museums.

Many may recognize the name Weston from significant named contributions to the Weston Family Innovation Centre at the Ontario Science Centre and the Weston Family Learning Centre at the Art Gallery of Ontario and an ongoing relationship with the Royal Ontario Museum, but in addition, the Foundation has also supported museums on a smaller scale including the Canadian Canoe Museum, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery and the Military Communications and Electronics Museum in Kingston. The breadth and depth of the Weston Foundation's support to Ontario museums has allowed them to pursue and achieve their missions in new and innovative ways.

**Museum Benefactor Award of  
Excellence - Individual**  
**Raphael Yu** for contributions to George  
R. Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art

The OMA Museum Benefactor Award of Excellence will be presented to individuals or institutions whose transformative gifts have demonstrated exceptional leadership, continued support and outstanding commitment to Ontario museums.

In 2011, Mr. Yu donated an extraordinary collection of over 300 contemporary Canadian ceramic works to the Gardiner, and made an irrevocable planned gift to create an endowment which will allow the Gardiner to continue its commitment to Canadian ceramics. In order to recognize this transformational gift, the Museum established the Raphael Yu Centre of Canadian Ceramics. Through Mr. Yu's remarkable gift, the Gardiner was able to greatly expand its



collection of Canadian contemporary ceramics and preserve a number of national treasures. He also shows how an ordinary citizen can make a tremendous difference to a cultural organization. Yu has a discerning eye and a strategic approach, which has enabled him to collect timeless and substantial works.

In addition, Mr. Yu's dedication to the ceramic medium and his recognition of the Gardiner as a centre for excellence in the field of ceramics has had a notable influence on other donors, several of whom have now made their own planned gifts to the Museum.

### **Award of Excellence in Exhibitions**

**George R. Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art** for *Transformation by Fire: Women Overcoming Violence Through Clay*

The OMA Award of Excellence in Exhibitions is presented to individuals, institutions, corporations, or agencies for the creation of an exhibit.

Since 2003, the Schlifer Clinic and Gardiner Museum have offered a trauma-informed art therapy group for twelve weeks each year led by renowned ceramic artist Susan Low-Beer and art therapist Suzanne Thomson. The ten-year retrospective exhibition, *Transformation by Fire*,



was designed to raise public awareness about violence against women in a sensitive, informed and compelling way. However, this exhibition was neither about curating trauma nor artists investigating trauma. Instead, this exhibition was about clay as a medium used for art therapy and social action. As Critical Reviewer Stewart Reid wrote, "It was a brave and visionary act for the Gardiner to feature this show in its main spaces."

The exhibit featured 30 clay sculptures organized in four sections – Metamorphosis and Transformation, Hope and Resilience, Mind and Body, and Sanctuary and Shelter – echoing the themes that have recurred over the past decade of this special project. As one participant stated: "Seeing my piece being fired became so real to me, not only that this was a real representation of how I felt inside, it was really translating the intangible thought in my head into a tangible sculpture, but also I saw what happened in the kiln, a piece broke off here, there was a little crack there, but it survived, it made it". The exhibition title *Transformation by Fire*, is apt because it describes how clay changes its molecular structure when it is fired in the kiln to become a harder and stronger material. The Schlifer Clinic clients who participate in the Gardiner Museum Expressive Arts Group similarly become stronger by rendering their trauma visible in clay to transform their personal experiences.

**Award of Excellence in Exhibitions –  
Honourable Mention**  
**Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives  
and the PAMA Aboriginal Advisory  
Committee for *We Are Here, the Story of  
Aboriginal People in Peel Region***



This permanent exhibition introduced visitors to the history, traditions and beliefs of one of Peel Region's unique populations; Aboriginal people that descended from North America's ancient indigenous populations. This exhibition was developed over almost 3 years with the wisdom and guidance of the Aboriginal Community Committee. This input has resulted in an exhibition that tells First Nations, Inuit and Métis stories in an authentic voice. Difficult issues, such as residential schools, are explored in a continuum that uses "balance" and "out of balance" as organizing concepts.

**Award of Excellence in Community  
Engagement**  
**Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation  
and the City of Toronto Museum services for  
*Outcome of the War of 1812: First Nations  
Betrayed***



The OMA Award of Excellence in Community Engagement is presented to individuals, institutions, corporations, or agencies that have increased the community's engagement with the museum or institution.

"How will they ever know about us?" "How will they recognize whose land they're on?" "How will they know us as we live today?" These "Three Questions" inform an unprecedented collaboration between the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation (MNCFN) and City of Toronto Museum Services. The resulting exhibit, "Outcome of the War of 1812: First Nations Betrayed", opened in the new MNCFN Community Centre Ni-maa-wan-ji-i-di-min (near Hagersville, Ontario) on June 22, 2013. The joint efforts of the MNCFN and City of Toronto Museum Services provided an opportunity to share with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Southern Ontario and the Greater Toronto area the stories, language, cultural heritage, beliefs and traditions of the First Nations to empower and educate the community. The collaboration became a profound learning experience that exercised innovation, creativity and leadership from all participants that told the remarkable story of the MNCFN and their determination to survive and thrive through adversity.

"There's a revival going on at New Credit...This is a project we are proud of and would love to show it off." - Chief M. Bryan LaForme, Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

**Award of Excellence in Special Projects**  
**Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives for the *Interactive Map of Peel***

The OMA Award of Excellence in Special Projects is presented to individuals, institutions, corporations, or agencies that have developed an innovative initiative, or new approach or technique that advances the museum profession.



The Interactive Map of Peel (IMP) project uses cutting-edge technology to encourage the exploration of the history and culture of Peel Region by providing personal interaction between visitors, heritage and the arts. Users can select from over 500 thumbnail images on a 55” multi-touch screen built into a table. Touch gestures, familiar to many from tablet computers and smartphones, are used to enlarge, sweep and flip the images. The IMP brings Peel’s culture together. It has an almost limitless capacity for images as well as the capacity for games of increased complexity and the ability to add crowd-sourced images. PAMA’s experience with the Multi-Touch Table has been overwhelmingly positive, from the enthusiastic sharing of images of our partner organizations, to the creative challenges of organizing the content, to hearing the excited comments of users.

“The end result is an interactive tool that taps into everyone's natural curiosity and sense of discovery.” – Jim Leonard, Archivist

**Award of Excellence in Special Projects –  
Honourable Mention**  
**Wellington County Museum and Archives**  
*for House of Industry Cemetery Exhibit*

The Wellington County Museum is a National Historic site, housed in the oldest surviving House of Industry in Canada. The House of Industry Cemetery Exhibit transformed an overgrown, forgotten acre into the first permanent, outdoor cemetery exhibit at a museum in Canada. The



Cemetery Exhibit reclaimed and restored a neglected burial site and capitalized on local resources with an innovative team approach to developing the interpretive plan for the exhibit. The Cemetery Exhibit is a physical space that represents the Museum’s vision and commitment to preserve and interpret not only artifacts, but also culture heritage spaces connected with the museum.

**Award of Excellence in Programs**  
TIFF for *TIFF Kids digiPlaySpace*

The OMA Award of Excellence in Programs is presented to individuals, institutions, corporations, or agencies for programming that creatively engages new audiences, or provides exemplary service to existing ones.



Over a six week period—from March 9 until April 21, 2013—over 12,000 Ontario family and student visitors experienced one of the world’s most innovative media exhibitions for children: TIFF Kids digiPlaySpace. Located in a 4,000sq ft gallery at TIFF’s facility, TIFF Bell Lightbox, digiPlaySpace invited children and youth, along with their friends and families, to partake in interactive adventures filled with laughing, learning and engagement with media technologies, installations, learning-centric games, mobile apps, new creative tools and hands-on production activities. Held in conjunction with the prestigious TIFF Kids Film Festival, digiPlaySpace allowed TIFF to engage new audiences while enriching their programming offering. digiPlaySpace has positioned TIFF as a leader in moving image-based arts and educational programming, while supporting the mandate of “transforming the way people see the world”

“TIFF’s digiPlaySpace demonstrated that an institution globally known for its cinematic programming can adeptly embrace the ever-expanding digital media landscape through the presentation of interactive and responsive media works” - Steve Daniels, Artist, Assistant Professor at Ryerson University

**Award of Excellence in Programs –  
Honourable Mention**

**Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum** for *Beyond the Bomb: Music of the Cold War*

What better way to appreciate the Canadian Cold War era than to be placed in an immersive Cold War setting, full of authentic sights and sounds? *Beyond the Bomb: Music of the Cold War* presented an entire evening of music from the Cold War period in a setting where listeners could truly appreciate the context. Even a year later, positive feedback continues to flow in. Innovative programming added a strong emotional impact to the Diefenbunker museum visit and nothing could be more powerful than music to interpret the feelings of anxiety and paranoia of the Cold War era.

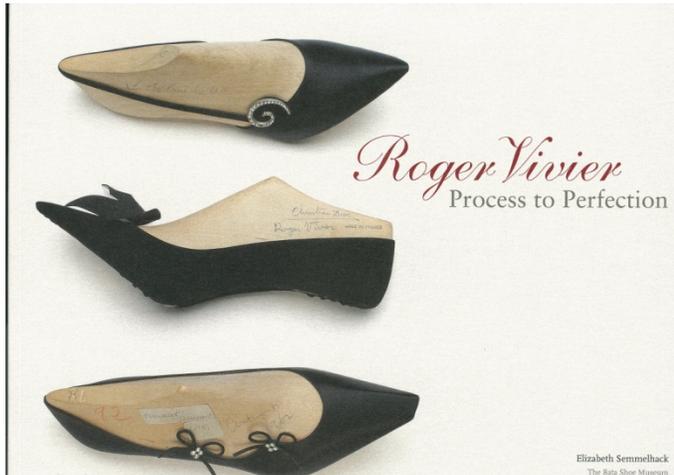


**Excellence in Publications – WOW Distinction**  
**The Bata Shoe Museum for *Roger Vivier: Process to Perfection***

The OMA Award of Excellence in Special Projects will be presented to individuals, institutions, corporations or agencies that have developed an innovative initiative, or new approach or technique that advances the museum profession.

The Awards Committee felt that due to this initiative's exceptionality, it deserved a special WOW distinction.

Roger Vivier: Process to Perfection is the first publication dedicated to the work process of one of the 20th century's most important master shoemakers, Roger Vivier. Many of the innovations examined in the catalogue, such as the needle, choc and comma heels are as important in fashion today as when he first introduced them. The book brings together the Bata Shoe Museum's Vivier holdings which are complemented by content from world-renowned institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Deutsch Ledermuseum in Germany and the archives of the Roger Vivier brand. The publication is a beautiful marriage of innovative graphic design, contextual and artefact photography and Senior Curator Elizabeth Semmelhack's insightful writing.



“It is an exemplary piece of museum publishing, which continues the Bata’s impressive – and increasingly uncommon - commitment to producing publications to accompany its exhibitions.” – Alexandra Kim, co-editor, UK Costume Society’s Journal Costume

The design of the Vivier catalogue is equally impressive and innovative. Of particular note is its deliberate and creative use of a high quality paper stock including the interleaved pages of vellum. The opulent cover and central section, which opens out to a full page spread, not only echo the luxurious feel of Vivier’s designs but also complement the sophisticated and understated design of the Vivier exhibition, with its pale grey set design, reminiscent of a Parisian couturier’s salon.