



FINAL ADJUDICATION CREATOR AWARDS AWARD SELECTION PANEL REPORT

April 22, 2025

BACKGROUND

This report is an overview of the discussion and decision of the citizen selection panel that met on the evening of Tuesday April 22, 2025 to determine which of the shortlisted 2025 City of Hamilton Arts Awards nominees should be selected to receive awards in Creator category. An annually rotating selection panel - comprised of discipline-specific artists, arts professionals and community leaders – is key to the selection of recipients in each category. The 2025 Award Selection Panel is listed at the end of this report.

The adjudication session was facilitated by arts service organization Cobalt Connects Creativity. The conflict of interest policy was reviewed, and no conflicts were declared. The adjudication process was outlined, wherein aggregate scores are shared as a jumping off point for discussion and final decisions are made through consensus.

CREATOR AWARD

The Creator Awards recognize living artists, arts professionals and artistic collectives working in any artistic discipline and at any career level. Up to nine Creator Awards will be given each year to recognize artistic excellence and/or innovation that contributes to artistic growth in the city, progresses the artform and expresses the cultural vitality and diversity of Hamilton's art scene.

AWARD SELECTION PANEL COMMENTS

The selection panel appreciates the 128 public nominations in this category and recognizes the work of the Arts Sector Review Panel in developing a strong Short List. The selection panel would also like to recognize all of shortlisted nominees in this category for their contributions towards Hamilton's artistic landscape across many disciplines.

The selection panel reviewed the shortlisted nominees' career history, contribution to the community and artwork samples and considered their impact. They acknowledged the challenges in narrowing the list down given the strength of the Short List. After a thoughtful and collaborative discussion, the selection panel has awarded nine 2025 Creator Awards. The 2025 recipients and the selection panel's rationale for selecting these individuals is outlined below.

Adrienne Crossman

The selection panel find Adrienne Crossman's work to be both scholastic and deeply impactful. The panel applauds Adrienne's commitment to accessibility, which is core to their artistic practice. Panelists feel that Adrienne's dual role as an artist and arts administrator creates a trickle-down effect, helping to build a more inclusive and accessible arts scene in Hamilton. A queer artist, Adrienne has made a lasting impact on the city's creative community, creating important spaces for all artists to thrive.

Clarence Porter

The selection panel commends Clarence Porter, an extremely skilled pastel artist who pushes the boundaries of pastel as a medium. Clarence's mastery of the pastel medium is exceptional, consistently earning recognition in international pastel awards and being featured in major publications. The selection panel celebrates Clarence's unwavering commitment to their artistry, making them a sought-after teacher and mentor.

Hexe Noire

Hexe Noire is recognized by the selection panel as being on forefront of the new generation of Hamilton drag. As a pillar of the drag community, Hexe has influenced countless performers in their artistry, advocacy, and theatrical approach to drag. Hexe's skills as a makeup artist and approach to drag as art—a fusion of performance, visual art, and activism—has set a new standard in Hamilton's arts scene. The selection panel believes Hexe's impact extends beyond the drag community, making them an important and influential figure in Hamilton's broader arts community.

Lester Coloma

The selection panel find Lester Coloma's mural work to be highly resonant, creating cultural landmarks that tell the story of our city and add to its vibrancy. Panelists also appreciate Lester's generosity in sharing of knowledge with youth, local Indigenous groups and creative problem solving for adults facing mobility challenges in the city. The

panel celebrates the fact that, while having a very strong artistic voice, Lester has made public art accessible, inviting engagement with the spaces where his work is embedded in the community. Panelists note that Lester creates artworks that uplift our everyday environment, and feel it is time that Lester be formally recognized for changing the way we move in our city by waking us up with thought-provoking and moving images on a gigantic scale.

LuckyStickz

The selection panel feel that two things are abundantly clear when looking at the work of LuckyStickz: their love for their community and their love for music. The panel celebrates the power of LuckyStickz's work to bridge cultures, elevate under-represented artists, and use music as a tool for social change. Panelists praise *The Blue Print: Artist Development Program* which fosters emerging talent and arts facilitators, commenting that the program is so well thought out that other arts managers could be greatly served as using it as a blueprint for their own programs. LuckyStickz's substantial behind-the-scenes efforts ensure that the city's arts scene continues to thrive and grow.

Priyanka Tope

A trailblazer in South Asian dance, the selection panel acknowledges Priyanka Tope's important role in bringing the refined art of Kanthak dance to Hamilton. The panel feels that as a filmmaker and advocate for diversity in the arts, Priyanka's work offers a refreshing and genuine artistic perspective. Priyanka's long history of mentorship in India and locally, and dedication to creating opportunities for this traditional art form in Hamilton is reshaping the local arts landscape, making Priyanka an important and emerging voice in Hamilton's cultural community.

Rollie Pemberton

The selection panel is proud to recognize Rollie for their socially relevant and artistically innovative body of work, bridging the realms of music, writing, cultural criticism, and arts curation. The panel honors Rollie's efforts to recontextualize rap music, prioritizing Canadian stories, while continuing to bring forth authentic and nuanced perspectives in their literary work and in engaging with audiences in Hamilton and beyond. Rollie is seen as a beacon to bring attention to Hamilton's arts scene from an international perspective. As a Polaris Prize winner, Rollie's talent is undisputed, and as an artist whose voice has become thoroughly integrated into Hamilton's arts scene, Rollie's impact on and care for community is clear. Rollie's multidisciplinary artistic achievements, creative drive, and infectious enthusiasm for building community.

Sonali Menezes

The selection panel is extremely moved by Sonali's work and creative vision. As an accomplished visual artist and curator, the panel feels that Sonali's work brilliantly weaves together personal experience and social critique, demonstrating raw vulnerability and bold resistance to systems of oppression at once. They create an artistic dialogue about barriers within gallery spaces on a visually accessible level. Additionally, as an emerging author, Sonali's work in the Zine community (such as

through the Hamilton Zine Club) has already been widely acclaimed, while other literary contributions continue to gain attention and showcase Sonali's refreshingly honest, funny, and insightful written voice. The panel is excited by the uniqueness of Sonali's artistic practice and recognizes the important ways that it challenges and enhances the Hamilton artistic landscape. As one panelist states, "Sonali truly exemplifies the idea of art being a reflection and enrichment of the human experience in a world on fire".

Tanis McArthur

The selection panel feels that Tanis McArthur's work is infectious, joyful and fun, blurring the lines between performance and sculpture. They are blown away by Tanis' spectacular costumes and set designs, noting it is unlike anything they have seen in Hamilton before – magical and extremely creative. Panelists feel Tanis' work wakes us up and transports us back to the wonderment of childhood, reminding us that we are welcome to dream and believe in the improbable. While the panel is familiar with and deeply appreciate Tanis' work, they feel that as an artist – Tanis deserves much greater recognition and therefore are thrilled to present them with a Creator Award.

PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

The selection panel has made several recommendations and highlighted key considerations for refining the City of Hamilton Arts Awards adjudication process for 2026. These recommendations aim to ensure that the process continues to recognize a diverse and inclusive range of contributions while providing a clearer and more equitable framework for evaluation in 2026 and beyond.

Evaluating Creator Award nominees in Arts Management and Arts Education -

The selection panel note that it can be challenging to evaluate arts workers against other artists in the Creator category, as the nature of their work can be more administrative and "behind the scenes" and therefore the artwork samples provided can be less compelling. The panel suggests that a separate category be considered, or clearer guidelines be established to address this disparity in the evaluation process. *Program staff will consider these suggestions and address them in the 2026 Arts Awards nomination and adjudication processes.*

Past Award History and Additional Research: The selection panel discussed the applicability of past Award history (whether a nominee had received an Arts Award previously) and conducting additional research outside of the nomination packages (via websites or social media) to provide context for nominations. *To address any potential for confusion regarding eligibility or allowable materials, program staff will ensure that the Adjudication Plan in 2026 clearly outlines the approach to such factors.*

Contextualizing Creator Nominees' Work: The selection panel found it challenging to choose the final award recipients due to the diverse range of impactful work. Panelists recommended that nominees be prompted to provide contextual statements which explain where their work fits within Hamilton's arts scene and the regional landscape.

Program staff will incorporate this recommendation in the 2026 Arts Awards nomination and adjudication processes.

THE SELECTION PANEL

Adam Bentley	Music
Andrea Jackman	Visual Arts / Curator
Angela DeMontigny	Fashion / Public Art
Anuja Varghese	Literary Arts
Astrid Hepner	Arts Management / Music
Fuzzy Mall	Visual Arts / Textiles and Installation
Janet Macpherson	Visual Art / Ceramics
Karma Kameleon (Kyle Robinson)	Drag Arts
Khadija Hamidu	Arts Champion / Arts Curator
Laurie Kilgour-Walsh	Arts Education
Matthew MacFadzean	Theatre / Arts Management
Rose Hopkins	Community Arts / Theatre
Vania Pagniello	Community Arts / Visual Arts / DIY

Advisors to the Selection panel:

Jeremy Freiburger, Cobalt Connects (Facilitator); Jen Anisef, City of Hamilton