



FINAL ADJUDICATION LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT & ARTS CHAMPION AWARDS

AWARD SELECTION PANEL REPORT

April 10, 2025

BACKGROUND

This report is an overview of the discussion and decision of the citizen selection panel that met on the morning of Thursday April 10, 2025 to determine which of the shortlisted 2025 City of Hamilton Arts Awards nominees should be selected to receive awards in Lifetime Achievement and Arts Champion categories. 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 adjudication process was outlined, wherein aggregate scores are shared as a jumping off point for discussion and final decisions are made through consensus. The conflict of interest policy was reviewed, and one conflict was declared. This panelist's scoring was not included and they abstained from commenting on that nominee.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

One (1) Lifetime Achievement Award is conferred annually to recognize living artists or arts managers who have contributed substantially to the artistic vitality of the city over the course of a career, and have inspired others through their leadership, creativity and artistic excellence. These individuals' experience and impact may be local, national or international in scope.

SELECTION PANEL COMMENTS

The selection panel appreciates the 15 public nominations in this category and recognize the work of the Arts Sector Review Panel in developing a strong Short List. The selection panel would also like to recognize all of the shortlisted nominees in this category for their substantial accomplishments and contributions that have had a lasting impact in Hamilton.

After a detailed discussion of the nominees' careers and influence, the selection panel decided to confer the 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award to **John Terpstra**.

The selection panel celebrates **John Terpstra**'s career as a brilliant and impactful literary artist with a body of work deeply rooted in this city's history and topography, writing on universal truths through the lens of Hamilton. John's work reflects a profound commitment to local environmental awareness and an ability to create meaningful connections between art and the local community. The panel honors John's ability to captivate readers, from their first collection in 1982 to current works and is impressed by the continued relevance of their themes and the sensitivity with which John approaches them. The selection panel honours John's capacity to inspire emerging writers through mentorship. The panel feels that John exemplifies literary citizenship, contributing significantly to the thriving literary community in Hamilton today through a lifetime of literary achievement rooted right here in Hamilton.

ARTS CHAMPION AWARDS

The selection panel appreciates the 14 public nominations in this category. Up to four (4) Arts Champion Awards may be conferred annually to living individuals who are outstanding supporters of the arts in Hamilton as volunteers, advocates, or board members. This is a non-monetary award and recipients will be given a special gift of recognition. This award is open to students and youth over 14 years old.

SELECTION PANEL COMMENTS

The selection panel reviewed the shortlisted nominees' history of work in the community and considered their impact. They agreed that each nominee has made significant contributions to their communities and the arts sector – particularly in platforming artists and creating barrier-free spaces – and appreciate their outstanding service. The selection panel have awarded four 2025 Arts Champion Awards to: **Smokestack**, **Lisa La Rocca**, **Rachel Conduit**, and **Steven Hilliard**. Their rationale for selecting these individuals is outlined below.

Smokestack

The selection panel acknowledges Smokestack for its exceptional contributions to the Hamilton arts scene, particularly in the field of printmaking. The panel recognizes Smokestack as a significant hub in Hamilton, providing exposure for local artists while also supporting printmaking—a medium that has lacked venues in the city. The panel feels that Smokestack has made it a point to showcase printmaking that pushes boundaries, including in digital formats, helping artists evolve and expand their artistic practices. Through its gallery, Smokestack has elevated Hamilton-based artists to new heights, presenting their work at high-profile venues like Art Toronto. The selection panel values Smokestack's dedication to nurturing talent and providing artists with a platform that has a lasting impact on the city's artistic ecosystem.

Lisa La Rocca

The selection panel recognizes Lisa La Rocca for tremendous contributions to Hamilton's music scene, particularly through their work with Supercrawl. They note that an involvement in nearly every concert and event in the city, demonstrating a remarkable work ethic and dedication. The selection panel commends Lisa for tireless volunteerism, high-quality work and a positive attitude, championing Hamilton's vibrant arts culture scene wherever possible.

Rachel Conduit

The selection panel feels that Rachel Conduit's work behind the scenes is vital to the Hamilton arts ecosystem, playing an instrumental role in making art accessible to a broader audience, beyond traditional gallery spaces. Rachel provides essential space for artists to showcase their work at B Side Gallery, a low-barrier, DIY-style venue that supports emerging artists. The selection panel celebrates Rachel's commitment to fostering a welcoming and accessible space for those in the arts community, including providing support for the queer community during challenging times. Their work reflects the spirit of inclusivity and community that defines Hamilton's arts scene.

Steven Hilliard

Steven Hilliard is celebrated by the selection panel for their work in supporting queer artists and building local spaces for drag as an art form. Panelists appreciate that Steven identified a critical gap in Hamilton's arts landscape—a lack of space for drag performers and queer artists—and responded by co-creating *House of Adam and*

Steve, a mobile venue that operates outside traditional brick-and-mortar limitations. They feel this DIY approach has given marginalized artists a platform and uplifted the visibility of drag as an art form. The selection panel applauds Steven's commitment to community and forward-thinking approach to creating accessible and vital spaces for queer artistic expression.

HONORABLE MENTION

Though not selected for an Arts Champion award this year, the Award Selection Panel would like to recognize the contributions of the following Hamilton arts volunteer:

Karen Logan

The selection panel praise Karen Logan for their outstanding volunteer work with the Women's Art Association. Karen has played a vital leadership role in revitalizing the organization, steering it through the challenges of the digital transition during COVID-19, and expanding its reach. Karen has been an advocate for inclusivity, successfully making the organization more accessible to a broader range of members by removing gender-specific barriers. Karen's tireless efforts in facilitating juried exhibitions and advocating for women's art do not go unnoticed.

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