



FINAL ADJUDICATION CREATOR AWARDS

JURY REPORT

April 22, 2021

BACKGROUND

This report is an overview of the discussion and decision of the volunteer citizen jury that met on the morning of April 22, 2021 to determine which of the short-listed 2021 City of Hamilton Arts Awards nominees should be selected to receive Creator Awards. Following a major program review in 2020 which included stakeholder consultation, the existing approach to nomination and adjudication was adjusted to allow for more flexibility in award categories. This creates opportunities for the awards to be more inclusive and responsive to the evolving arts community. An annually rotating jury - comprised of discipline-specific artists, arts professionals and community leaders – are key to the selection of recipients in each category. The Final Jury listed at the end of this report is the first group to participate in this pilot process.

The adjudication session was facilitated by arts service organization Cobalt Connects Creativity and audited by a member of the Arts Advisory Commission to ensure a fair and transparent process. The Creator Award category definition was reviewed (as below) and clarifications made for the jury. The City of Hamilton Arts Awards Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion was also reviewed. Aggregate scoring (based on individual jury members' scores) was shared as a starting point of the conversation.

CREATOR AWARDS

The Creator Awards recognize living artists or artistic collectives working in any artistic discipline and at any career level. A minimum of eight 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.

JURY COMMENTS

The jury appreciate the 145 nominations submitted by the public in this category and recognize the work of the Arts Sector Review Panel in developing an extremely strong Creator Award Short List which included a total of 28 individuals, duos and collectives spanning multiple artistic disciplines, practices, and career levels. The jury feel that all shortlisted nominees are deserving of recognition for the quality of their work and contribution to Hamilton's arts and culture sector.

The jury selected 9 individuals as recipients of 2021 City of Hamilton Creator Awards. In their opinion, this group of artists deserve special recognition as innovators, visionaries, and for having had a transformational impact on the arts in Hamilton. Many of them have created safer and more inclusive places for arts to flourish, and have transformed friction created by marginalization into beautiful art. Further to this, the jury note that lived experience and artistic journey can not be separated for many of the recipients. Collaboration across disciplines and communities is another common thread that emerged amongst the recipients. The Jury feel that all Creators awarded will leave a mark on Hamilton that will last beyond the life of their career.

Further details about why each artist was chosen to receive a Creator Award is outlined below.

Jordi Alfaro – Ceramics and Sculpture The jury consider Jordi to be an accomplished, incredibly skilled established sculptor whose work is recognized locally, nationally and internationally. He is an innovator yet exceptionally consistent – at the top of his game in ceramics. The jury find Jordi's exploration of architectural forms and adobe architecture impressive. In addition to his artistic work, they recognize his contributions across communities and cultural organizations.

Karen Ancheta – Theatre, Performance and Arts Education The jury appreciate Karen's open mind, innovative spirit and willingness to work across disciplines and communities as an educator, activist and collaborator. They admire her highly creative, risk-taking nature and caliber of the creative teams she has assembled. Karen's focus on under-represented communities – mentoring new immigrants and BIPOC and fostering a sense of community and place was credited with encouraging these individuals to stay in Hamilton and make a life here. The jury also remarked on the quality of Karen's writing and feel that as a performer Karen is an extremely moving storyteller and genuine communicator of her heritage on the stage.

Olivia Brouwer – Visual Art and Media Art. The jury are moved by the intersectionality of Olivia's lived experience and artwork as an artist with diminishing vision. They feel that Olivia is making very interesting work while advancing ideas about accessibility, particularly at this early stage in her career. The jury acknowledges the challenge Olivia faces in maintaining her art practice as a clinical as well as an emotional and spiritual experience, a narrative that is not broadly understood. They feel it

to be powerful and uplifting to recognize Olivia's work and perspective with a Creator Award.

Dan Edmonds – Music and Visual Art The jury feel Dan's practice reflects a unique level of innovation and personal investment in his work. They discussed a recent album where he brought in 19 different musicians to collaborate, including vocalists who sang (without him) on tracks that he wrote – a very unique approach for a singer-songwriter. The jury are also impressed with the breadth of his practice for a young artist – in addition to creating his own music, he runs a recording studio, does production work for other musicians, and creates visual artwork that is very cohesive with his music. Finally, the jury praise Dan's resilience, evidenced by the establishment of a thriving musical career after his well-known band ended, as well as the creation of excellent work during the pandemic.

Jennifer Gillies – Arts Management, Writing The jury credit Jennifer with being instrumental in transforming and energizing the writing culture in Hamilton through her leadership in the gritLIT festival. Beginning as a modest festival, it has grown to bring in many exciting and diverse local, national and international writers. The jury recognize Jennifer's efforts to diversify the festival by establishing a diverse board and employing a progressive programming lens. The jury believe gritLIT is the most important literary event in Hamilton and feel that Jennifer has grown it with great enthusiasm and professionalism.

Andrew McPhail – Visual Art, Performance, Curation As co-founder of Hundred Dollar Gallery, the jury value Andrew's commitment to keeping art accessible to audiences and exhibition opportunities accessible to Hamilton's artists. Andrew's own artwork, including his ground-breaking work around AIDS, was described as clever and stunningly moving. The jury feel that Andrew's practice is important and fresh and deeply appreciate his unique contributions to Hamilton's arts community.

Leon 'Eklipz' Robinson – Visual Art / Street Art, Music, Arts Education and Community Art Leon's impact on Hip Hop culture in a "rock city" cannot be overstated, according to the jury. As visual artist, emcee, DJ, radio host, educator and community artist he has paved the way for Black Hamiltonian artists to be respected. The jury recognize Leon to be an important role model for marginalized, emerging artists that relate to Hip Hop as an artform. They also recognize his tenacity in elevating street art despite obstacles faced, and the impact that he has had on Hamilton's streetscapes through his efforts.

Jim Ruxton – Media Art, Performance The jury celebrate Jim for producing mind-blowing visual performances, declaring him the best in country at creating highly innovative and interactive technological manifestations of art. They acknowledge the complexity of his work and feel that he has progressed his artform – the marriage between art and science. They appreciate the collaborative and interdisciplinary character of Jim's work. The jury are also moved by the educational and community-

rooted dimension of many of his projects, such as engagement with disability arts and bringing art and technological literacy to isolated seniors.

Stylo Starr – Visual Art, Curation, Arts Education The jury would like to recognize Stylo's advocacy for Black and racialized artists and her visionary artwork. As declared by one of the jurors, "*Hamilton needs Stylo – now.*" The jury understand Stylo's work in the community (in part as a co-founder of the Coalition of Black and Racialized Artists) to be transformative, having broken down barriers in the creation of safer spaces and the way art can function in communities. They find her Afrofuturist collages to be gorgeous – and deserving of recognition and collection on a national level.

REFLECTIONS AND FEEDBACK

The jury were impressed by the caliber of work and range of career levels, backgrounds and artistic practices of the 2021 Arts Awards Short List. They remarked that writers and dancers could have greater representation on the Short List next year and that more outreach may be required in these communities.

Members of the jury will be invited to a debriefing session after the announcement of the Arts Awards recipients in June to further reflect on the pilot process and to make recommendations for the 2022 Arts Awards.

THE JURY

Scott Barnim	Fine Craft
Gary Barwin	Writing / Music / Public Art
Pamela Edmonds	Visual and Media Arts (Curator)
Ryan Ferguson	Film / Arts Management
Yvonne Felix	Community Art / Public Art
Sara Froese	Client-based art / Music / Fine Craft
Heather Kanabe	Theatre / Arts Management
LTtheMonk	Music
Taijen Ng-Chan	Media Arts / Writing
Bryan Prince	Lifetime Achievement Recipient / Writing
Kirk Starkey	Music
Josh Taylor	Dance and Performance, Arts Education

Regrets

Kirk Starkey	Music (Abstained due to conflict of interest with nominee)
Cher Obediah	Film
Colina Maxwell	Community Art / Arts Management

Jury Auditor

Eileen Reilly	Arts Advisory Commission
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Advisors to the Jury:

Kim Selman, Cobalt Connects (Facilitator)

Ken Coit, City of Hamilton

Jen Anisef, City of Hamilton