

# Homer Watson *House & Gallery*



## *2023 Annual Report*

Homer Watson House Foundation  
Homer Watson House & Gallery 1754 Old Mill Road, Kitchener, ON





Homer Watson

Homer Watson "Untitled (Landscape with House and Trees" etching c.1890

# Contents

2023 Year at a Glance	4
Our Team	5
Chair's Message	6
Director's Message	7
Historical Significance	9
Mission	10
Exhibitions	12
Events	18
Education and Program Report	19
Acquisitions	20
Donations, Grants & Memberships	22
Treasurer's Report	23

Cover: Homer Watson "Oregon Hill" c1880

# 2023 Year at a Glance

9 Exhibitions

155 Art programs offered

1808 Program participants

89 Members

4969 Social Media followers

63,026 Website visitors

\$11,900 In fundraising and donations

\$331,997.23 In grants and subsidies

# Our Team in 2023

## Board of Directors

**Colleen Bulla – Chair**

**Karen Bulman – Secretary**

**Shelley Wickenheiser – Treasurer**

**Chetna Chavvada – Director**

**Doris Cowan – Director**

**Elaine Seeley – Director**

**Paige Bromby – Director**

**Christine Michaud – Appointed by City of Kitchener**

## Staff

**Cathy Masterson**  
Director/Curator

**Celia Vernal**  
Education & Public Programs Coordinator

**Ralf Wall**  
Graphic Designer & Retail Manager

**Allison Taylor**  
Collections Management Assistant

**Janet Mayhew**  
Bookkeeper

**Katie Pearson**  
Marketing & Development Officer

## Additional Staff

**Alice Plummer**

**Andrew Ing**

**Braeden Grueber**

**Dani Siddique**

**Deanna Fitzgerald**

**Elizabeth Weiner**

**Emilie McNamara**

**Katherine Percival**

**Shannon Stehr**

## Artist Instructors

**Ada Bierling**

**Alice Plummer**

**Atena Ganea**

**Brett Keating**

**Courtney Durastanti**

**Danielle Petti**

**Ekta Trienekens**

**Filiz Ayd**

**Jaime Gross**

**Janice Saunders**

**Janus McBride**

**Jonathan Tang**

**Juanita (Joana) Iturriaga Velazquez**

**Katherine Olenic**

**Kathleen Dinner**

**Laura Moreland**

**Lauren Martin**

**Moumita Roychowdhury**

**Raheleh Mohammadi**

**Ralf Wall**

**Roshan James**

**Roxana Bahrami**

## Camp Staff

**Ada Bierling**

**Brett Keating**

**Jamie Gross**

**Kathleen Dinner**

**Shannelle De Croos**

**Zoe Wendling**



# Chair's Message

The 2023 Board of Directors would like to take a moment to reflect on the life of the first chair of the Board, Frances McIntosh. Frances held this position for five years beginning in 1981. She guided the visioning of the house into a successful art gallery celebrating the life of Homer Watson. After her role as chair, she stayed connected with the Gallery looking after the gardens on the property for many years. Without her dedication, the restoration and community use of the property would not have occurred. We thank you for your years of service.



Frances McIntosh - Doon School Homecoming, 1983

In 2023, HWHG's commitment to our community remained strong. The Board, staff, instructors, and volunteers continued to focus on creating a strong art centre welcoming all to explore the exhibitions and participate in the art classes.

The team continued to bring forward programs and exhibitions to share through our online and in-person audiences. Staff continued to develop unique and creative content for our Social Media channels, promoting Homer and Phoebe's interests in spiritualism, the environment and of course, their artistic practices.

In person programming has steadily increased with new offerings structured to meet the interests of our participants. Students of all ages were happy to explore new classes. Offerings to local schools resumed in the fall—it was refreshing to hear enthusiastic youth enjoying the exhibitions and creating their own master pieces.

-Colleen Bulla, Chair

# Director's Message

In 2023 the Gallery Board and staff refocused our energies and visions on welcoming our community back into our spaces. We evaluated our studios and galleries, our programs, our exhibitions and thoughtfully moved forward.

2023 was a busy year at the Gallery as staff and instructors strove to develop new audiences and new experiences. Art programming transitioned away from online classes to in-person classes. Class sizes remained small through to the Fall schedule as participants regained their confidence of attending group situations.

Eight exhibitions took place supporting and celebrating the work of artists—high school, University of Waterloo through to established regional artists. It is an honour to provide a space where artists at all points in their career can experience the joys of seeing their work displayed in a gallery environment.

New staff joined the team with new ideas on how to reach out our members, supporters and participants. E-Newsletters were developed, Social Media opportunities were enhanced, and new Donor campaigns were established.

The steps taken in 2023 have continued to build on the foundation of the past while striving to grow well into the future.

-Cathy Masterson, Director / Curator





Homer Watson "Untitled (Two Cows Amongst The Birch)" 1880



# Historical Significance

## Statement of Provincial Significance:

The Homer Watson House & Gallery was the homestead, gallery and studio of Canadian-born painter, Homer Ransford Watson (1855-1936). Watson was the first internationally celebrated Canadian landscape painter, rising to fame after selling 2 paintings to the English Royal Family. Homer Watson died in 1936 and was recognized as a National Historic Person of Canada by the Federal Government in 1939.

The Homer Watson House is part of Watson's artistic legacy; he left a significant architectural and artistic mark on the house, adding two additions to the house and painting a frieze in his studio depicting artists who influenced him. A federal plaque was raised at the site in 1955.



Homer Watson Studio, c.1930s



# Our Mandate

## Vision

The vision of Homer Watson House & Gallery is to preserve and celebrate the legacy of Homer Watson's creative spirit by stimulating the appreciation, enjoyment and practice of the visual arts.

## Mission

Homer Watson House & Gallery will fulfill its mission by engaging in a three-part program of:

- Preservation and Collection of Homer Watson's art, his home studio and gallery and the heritage of his life, his times and that of Phoebe Watson and the Doon School of Fine Arts.
- Exhibition of Homer Watson's body of work and regular shows of contemporary local and regional artists.
- Education and enrichment through events and instructional programs in the visual arts.

## Values

- Inspire creativity, knowledge and ideas through art.
- Celebrate diversity and inclusivity in our activities and working practices.
- Recognize the inherent value of the natural environment.
- Improve accessibility.
- Operate in a fiscally responsible way to ensure long term sustainability of the organization
- Develop meaningful relationships within our region and the broader arts community.

# Core Competencies

Core competencies allow Homer Watson House & Gallery to engage a variety of markets and offer unique contributions to the community that are difficult for other galleries to emulate.

## 1. Celebrate Historic Significance

- Designated National Historic Site
- Designated Ontario Heritage Site
- Site of the renowned Doon School of Fine Arts
- Unique architectural design of House and Gallery
- One of the oldest operating gallery in province

## 2. Participate in Art Education

- Wide variety of classes and workshops for children and adults
- School programs for preschool to post-secondary
- Community, Children's and Family Group workshops
- In-house and outreach community programs

## 3. Provide Centre for Local Artists and Community Interaction

- Student exhibitions
- Local emerging and established artist exhibitions
- Hands-on teaching and mentoring opportunities

## 4. Protect Environmental Significance

- Part of the Historical Walking Tour of Lower Doon
- Situated on the Heritage Grand River
- Connected to the Walter Bean Nature Trails
- Affiliated with the Homer Watson Park (Cressman Woods)

## 5. Build Community Partnerships

- Regional elementary and secondary school tours
- Local businesses, community groups and individual stakeholder involvement
- Other charitable foundations associated: Grand River Conservation Association; KW Community Foundation; Ontario Heritage Foundation; Community Museum Associations

These core competencies originate from Homer Watson's philosophies of environmental preservation through the celebration of arts, culture and community.



# Exhibitions



## Crescendo

*Eastwood Collegiate Institute*

January 13-29, 2023

Homer Watson House & Gallery presents Crescendo, an exhibition celebrating students from the Senior class of Eastwood Collegiate Institute's Integrated Arts Program. This annual show provides a unique opportunity for art students to create and curate an exhibition at Homer Watson House & Gallery.

Crescendo represents a rebirth of inspiration and fortitude of spirit following the adversities of the pandemic. The artists are emerging from hardships stronger and continuing to grow.

This show invites viewers to join in the journey as we rise towards a triumphant new world of possibility. The tune of our art will guide us to the limelight; our Crescendo.



## Disembody

*University of Waterloo Department of Fine Arts*

February 3 – 26, 2023

The disembodied artist is free of reality's concrete form; they question social logic and resist the ideological truths shaped by historical and current acts of social exploitation and violence.

Featuring emerging artists in the University of Waterloo Department of Fine Arts, Disembody explores the conceptual disembodiment as a liberatory method. In a variety of media and methods, the artists free their internal selves from the heteronormative and colonial norms perpetuated in popular culture. The curatorial vision emphasizes the artists' ability to restructure given realities and put forward critical, inclusive and anti-colonial truths.



## Inside Out

*Judith E. Martin*

March 3 – June 25, 2023

Many of the textiles in this exhibition are presented with their ‘inside’ out. This is expressed using techniques that involve stitching onto the front of the piece but displaying the reverse or working on the back of the artwork but showing the ‘front’.

During their creation, Martin noted that the stitched marks she made by carefully working from the back, appeared natural and intuitive on the front, resulting in a more authentic piece. Acting as a metaphor for the way we live, the pieces reflect an outer self that we present to the world and an inner self, probably more interesting, full of thoughts and stories and dreams that are only occasionally shared. A process of creation that provided great peace during a period of isolation, loss, and worry, the repetitive gestures made while stitching, wrapping, caressing, folding, and holding had a calming effect, and acted as a reminder that things will be okay.

## Distant Horizons

*Micaela Fitzsimmons*

March 3 – June 25, 2023

The work in this exhibition is a response to the textures and patterns in cloth that combine with layering and stitching to create abstracted landscapes and distant space. Horizons, by their nature, are viewed from a distance, yet they draw us towards them, connecting us to a place – real or imagined; or to a time – long past or in the future; or to a goal, an aspiration that has been hard won, or perhaps not yet achieved.





## Reflections of Ourselves

*Tracey Lawko*

Reflections of Ourselves is a collaborative artwork celebrating the rich cultural heritage of Canadians. The installation explores the question “Who are we?” The dual lenses of cultural heritage and material culture are expressed through textile traditions and contemporary techniques. Leaves created by over 100 Indigenous, settler and immigrant Canadians honouring their cultural heritage, hang from the branches of a genealogical maple tree. Over 36 million people live on Turtle Island within the boundaries of Canada. Some are recent arrivals while others trace ancestors who have been here since time immemorial, each with their own stories and rich traditions.

Concerned by intolerance and attacks on cultural groups, lead artist and project developer Tracey Lawko created this tree as a metaphor for our community, where distinctions in human culture are like the variations of individual leaves on a tree. It is her hope that the individual creative expressions on each leaf engage viewers to learn more about each culture, enable cultural exchange and increase respect and understanding.



## The In Between

*Homer Watson & Abdul Khaliq*

June 30 – November 5, 2023

Over the course of his career, Homer Watson grew to appreciate the liminal times of day, where landscapes are faintly illuminated, and viewers are forced to appreciate the feeling of a scene rather than the details within it. This interest in the transitory periods at dawn and dusk may have been influenced by his interest in spiritualism, in which these periods represent a time when the veil between the living and the dead is thin. In his later career, Watson explored this theme to a greater extent, incorporating sunsets, fading daylight and reduced visibility to immerse the viewer into the landscape in a way that his earlier style had never accomplished.





This theme continues to act as a source of inspiration for artists, as demonstrated in the work of Stratford artist, Abdul Khaliq. Inspired by many of the same local landscapes memorialized on Homer Watson's canvases, Khaliq captures his surrounding landscape during these transitory periods. Using a limited palette, his pieces convey a moody and mystical effect, reminiscent of the work of Homer Watson. With many parallels in their careers, both self-taught landscape painters, Khaliq and Watson both utilize the "in between" periods through the day to encourage their viewer to appreciate the subtle beauty and mystical nature of their surrounding landscapes.

## Collective Colours

*HWHG Juried Show 2023*

November 10, 2023 – January 7, 2024

Our annual juried exhibition showcases artwork from across the Waterloo Region and celebrates the creativity shared throughout our community. In keeping with this year's theme, *Collective Colours*, we encourage artists to embrace their relationships with our physical, mental, and artistic surroundings. These explorations can be captured in a variety of ways; therefore all artistic techniques are welcome.

# LEGACY 75 ONLINE EXHIBITION



doon school of fine arts



Dorothy Stevens "Portrait of Bess Hamilton" c. 1955



Frederick Varley "Old German Mill" c. 1949

## Legacy 75

*Celebrating the Doon School of Fine Arts*

Online Exhibition

As of 2023, the Doon School of Fine Arts marks its 75th anniversary. Its students and staff forged unique paths through the Canadian art world, on both large and small scales. By the time of its closure, the Doon School of Fine Arts had grown into a community where artists of all ability levels might learn from the life and legacy of Homer Watson.

To promote learning to "see like an artist", the School provided instructors and students alike with the opportunity to experiment with a variety of styles and techniques. Students received high quality instruction while still enjoying a social experience, participating in costume parties, dances, movie screenings, and more.





Jack Bechtel "Untitled (Bechtel Cabin)" 1951



# Events

Events Revenue: \$7,961.91

## Mother's Day Garden Party

*Saturday May 13th, 2023*

The Mother's Day Garden party fostered a vibrant community.

It was a welcome opportunity for everyone to enjoy our picturesque grounds and participate in a variety of creative activities. There were workshops led by local artists, live music, a photo booth, delicious refreshments by Lady Glaze Doughnuts, and shopping at our beautifully cultivated Pop-Up Shop.

## Memento Mori – An Evening with the Spirits

*Friday May 26th and Saturday May 27th, 2023*

Memento Mori – An Evening with the Spirits, honoured the anniversary of Homer Watson's death on May 30th, 1936. With The Ontario Paranormal Society (T.O.P.S), visitors had the opportunity to participate in a paranormal investigation techniques workshop and paranormal investigation tour.

## Art Fair

*Saturday September 16th, 2023*

The Gallery has a rich history of being a hub for learning, teaching, creating, and enjoying art. In celebration, 34 artists displayed their work at the 3rd annual Art Fair. Art on display included a wide range of artistic styles and mediums from acrylic paintings, photography, sculptures, textiles.

## Spirit Season:

Homer Watson showed an interest in spiritualism at an early age, which influenced both his personal life and his artwork. In the 1920's, Homer Watson's interest in spiritualism was deepened with the passing of his loving wife Roxana. Spirit Season carries on the tradition of the exploration and practice of spiritualism with a spirit themed market, psychic readings, painting, a family movie night and paranormal investigations.

- **Spirit Market**  
– *Saturday October 5th, 2023*
- **Psychic Sessions**  
– *October 14th, 2023*
- **Nocturne Painting with Ralf Wall**  
– *October 20th, 2023*
- **Family Movie Night**  
– *October 21st, 2023*
- **T.O.P.S Paranormal Investigations**  
– *October 27th, 2023*

## Homer Holiday

*Sunday December 10th, 2023*

A family friendly drop-in event, where folks enjoyed a holiday story courtesy of Kitchener Public Library – Pioneer branch, created a gift together, and enjoyed festive treats.

# Education & Programs

## School Visits

**Total Attendance: 553 students**

**Total Reservations: 17**

We were thrilled to welcome **553 students** from regional schools to HWHG for in-person field trips. Classes toured through exhibitions and we engaged students in art activities in our studios – we were delighted to welcome:

- St. Jacobs Public School
- Franklin Public School
- Linwood Public School
- Laurentian Hills Christian School
- Jean Steckle Public School
- Holy Family Catholic School
- Vista Hill Public School
- Riverside Public School
- Blenheim District Public School
- St. Anne Catholic Elementary School
- Laurentian Public School

## Summer Camps

**Total Number of campers: 198**

In 2023, the program delivered nine consecutive weekly summer camps from July 4 – September 1, 2023. Designed for children and youth, camps were full of hands-on and collaborative projects, which encouraged skillful and meaningful ways of thinking, seeing, and making contemporary art and craft. The camps offered one-of-a-kind art making experiences as well as interactive tours of the gallery's exhibitions.

## Art Programs

**Total Attendance: 1808**

**Total Programs Offered: 155**

The HWHG Education and Public Programs department believes in the power arts has to enrich communities, attract new visitors, economic growth, initiate strong bonds of friendship and promote confidence and self-esteem in individuals of all ages.

We offered arts programming for a wide range of ages, to foster creative growth. 2023 was an important year of transition from the pandemic to a new normal. It was a year of return and growth with **181.62% increase** in program participants. The most significant recovery was observed in school programming.

One of our priorities was re-engaging with our participants and communities with an emphasis on social and heritage connections. Throughout 2023, participant numbers grew, and an overall sense of energy and excitement fueled our work. New programs that were introduced or re-introduced include:

- Adult art retreat promoting art and wellness in partnership with Stepping Stones
- Life Drawing classes with Trevor Waurechen and Tatiana Nikolaeva
- Educational videos launched on our [YouTube channel](#)

# New Acquisitions

In 2023, Homer Watson House & Gallery added 6 new pieces of art into the Permanent Collection. These acquisitions include works by Homer Watson as well as Doon School artists Nicholas Hornyansky, Peter Goetz, and Tom Cayley.

We would like to thank the generosity and support of Manulife Financial, the Connell family, and the Totzke family.



Homer Watson, Autumn Moonrise. Undated, Oil on Board.





Tom Cayley, Untitled (Kissing Bridge). 1970, Watercolour on Paper.



Peter Goetz, Canterbury Water Tower.  
Undated, Watercolour on Paper.



Nicholas Hornyansky, Wharves at Sundown. Undated, Ink on Paper.

# Thank You to Our Supporters

**Total Donors: 51**

**Total Donations: \$3,939.06**

## Donors

Bernice Cahill	Doris Cowan
Chantal Dube	Cathy Masterson
Cathy Gregory	Anne Taylor
Jean Haalboom	Bill Poole
Violet Horton	Wen Li
Sandra & John Kendall	Brooke Dietrich
Pam Kinney	Paul Bulla
Shirley Levene	Richard Farrar
Teresa Martins	Karen Buhr
Frances McIntosh	Kathryn Craig
Ms. Elaine Seeley	Anatoli Guelfgat
Simone Sicard	MD Management LTD
Kevin Arnold	Grand Valley Society of Architects
Carolyn McCallum	

## Funders

City of Kitchener  
Region of Waterloo  
Good Foundation  
Young Canada Works  
Canada Summer Jobs



## In-Kind Sponsors

LiveFitBabe  
Grosche International  
Cloverdale Paints  
Plantables  
Apollo Cinema  
Esta Chocolates

## Grants

Despite the challenges that the pandemic continued to present in 2023, we were very grateful for the many grants and subsidies that were made available to arts and culture to help carry us through the year.

Special thanks to the following granting bodies:

City of Kitchener Community Tier 1 Grant  
Region of Waterloo, Cultural Drivers of Tourism Grant  
Good Foundation,  
Young Canada Works,  
Canada Summer Jobs

## HWHG Memberships

**Individual memberships 29**

**Family memberships: 35**

**Student/Senior memberships: 25**

In 2023, HWHG had 89 unique, active members.

**As of Dec. 31, 2023 all memberships included:**

10% discount on adult programs

10% discount at Curry's Art Supplies

10% discount at Watts Visuals on first order.

15% discount at Framing and Art Centre

Advance invitation opening receptions and events

Complimentary admission to the Gallery

Friends of the Gallery online portal



## Treasurer's Report for Year Ended December 31, 2023

BDO continued as the approved auditors for 2023. Staff worked closely with them as they audited HWHG's fiscal year. In 2023, the normal programs and activities of HWHG continued to be impacted by the Covid pandemic, as we experienced the slow emergence from the pandemic.

Municipal funding from the City of Kitchener continues to provide the core annual funding through the Tier 1 program which is appreciated and necessary to fulfil our mandate.

The granting environment has changed post-Covid and governmental grant funding dropped from \$552,821.21 in 2022 to a combined total of \$331,697.23 in 2023 (a decrease of 33%). Funding received from the federal and provincial governments assisted HWHG in providing programming for the youth in our community.

Earned Revenue consisting of registration and program fees together with public fundraising combined to \$151,336.07 (an 18% increase from 2022) in 2023. Staff continue to strive towards the goal of reaching pre-Covid program revenue levels.

Expenses, while continuing to rise, were prudently managed. We are very grateful for the funding we received over the course of 2023 from all levels of government which assisted in offsetting the costs of operations.

-Shelley Wickenheiser, Treasurer



