



101 Queen Street North
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Judith Stephens-Wells, President, KW|AG's Board of Directors. Photo: M. Dupuis, KW|AG.

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Connecting people and ideas through art.

Gallery Hours:
Daily 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Thurs 9:30 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Sat 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Sun 1 – 5 p.m.
and prior to Centre In The Square
performances

An Interview with Judith Stephens-Wells KW|AG's New President of the Board of Directors

Why did you become involved with KW|AG?

I am a huge fan of the arts across all disciplines. I love the sensory experiences and the new perspectives that I gain through the arts and believe that for any urban centre to be dynamic and healthy, the arts have a key role to play at the heart of the community. Through the arts, we come to see ideas, ourselves and our community in new ways, develop a sense of identity, and stimulate new and creative approaches to what we do in everyday life. My own hands-on involvement in painting, digital printmaking and mixed media work is a reflection of my particular passion for the visual arts. Having studied in both fine arts (painting and printmaking) and business programs at university and having spent many years working in the arts management field, getting involved on the boards of arts organizations in our community has been a natural fit. Having thoroughly enjoyed and learned through my experiences as a visitor to the Gallery's exhibitions and events, getting more involved just made sense.

To me, KW|AG is a true gem in our community. Its history, spanning over 50 years, is a testament to the community's love and commitment to the visual arts, and to the board stewardship enabling the Gallery to grow through the opportunities and challenges of changing times. KW|AG's accomplishments, the energy and commitment of its Board members and the breadth of skill, knowledge and experience reflected in its senior management, persuaded me that KW|AG is an exciting organization filled with possibility, and a wonderful place to invest my time and energy as a volunteer director.

As a practicing artist, what inspires you about the Gallery?

First, I always love to see the work of other artists, to explore the ideas and images on which they focus, and learn from the techniques and media they use to communicate. KW|AG's exhibitions give me continuous exposure to high quality works by living artists working in my own time. I never cease to be intrigued by the range of ideas on which other artists focus their attention. I often walk away from the experience with a new level of awareness about a subject or idea, or a different way of thinking about it. Like film, theatre, music and literature, I find visual works provide an opportunity to transport myself somewhere else, to encounter new ideas or to consider something in a new way and from a new perspective. This allows me to learn something more about myself—things that intrigue me, disturb me or that I'd never stopped to think about before. Those shifts in awareness and heightened perception nurture my own ideas and approach to my own work.

I also find KW|AG is a valuable resource because of its [permanent collection](#). It is one thing to read about and see reproductions of works by artists throughout history, but nothing compares to the experience



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of seeing works of art firsthand, and truly appreciating their actual scale, colour, and texture. Having access to new exhibits of works from KW|AG's permanent collection, a collection of high quality works seen as important and relevant from the perspective of this community, is invaluable.

The other aspect of the gallery that I really value is the array of [artists' talks](#) presented. While I thoroughly enjoy seeing art firsthand and interpreting it from my own personal perspective, I always find it fascinating to hear artists talk about their work and come to better understand their perspective about what they were trying to achieve. I guess it's part of human nature's attraction to hearing stories from behind-the-scenes, but I find hearing artists talk about their work really enriches my experience of viewing and interpreting their work.

As a KW|AG Board member, what would you like the public to know about the Gallery?

My 2.5 years of involvement on [KW|AG's Board](#) have made me keenly aware of the amazing progress the Gallery has made in recent years, and I would like to share some indicators of its progress:

- KW|AG has increased and diversified its revenue base. The growth in Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council operational and program funding (going from \$17,500 to \$107,000 and \$0 to \$85,000 respectively) reflects the positive assessment of the quality of the Gallery's programming and management when evaluated in a peer-review context
- Public support for the Gallery as demonstrated by personal and corporate donations (excluding marketing sponsorship agreements) grew by 350% between 2001 and year end 2008
- KW|AG's collection of over 4000 works has now been fully catalogued and stored, and this enabled us to lift our moratorium on collecting
- Between 2004 and 2008 KWAG has experienced an 18% increase in gallery attendance
- Starting with launch of its first website in 2004, KW|AG has steadily developed its web presence. The Gallery recently launched its newly developed website and in the first month of its operation, we had 3400 visitors to the new website as compared to 455 visitors in the first month of operation of the original website in 2004.
- Development of the Gallery's vision, roots in the community and eyes on the world, has provided a solid foundation for KW|AG's programming
- The introduction of thematically-based series of exhibitions

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and commissions (such as [River Grand Chronicles](#) and [Parochial Views](#)) has added a new depth, richness and impact to KW|AG's programming

- KW|AG values and believes in working in concert collaborating with community partners and has successfully undertaken many such projects including successful collaborations with: [Open Ears](#), [CAFKA](#), the Art Gallery of Ontario's [ArtsAccess](#) program, [Visual Arts Alliance](#), Alliance for a Grand Community, [The Children's Museum](#) (Ed Burtynsky's photographs and Max Dean's [Robotic Chair](#)), [Prosperity Council of Waterloo Region](#), and [Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics](#) ([Art Talks](#)) to name only a few

Do you have any specific goals that are a priority for you?

- To grow our audience and find new and better ways of sharing the Gallery's story, so that the community has a better understanding of KW|AG's [history](#), sustained development, [programs](#), and potential for growth, so the Gallery can play an even larger and more meaningful role in the community. We have enormous opportunities to develop - and to do so in an exciting way, using creative new ideas that build on strengths and firm foundations.
- To find ways of making our [permanent collection](#) more accessible to the public, so that the community knows more intimately the impressive legacy of KW|AG's [permanent collection](#).
- To continue to find and develop meaningful [partnerships](#) in the community that enable KW|AG and its partners to work, with enhanced capacity, toward meeting their objectives.
- To continue to build on practices which engage key stakeholders in the Gallery's planning processes.

I am excited about all of these opportunities, and I look forward to investing my time and energy with my fellow colleagues on the Board of Directors, KW|AG members and community members, on further developing KW|AG's influential role in the community.

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