

## Special

## ARTS IN FOCUS

## Programs bring new artists and art into focus

**B**eing an artist has never been a choice for Beth Stuart. For as long as she can remember, she has always been compelled to create.

“Even as a child, I was always making things,” recalls Ms. Stuart, a Saskatoon-born painter and sculptor who now lives and works in Toronto. “I guess art is just an innate part of my life.”

Most Canadians would probably echo Ms. Stuart’s sentiments, even if they don’t express their thoughts with paint and brush, chisel and stone, music and movement. A recent study financed jointly by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council found that participation in arts, cultural and heritage activities has increased over the last two decades. In 2010, an incredible 99.7 per cent of Canadians aged 15 or older had participated in at least one arts, culture or heritage activity.

Whether they’re visiting a museum or going to a concert, whether they’re creators or culture appreciators, it’s clear that Canadians embrace art as an integral part of their lives.

“Art and culture are essential to a richer quality of life and a strong sense of community,” explains Nichole Anderson, president and CEO of Business for the Arts, a national association of business leaders whose focus is to strengthen cultural institutions and support artists, by building connections between the arts and business communities. “It’s really amazing what happens when people’s lives are opened to the arts.”

While art is often viewed as a costly luxury, the reality is that it can yield significant economic benefits. In Canada, the culture sector contributes, directly and indirectly, close to \$85 billion, or more than seven per cent of the country’s gross domestic product, according to the Conference Board of Canada. In 2008, the country exported almost \$4 billion worth of cultural goods and services.

The overwhelmingly positive social and economic impact of art in Canada provides a strong case for supporting the country’s creative community, says Wafa Kadri, senior manager of the RBC Foundation.

Launched in 1999, the RBC Emerging Artists Project helps up-and-coming artists make the transition from academics to the professional world. Last year, RBC invested \$2.4 million in grants to programs in the areas of visual arts, film, theatre, musical per-



Beth Stuart won one of two honourable mentions in last year’s RBC Canadian Painting Competition, an award that allowed her to set up studio space and led to two art exhibitions. PHOTO: MICHELLE SIU

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**Nichole Anderson**  
President and CEO, Business for the Arts

formance, writing, glassmaking, curatorship, design and choreography.

These programs range from competitions and mentoring to apprenticeships and residencies. “For many artists, there’s that critical period when they’re trying to launch their career,” explains Ms. Kadri. “That’s when they really need help, and where RBC feels we can make the biggest impact.”

Ms. Stuart is one of the beneficiaries of the RBC Emerging

Artists Project. Last year, she won one of two honourable mentions in the RBC Canadian Painting Competition, an award that translated into a \$15,000 purchase by RBC of her oil-and-acrylic-on-linen painting entitled *02*, from the *Doppelbanger* series.

That money allowed Ms. Stuart to set up studio space and devote more time to her craft. Since the competition, she has staged two art exhibitions, “none of which would have been possible without my being a runner-up

in the competition,” she says. “It was a huge gift, because what it really did was buy me the time and freedom I needed to focus on my art.”

Abhyah Baker, a Vancouver artist who is among the 15 finalists for this year’s painting competition, hopes the RBC program will help open doors to career opportunities and expand her network of gallery owners and fellow artists.

“Since I graduated from Emily Carr University of Art and Design in 2006, I’ve been trying to build a career as an artist,” she says. “I look forward to taking advantage of this opportunity.”

So what’s the return-on-investment for art supporters such as Business for the Arts and RBC?

“The fact is, when you invest in the local art community, you’re investing in the economy,” says Ms. Anderson. “You’re helping to build tourist attractions, creating jobs, attracting and retaining talent, and driving innovation.”

Ms. Kadri agrees. Art and culture build vibrant communities, which in turn drive strong economies, she says. By investing in emerging artists, RBC can help ensure Canada’s prosperity now and in the future.

## THE RBC CANADIAN PAINTING COMPETITION

## Emerging painters find inspiration in competition

It’s a tough and a wonderful job. Each year, nine jury members for the RBC Canadian Painting Competition assess more than 500 submissions from emerging artists across the country and narrow the field to 15 finalists. In the end, they must choose three winners: a national champion, who will be awarded a \$25,000 purchase prize for his or her work, and two honourable mentions, whose entries will be purchased by RBC for \$15,000 each.

Since its creation in 1999, the RBC Canadian Painting Competition has helped launch the careers of many of today’s successful artists, including Dil Hildebrand, whose solo exhibitions frequently sell out. Others whose works have been chosen include Sasha Pierce and Jeremy Hof.

“We get submissions from so many talented artists,” says Robin Anthony, art curator at RBC. “So you can only imagine how challenging – and exciting – it is for the jury.”

## ONLINE?

For more information, visit [rbc.com/emergingartists](http://rbc.com/emergingartists)

## PROFILES

## The sights and sounds of success



The Cecilia String Quartet, winner of the 2010 Banff International String Quartet Competition. PHOTO: CRAIG HALL

## Banff International String Quartet Competition

Every three years for the last three decades, chamber musicians from all over the world have travelled to Alberta to take part in the Banff International String Quartet Competition, supported by RBC.

Winners receive between \$2,000 and \$25,000 in cash prizes, with second- and third-place laureates getting a fully funded creative residency at the Banff Centre’s Music and Sound Program.

But the spoils are sweetest for the top quartet, which gets a three-year artistic and development program worth about \$150,000. This includes \$25,000 in cash as well as custom-made bows, concert tours in Europe and North America, and creative residency projects at the Banff Centre.

“Because of this amazing support during the early stages of their careers, these quartet

artists go on to have successful careers for 10 to 20 years,” says Barry Shiffman, executive director of the Banff International String Quartet Competition and a former competition winner. “The country as a whole really benefits.”

## RBC Resident Conductor

Shalom Bard has always dreamed of being a symphony conductor. Last month, his dream turned to reality, when he was named the first RBC Resident Conductor at the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

“From a career perspective, to find myself in this position is really just incredible,” says Mr. Bard, who has just finished a conductor residency at Symphony Nova Scotia and has also worked as assistant conductor in Los Angeles.

In his new, two-year salaried position, Mr. Bard will conduct as many as 20 concerts throughout

the TSO season. He will also be the new conductor of the Toronto Youth Symphony Orchestra.

“The program will allow me opportunities to work as a conductor and also to study,” says Mr. Bard, who will make his Toronto debut as RBC Resident Conductor on October 20. “I’m especially excited about leading the youth symphony, because this is where I’ll be able to experiment, to see what kinds of sound I can achieve by different bowing, or by getting louder here or softer there. It’s a real training ground, and I feel so lucky to be here.”

## RBC Emerging Filmmakers Competition

There’s a good reason why Canada is known as Hollywood North: the country boasts a wealth of talented filmmakers.



Shalom Bard (left) is the RBC Resident Conductor at the Toronto Symphony Orchestra; Cameron Labine (right) is a finalist in this year’s RBC Emerging Filmmakers Competition. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

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**Cameron Labine**  
A finalist in this year’s RBC Emerging Filmmakers Competition

Through a partnership with the Toronto International Film Festival, RBC launched its Emerging Filmmakers Competition in 2010. Participants make a short film on a chosen topic and a distinguished jury and the public vote to determine the winners.

Open to all emerging filmmakers in the TIFF Talent Lab, the RBC competition provides bursaries to finance the production of the entries, and it awards cash prizes of \$15,000 to the winner, \$10,000 to the honourable mention and \$5,000 to the Fan Favourite.

“The cash prizes are pretty fantastic – that \$15,000 first prize can go a long way for an emerging filmmaker,” says Cameron Labine, one of the five finalists in this year’s competition. “Plus, it’s great that people can watch the films online. It could translate into some solid opportunities – you never know who’s watching.”

