

GALLERY GUIDE

9 AUGUST 2025 - 18 OCTOBER 2025



SAAG SOUTHERN ALBERTA ART GALLERY
MAANSIKSIKAITSITAPIITSINIKSSIN

saag.ca

WELCOME

To the Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin.

This summer, the Gallery is delighted to present two exhibitions by artists exploring personal, ecological, and political aspects of the natural environment.

forest documents by renowned artist Leila Sujir is a culmination of her research and multimedia works of Vancouver Island's Walbran Forest. Her work brings together a network of evidence in video, audio, and printed material where viewers participate in shaping the vast, intertwined roots of personal, colonial, and environmental issues that converge in the forest. In the Upper Gallery, Namaakii Bee Bear Hat's solo exhibition *Something Given* is a reflection on the lessons and knowledge of living off the land that is passed through generations. It reflects on the ties that bind her to the land of traditional Blackfoot territory she calls home.

Our summer programming includes an Articulations talk with our exhibiting artists, a book-binding workshop in our Tiny Press Studio, a collaboration with the Lethbridge BIPOC Foundation alongside our recurring programs. We are also pleased to offer special discounts on memberships for families (25% off in August) and students (annual membership for the price of regular admission through September).

For more details about our exhibitions, programs, and events, please visit our website saag.ca, follow us on social media (@thesaag on Instagram and Facebook), or drop by the Gallery. Enjoy the summer; we look forward to welcoming you to the gallery.

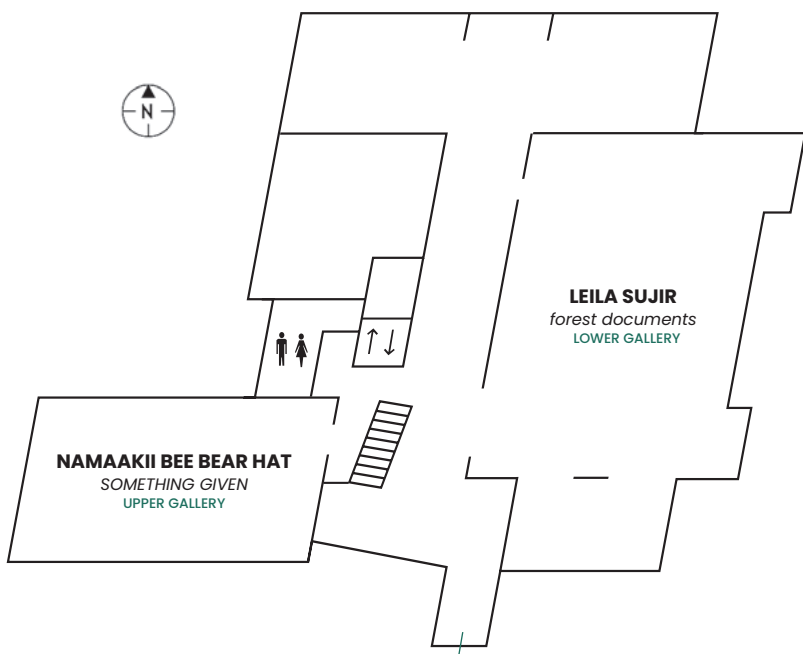
The Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin is located on traditional territories of the Siksikaitsitapi, or Blackfoot Confederacy. We honour and acknowledge the Siksikaitsitapi, who have cared for these lands since time immemorial. We recognize that Treaty 7 territory is also home to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, District 1, and many other Indigenous peoples.

LEILA SUJIR

forest documents | LOWER GALLERY

NAMAAKII BEE BEAR HAT

SOMETHING GIVEN | UPPER GALLERY





LEILA SUJIR

forest documents

LOWER GALLERY | 9 AUGUST 2025 – 18 OCTOBER 2025

The installation *forest documents* brings together a network of evidence in video and audio along with a Reading Room of publications and documents. The installation provides an opportunity for people to participate in the exhibition by approaching the video projections and Reading Room with a sense of curiosity and wonder about the forest as an ecosystem and as a sacred host of living systems.

forest documents is the third artwork on old-growth forests from Leila Sujir's body of work, *forest!* comprising three artworks: *Forest Breath* (2018), *Aerial* (2019), and *forest documents* (2025). *forest!*, which began in 2016, conveys a sense of the tangled stories of the Walbran, the old-growth forests on the unceded traditional territories of the Pacheedaht First Nation. Home to Red Cedar trees nearly 1,000 years old and biodiversity not seen anywhere else in the world, parts of Vancouver Island's Walbran old-growth forest remain outside of the provincial park boundary established after the Carmanah Walbran protests in the 1990's. In the Walbran, the protests took place at the bridge you can see in the video, and this old-growth forest is still at risk from corporate logging.

During the Fairy Creek protests from 2020 to 2022, old-growth forests near the Walbran became a contested site

Leila Sujir, *forest documents* (TFL 46), 2-channel video installation with large format stereoscopic 3D and 2D video projection, 2025. Technical director: Jorge Zavagno, Reading Room in collaboration with John Latour. Courtesy of the artist.

where over a thousand people were arrested for protesting, the largest act of civil disobedience in terms of arrests, in Canadian history to date.

Throughout her long career, Sujir has continued to reinvent the capabilities of film, editing, video, audio, and installation technologies within her artworks. Technical Director Jorge Zavagno has worked with Sujir since she returned from the first *forest!* production in the Walbran in August 2016. She appreciates the nuance, insight, experimentation, and technical insight Zavagno brings to their working collaboration.

forest documents represents a culmination of Sujir's past research and artworks in Vancouver Island's Walbran old-growth forests near Port Renfrew, B.C. The roots of the exhibition spread wide and deep, coming together in an installation of a floating, two-sided, video projection using 2D and stereoscopic 3D video. On one side, the 3D video is accompanied by a spatialized soundtrack of the sounds of the Walbran and on the other, the Reading Room offers an engaging space for viewers to browse the documents and publications from Elastic Spaces research lab colleagues and others.

The two-sided floating projection wall with *forest documents* is composed of three sections, each cutting between sky and ground with two distinct camera set-ups: an aerial camera on a heavy-lift drone, and a two camera set-up with a mirror rig on the forest floor:

Section 1: *TFL 46 (Tree Farm License 46)*

The floating aerial camera shows evidence of clear-cut logging and second-growth forests with video stills pausing

and punctuating the moving aerial camera, along with the two camera set-up on the ground, indicating where logging continues.

Section 2: *Emerald Giant*

The floating aerial camera then circulates around the forest, lingering on the tree that local communities have named “the Emerald Giant.”

Section 3: *Emerald Pool*

Descending from great heights above the tree canopy, the camera’s gaze shifts into the stillness on the ground near the Walbran’s “Emerald Pool” with only the undergrowth moving.

Over the course of an hour, Sujir indicates, “the video moves from the forest floor to the canopy, from ground to sky and back again.” It instills a meditative, self-forgetfulness as viewers experience the forest’s unimaginable scales of time, size, and biodiversity. This video is but one document of the forest. It is evidence of the forest’s majesty and endurance, but also attests to the colonial extraction of natural resources that continues to threaten the ecosystem.

On the other side of the 3D video viewing room is the Reading Room, an exhibition component created in collaboration with Concordia University Librarian and artist John Latour. He brings his expertise as both a librarian and artist to this presentation of the collection of books Sujir chose. Located ‘within’ and beside the video projection of an old-growth forest, it offers a contemplative and active space where visitors are encouraged to browse, chat, form questions, and potentially, come to new understandings of the forest. The scientific

papers, reports, curatorial essays, children's books, poetry, and writing, most of all, attest to research and art-making being inherently collaborative acts.

Created with this exhibition in mind, along with future plans for distribution through schools and to the public, the chapbook *Chronicles of the Forest* is a transcript of Elder Bill Jones's, speaking about the forest, put onto the page in the strategy of a long poem. John Latour, along with artist Santiago Tavera and the Elastic Spaces team, fit Elder Jones's transcript into the chapter headings he worked out. In the chapbook, Elder Jones talks about the Walbran's importance to him, how he became an unofficial leader of the Fairy Creek protests, and his feelings of respect and reverence for the old-growth forest. The format of the book offers pauses, with its interstitial Walbran forest illustrations by Elastic Spaces book designer, Daniela Ortiz, who drew from frames of the video. As a result, we as readers slow down and take time to look at the drawings. These pauses in the chapbook mirror the "rests" present in the video's use of scans of the coverpaper embedded with cedar and salal by Tasha Lavdovsky. She explains the location where she harvested the plants: "[from] forests within the Diitiida? (Jordan River) watershed, the Pacheedaht First Nation's origin site, the cedar leaves were cut from recently felled trees in a logging cut block, and the salal was harvested days before their forest was clearcut." At the start of each section of the video, these scans of the chapbook cover allow viewers to pause, to breathe in the forest.

Leila Sujir, "*forest documents (Emerald Pool)*, 2-channel video installation with large format stereoscopic 3D and 2D video projection, 2025. Technical director: Jorge Zavagno, Reading Room in collaboration with John Latour. Courtesy of the artist.



In their respective artworks, research, and approach to living, Sujir and Elder Jones demonstrate the generative possibilities of weaving together interdisciplinary stories and ideas. "It's like a bird building a nest." Jones remarks in *Chronicles of the Forest*, "...it will put the rough stuff around the edge and knit it, so that it will stay together... and I thought that's so apt even in our lives so that they can hatch into other ideas."

Text by Curator Adam Whitford based on conversations, notes, and text excerpts from artist Leila Sujir.

Curated by Adam Whitford, Curator & Exhibitions Manager

Canadian artist **Leila Sujir** was born in India, her father Raghu Sujir's homeland, where she lived until she was five. She immigrated to Canada with her family: first to Mont Joli, QC along the St Lawrence river where her father's job took him flying in and out of Arctic; and then to Granum, AB where her mother's parents lived, then High River, AB and after the death of Raghu Sujir in a small plane crash, finally to Calgary. She and her two brothers Roy (now deceased, during COVID) and Jay grew up within an extended family, with Bernice and Henry Horricks, and mother Ruth Horricks-Sujir who worked as a high school teacher. In 1998, Sujir arrived at Concordia University, Montréal as an Associate Professor in the Studio Arts department in the Faculty of Fine Arts, carrying out research, art-making, and teaching, along with being a Department Chair 2017-2022, and where she continues now, since July 2023, as an emeritus professor, artist, and researcher.

Over the last decade, she has led Elastic 3D Spaces, an art research studio-lab supported by Concordia University, where she and her team have received numerous SSHRC research grants including, “Elastic Forest Spaces” (2024); “Thinking Allowed” (2022); a Canada Council for the Arts, Concept to Realization, Media Arts (2022) for *forest documents*; and prior to that, SSHRC research grants including, “Elastic 3D Spaces: the old growth forest as ‘home’ space with an emphasis on land, healing, home, communities” (2019); *Exploring Elastic 3D Spaces: bodies and belonging* (2016); and *Elastic 3D Spaces Research Workshop Exchange* (2016).

Leila Sujir has been building a body of video artworks over the last forty years exploring family histories and Canadian histories, using visual and audio collage techniques. Often located within custom-built technologies both for the production as well as its exhibition presentation, the artworks bring together a blend of visual and acoustic elements employing documents from archival sources, fiction, and the fantastic. Her video artworks have been shown in group shows at the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and the Tate Gallery (Liverpool). Exhibited in galleries all over the world, her work is in collections including National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa and the Glenbow in Calgary.

The artist would like to acknowledge support for the artwork *forest documents* from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, and support for the research from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), along with assistance from Concordia University Faculty of Fine Arts Resources, and Hexagram UQÀM.

The chapbook *Chronicles of the Forest* received support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (AGGV), Concordia University’s Aid to Research Related Events (ARRE) program, and Elastic Spaces.



NAMAAKII BEE BEAR HAT

SOMETHING GIVEN

UPPER GALLERY | 9 AUGUST 2025 – 18 OCTOBER 2025

The beauty of a lesson is that it is transitory. It is a gift held for a time before it moves again from giver to receiver, becoming unique to each practitioner in the process. Namaakii Bee Bear Hat's solo exhibition, *Something Given*, reflects on the lessons and knowledge passed through generations down to her. These lessons were taught to her, her siblings, and cousins from elder members of her family in the process of learning how to be prepared to hunt, trap, and fish on the land. In the exhibition, these teachings are made tangible through small ceramic sculptures of the gifted objects associated with each lesson.

A lesson is also a legacy. Knowledge passed down from one generation to the next is often one of the most enduring connections to the generations that have come before. For Bear Hat, the lessons started when she was a child, as her father sought to teach her self-reliance on the land. Even going back to when her father was a young man, that same independence was an important part of the lessons he learned from his own parents. The hands-on learning he passed to Bear Hat includes practical skills like knowing how to start a fire for camp, hunting, and finding smudge in the bush interwoven with spiritual teachings.

Akin to how lessons learned on the land are dependent on natural cycles, *Something Given* is also closely connected

Us in Sikoohkotoki (pt.2), two large-scale photo prints on paper and hand-written text with waterbased marker, 2025. Courtesy of the artist.

to the variances of earth, sun, and water. Earlier this year, Bear Hat visited Sikoohkotoki (Lethbridge) to collect natural clay to create the gift sculptures, take photographs, and borrow the rocks seen in the exhibition. Made from rough-hewn pieces of local cottonwood, the plinths that support the gift sculptures rise and fall in height like the hills and the rippled puddle mirrors on the floor suggest moving waters as they reflect daylight at different intensities throughout the day. The four plinths and four mirrors directly tie to Blackfoot knowledge and teachings about the significance of four in relation to the four cardinal directions and the cyclical nature of the four seasons, reminders of the movement of knowledge as it is passed on.

Curated by Adam Whitford, Curator & Exhibitions Manager

Namaakii Bee Bear Hat is a Mohkinstsis based artist, whose Blackfoot and Cree/Dane-zaa ancestors have lived on the lands that are now part of Treaty 7 and 8, for many millennia. Her work explores this cultural lineage through installation, photography, text and collage. Bear Hat graduated from the Alberta University of the Arts in 2011, where she majored in painting. Her work explores identity and story-telling, wanting to give back to the rich stories of her home territories. Within her work, Bear Hat is unfolding that which ties her to these unique landscapes.

Bear Hat's most recent work, these trails are home, was a part of Story Keeping (2023) exhibition at The Nanaimo Art Gallery. Other recent exhibitions include, *Big Rock River: Contemporary Indigenous Art in an Ancient Land* (2022) exhibition at The Okotoks Art Gallery; *Related* (2022), at Libby Leshgold Gallery, Vancouver; *Visions of the Hunt* (2018), The Esplanade, Medicine Hat; *níchiwamiskwém | nimidet | ma soeur | my sister*, at the Contemporary Native Art Biennial (BACA), Art Mûr, Montréal and *I Believe in Living* (2018), Untitled Arts Society, Calgary. Bear Hat has also been awarded the Joane Cardinal Schubert Memorial Scholarship in 2011 and the Sonia de Grandmaison Scholarship in 2013.

PROGRAMS + EVENTS

EXHIBITION OPENING RECEPTION

AUG. 9 | 7–9 P.M.

Join us at the Gallery to celebrate the opening of our newest exhibitions featuring work by Leila Sujir and Namaakii Bee Bear Hat.

TINY PRESS MAKE YOUR OWN BOOK WORKSHOP

SEPT. 12 | 2–4 P.M.

Join us for this hands-on workshop to have the chance to make your own book in our Tiny Press Studio. \$10 for members, \$15 for non-members. Registration required.

SAAG AT WHOOP UP DAYS

AUG. 21 | 4:30–8 P.M. | Featuring Nicole Kelly Westman

AUG. 22 | 12–4 P.M.

The Gallery will run an art activity booth at this year's Whoop Up Days! Join artist Nicole Kelly Westman and Outreach Coordinator Bariyaa Ipaa for fun art activities

BLETCHER HOUR: SAAG ARTS WRITING PRIZE RECEPTION (ONLINE)

AUG. 21 | 6–7 P.M.

Join us online to celebrate the

winners of the 2025 SAAG Arts Writing Prize and Aruna D'Souza Award for BIPOC writers. Meet this year's winners Leanna Barwick and Kaya Panthier and learn more about their writing practices. Registration required.

BIPOC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

SEPT. 5 | 6–8 P.M.

Part of the 2025 Culture Days: BIPOC Foundation Digi-Arts Program Series, a free series of art events supporting and highlighting the work of BIPOC artists in Southern Alberta made possible by the Alberta Culture Days Host Site Grant. Limited space, registration required.

SAAG AT COULEE FEST WITH NATALIA SMITH

SEPT. 13 | 11 A.M.–5 P.M.

Join the Gallery at Lethbridge Polytechnic's annual community celebration to explore cyanotype printing with local artist Natalia Smith.



BIPOC FOUNDATION DIGI-ARTS FESTIVAL AT CASA

SEPT. 19 | 5-9 P.M.

A digital art exhibition featuring musical performances, a fashion show, and more! Part of the 2025 Culture Days: BIPOC Foundation Digi-Arts Program Series, a free series of art events supporting and highlighting the work of BIPOC artists in Southern Alberta made possible by the Alberta Culture Days Host Site Grant.

CULTURAL CANVAS WORKSHOP SERIES WITH THE BIPOC FOUNDATION

SEPT. 25 | 4-7 P.M.

Hands-on art workshops led by local BIPOC artists. Part of the 2025 Culture Days: BIPOC Foundation Digi-Arts Program Series, a free series of art events supporting and highlighting the work of BIPOC artists in Southern Alberta made possible by the Alberta Culture Days Host Site Grant.

EARTH, MEMORY, AND RESISTANCE: AN INDIGENOUS CLIMATE ACTION PANEL

SEPT. 26 | 6-8:00 P.M.

Presented in partnership with the Galt, This panel gathers voices at the intersection of art and

environmental advocacy, exploring how Indigenous worldviews offer both ancient and urgent solutions to the climate crisis. This program is free to attend at the Galt.

RECURRING PROGRAMS

ARTICULATIONS

AUG. 9 (WITH LEILA SUJIR AND NAMAAKII BEE BEAR HAT) | 2-3 P.M.

The Articulations Art Lecture Series offers presentations from practicing contemporary artists and arts professionals. Join our upcoming artists for a talk and tour of their exhibitions before the opening. Free for members or with admission.

BLETCHER HOUR

OCT. 9 | 6-7 P.M.

Bletcher Hour is the Gallery's bimonthly critical reading group. Readings explore key themes of the exhibitions and current events, with the intent to deepen our understanding of the artworks and their context within our community. Contact hkehoe@saag.ca to register. This program is free to attend.



CRAFTERNOON**AUG. 30, SEPT. 28, OCT. 18 | 1-4 P.M.**

Looking for a fun and family-friendly activity? Visit the Gallery on the last Saturday of each month for Crafternoon, a self-directed art activity in our Creativity Centre inspired by our current exhibitions. Free for members or with Gallery admission.

CURATOR'S TOUR**AUG. 28 | 6-7 P.M.**

Curator & Exhibitions Manager Adam Whitford offers a behind-the-scenes guided tour of the Gallery's current exhibitions. Free for members or with Gallery admission

FRANCOPHONE NIGHT AT THE GALLERY**SEPT. 11 | 6-7 P.M.**

Join us at the Gallery for a French-language guided tour of our current exhibitions. Snacks and refreshments available. Presented in partnership with ACFA régionale de Lethbridge. For more information contact Bariyaa Ipaa, Outreach Coordinator, at bipaa@saag.ca. This program is free to attend.

SENIORS TOUR+TEA**AUG. 19, SEPT. 9, OCT. 7****(WITH LEILA ARMSTRONG) | 10-11:30 A.M.**

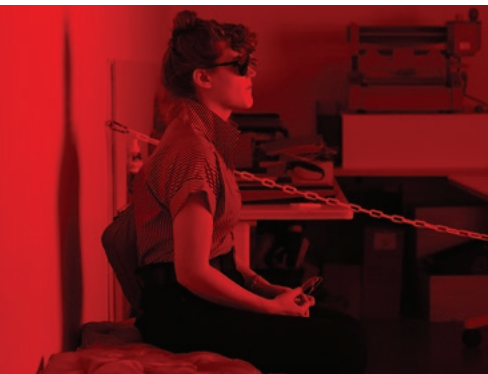
This program invites Seniors (65+) into the Gallery for a guided tour, hands-on art activity, and refreshments. This program is free to attend.

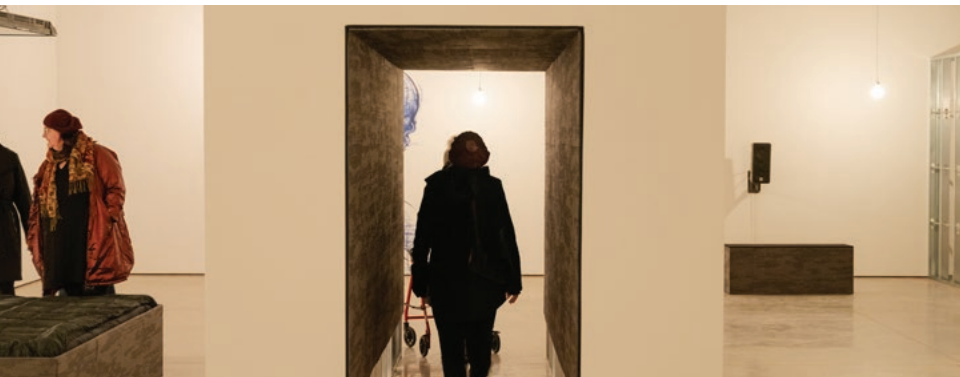
YOUTH ART CLUB**AUG. 29, SEPT. 19, OCT. 17 | 1-3 P.M.**

Youth aged 12 to 18 looking to explore their artistic side in a warm and welcoming environment are invited to join us for the monthly drop-in Youth Art Club program. Bring your own art to work on or make something here while taking in a tour of the current exhibitions. Supplies and snacks provided. This program is free to attend.

For up to date information on these and other Gallery programs and events, visit saag.ca/events.

For additional information, to register, or if program cost presents a barrier, contact Heather Kehoe, Program and Event Coordinator at hkehoe@saag.ca.





GET INVOLVED

SUBSCRIBE

Sign up to our e-newsletter to stay in the loop about everything going on at the Gallery from current exhibitions to programs and special events. Visit www.saag.ca to subscribe.

DONATE

Your gift to the Gallery is a meaningful contribution to our work to make southern Alberta a place where contemporary art supports and connects vibrant communities. Visit us at the Gallery to give in person, or make an online donation through our website. Interested in growing your impact? Join Centennial Club, the Gallery's monthly giving program, where you can make a sustainable gift of any size that supports programming and exhibitions all year round. All donations include a charitable tax receipt.

Visit saag.ca/ways-to-give or email development@saag.ca for more information.

JOIN

Become a Gallery member and enjoy free admission to the Gallery all year, discounts on all classes, programs, and workshops, 10% off select merchandise in the Shop at SAAG and special discounts at our partners and supporters.

Individual | \$25 **Student** | \$15
Senior | \$20 (65+) **Family** | \$50*

*includes 2 Individual Memberships and memberships for any number of children under 18.

LIMITED TIME MEMBERSHIP SPECIALS

Aug. 1-31 | 25% off Family Annual Memberships

Sept. 1-30 | \$10 Student Annual Memberships

To join or for more information, visit saag.ca/membership.

VOLUNTEER

The Gallery is always looking for passionate and committed volunteers. We have a variety of long-term and one-time opportunities available with a wide range of positions. For more information on volunteering with us, contact info@saag.ca.



VISIT US

GROUP RATES

We offer special rates with optional tours for groups of 10 or more, including students. Group visits must be booked in advance.

ACCESSIBILITY

All galleries and public spaces are wheelchair accessible. Free admission is available for the accompanying personal care attendant of a visitor paying regular admission. Accredited service dogs are welcome in all Gallery spaces. A Service Dog Identification Card must be presented on arrival and each animal must be clearly identified by visual indicators. Other animals are not permitted in the building.

TRANSIT + BIKING

The Gallery is accessible via many Lethbridge Transit routes and is just a few blocks from the downtown Park 'n' Ride Transit Terminal. If you are visiting us by bicycle, bike racks are available directly east and west of the Gallery along 3 Avenue.

PARKING

Ample paid street parking is available surrounding the Gallery along 3 Avenue. Parking downtown is free on weekends, stat holidays, and after 4 p.m. on weekdays.

CANOO

New Canadians in their first year of citizenship and Canadian permanent residents in the first five years of their permanent residency can enjoy free admission to the Gallery through the Canoo free mobile app. Visit canoo.ca to download the app and register.

FACILITY RENTALS

The Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin has several unique and diverse spaces available to rent for your business or social gatherings. Visit saag.ca/rentals to view our rental guide. **For more information on rentals, hours, rates including groups, accessibility and accommodations, contact info@saag.ca.**

GALLERY CODE OF CONDUCT

The Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all visitors, employees, and volunteers. We expect all visitors, employees, and volunteers to treat one another with dignity and respect and strive to create a space free from violence, abuse, harassment, discrimination or other unacceptable behaviours. Individuals whose conduct is abusive, threatening, disruptive, or disrespectful will be asked to leave the Gallery. If you experience or witness harassment or other behaviours that are creating an unsafe environment, please notify a Gallery staff member. Thank you for helping us make the Gallery a safe space for all.

Please see the full visitor guidelines on the Gallery wall on the main floor, at the front desk, and our website.

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