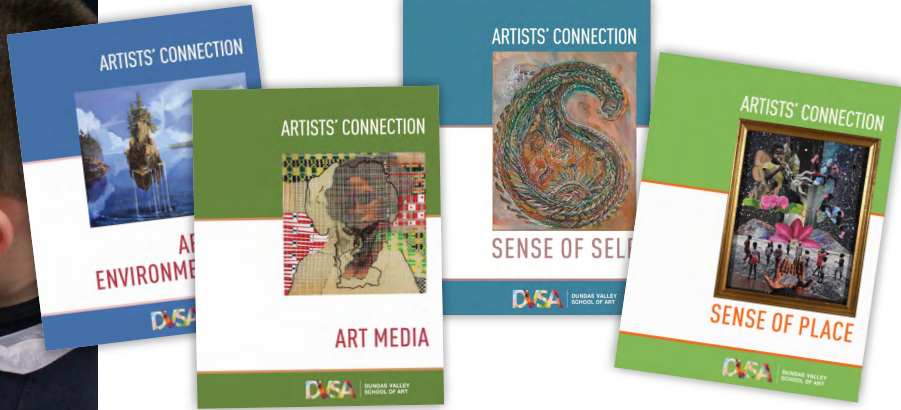




Newsletter



It's Back To School For A Refreshed Artists' Connection Program

SINCE IT BEGAN IN 2004, DVSA's Artists' Connection Program has provided young people in the GHA with direct hands-on opportunities to experience artworks created by local artists. Delivering four exhibitions of original art and each exploring a theme—Sense of Self, Sense of Place, Art Media and Artist as Environmentalist—the program is offered free to HWDSB/HWCDSB elementary and secondary school students. After a yearlong hiatus to undergo a revitalization, the program recently returned to classrooms with an expanded art collection that includes new artistic voices from the Hamilton region.

"It's really unique, this idea of sending a collection of actual art objects right into the classroom," says Sally McKay, DVSA's Visual Arts Director. "It provides an opportunity for the students to really engage in depth with the materiality. It's a whole different interaction. You don't have to sit passively, staring at slides on a screen."

Each exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive guidebook for educators, providing artist information and curriculum-aligned activities to guide classroom work and maximize student engagement.

"We're aware that not every teacher who books this program will be an art teacher," says McKay. "One of the big goals is to help facilitate increased access to art and art learning, with the understanding it has broad positive impacts on mental health and self-awareness."

DVSA Outreach Facilitator Lisa Jefferies agrees, adding that making art accessible for students increases their visual literacy. "Students talk about the art, they look at the art together and use it as a springboard to do activities together," she says, adding that the program is very popular, booking up every year.

The pause in 2024 to update the AC Program focussed on revisiting the themes and refreshing the collections with new artworks. "We wanted to update the program's representation to ensure it speaks to all kinds of students in the Hamilton region," says Jefferies. "And, that it's a diverse selection of artists with different cultural backgrounds and life experiences."

"One of the big goals is to help facilitate increased access to art and art learning, with the understanding it has broad positive impacts on mental health and self-awareness."

► Interested in welcoming the Artists' Connection Program to your classroom? Contact Lisa Jefferies at lisaj@dvsa.ca or 905-628-6357 ext. 232 for information.

Let's build and support the arts – it makes our country stronger.

WHEN PEOPLE DIMINISH THE ARTS—speak to elitism and its irrelevance—they underestimate its importance and the significant impact it has on Canadians.

Through the visual arts we tell and learn stories, reposition our ideas and build a better understanding of ourselves and those around us. Visual arts intersect with all elements of our lives... our physical, mental and spiritual health.

“The arts literally rewire our brains, changing our thoughts, feelings, social cognition, and behaviors. Making art decreases the stress hormone cortisol, and increases levels of feel-good hormones such as dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphins.”

— Dr. Jeremy Nobel

It is not surprising to learn that those countries who value and invest in the arts also register the greatest levels of happiness and contentment—*these are countries such as Sweden and The Netherlands, who rank in the top for arts funding and also rank in the top five as having the happiest citizens.*

While building stronger identity and communities, the arts sector also strengthens our economy. In 2025, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce released a groundbreaking report showing that in one single year—2024—Canada's arts and culture sector contributed **\$65 billion in direct GDP to Canada's economy**; growing faster and supporting more jobs per dollar than other key sectors (oil and gas, manufacturing or agriculture).

We should view investment—both through public and private funding in the arts—as being constructive and empowering, ensuring for future generations that our community and country will be socially and economically stronger.





FACULTY PROFILE

Jennifer Finn: *Capturing Moments in Time*

Since joining DVSA as an instructor in 2018, Jennifer Finn has continued to foster a love for the photographed image in her classes. A graduate of McMaster and Sheridan's photography program, she has a true gift for capturing memorable images—many which can be found in regional art sales and stores, plus our Annual Art Auction. We caught up with her to ask three pressing questions.

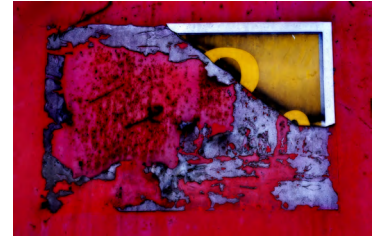
1 What is the first artwork you remember that made a significant impact on your artistic path?

What got me on the path of becoming a photographer was film, actually. That was the first art I saw that inspired me—mostly silver screen and old film noir movies. I've

been watching them since I was a teen. To this day, if I need inspiration, I throw on an old Alfred Hitchcock movie like *The Birds* or *Rear Window*. I've always admired the way Hitchcock makes an image more powerful by suggesting more than it actually shows—there's just enough to activate the viewer's imagination. His work has had a great impact on me and reflects how I photograph, especially with my abstract photography.

2 What draws you to the art of photography?

I've had a camera since I was 13 and it's never left my hands since. I've been documenting my life and my friends' lives. And I studied history and I love film, but for ages I didn't see the connection between



No Parking by Jennifer Finn

the three. It wasn't until my time at McMaster that I looked at the camera I'd always carried and thought, "I should study photography. I love it so much." It's about capturing moments in time. I have a great passion for documenting the world around us and being a witness of time.

3 When was your first 'eureka' moment—that feeling of love and discovery?

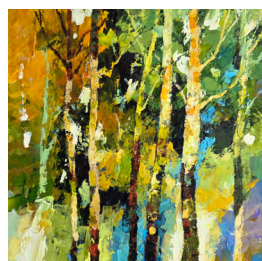
My first camera—the one I got when I was 13—was a Kodak 110. I remember getting it in my hand and the feeling of creative excitement it produced. I couldn't wait to document everything! Of course, I couldn't yet use a dark room and this was in the age of actual camera film so I had to take my roll to the drug store and wait a whole week for it to be developed. Can you imagine?

Steve Sianchuk Is A Man In Pursuit

STEVE SIANCHUK'S FIRST MEMORY of doing drawing is from a Grade 4 art project on volcanoes. As he grew, he found he wanted to draw the mushrooms, roots and other things he found while playing in the garden.

"I always felt drawn to [painting and drawing]," Steve confesses. "It's just something I want to do and I think we should pursue the things we want to do."

A change in career meant time for DVSA art classes with Jody Joseph, where a fellow student suggested he contribute to the Annual Art Auction. Success in the auction encouraged him to take his art more seriously. When DVSA approached him about Little



"I think we should pursue the things we want to do."

Black Frame, Steve was thrilled not only to further support the school, but to be included among artists he admired.

"Since contributing to the Little Black Frame event, I actually work with that 10x10 size restriction quite a bit. It's a good way to work on composition. The pieces become a kind of sketchbook."

Steve loves the energy and atmosphere of Little Black Frame and his vibrant abstract landscape works are a coveted choice for attendees. "I go every year and it's exciting to see the crowd and feel the buzz in the room. We'll see what this year brings."

► A new twist on our Little Black Frame event is scheduled for November 7.



Back To The Future

WITH THE RETURN OF SPRING, the old adage and tradition of “a good spring clean,” overtook and a reset of the Development office

began. Unfortunately, it didn't take too long to be derailed. The reason for the abrupt halt? A copy of DVSA's Fall 1979 course brochure—an incredible time capsule, listing programming, events and guest artists.

In the Fall of 1979, DVSA was advertising and offering 50 classes; this in stark contrast to the 2026 Fall program which will be offering 200+ classes!

Connections between 1979 and 2026 were spotted around past and present instructors. In 1979, Anne Sneath, the highly regarded potter,

was teaching. This Fall her daughter Holly, who has been a member of faculty since 2000, will continue nurturing creativity for this generation of students.

One program DVSA was unable to continue—due to the severe funding cuts in the early 1980s—was the Visiting Artist and Artist-In-Residence. When it started in the 1970s, supported by funding from The Canada Council and The Ontario Arts Council, DVSA welcomed artistic luminaries such as Michael Snow, Michael Ondaatje, Joyce Weiland and Katja Jacobs for special lectures and seminars. At the same time, DVSA also hosted a yearly Artist-in-Residence—in 1979 it was An Whitlock, whose artwork can be found today across Canada in private and public collections.

Forty-seven years on, DVSA has grown to be one of the largest independent art schools in our country and we have not moved away from being a unique Canadian institution with a mission of inspiring creativity and bringing the visual arts to learners of all ages and abilities.



Now that's a good-sized cheque!

Congratulations to our 2026 50/50 Raffle at the Art Auction winner, Otto Hoffmann. Otto bought 50 tickets while visiting the school during auction preview days and had his lucky name drawn for the jackpot. Thank you to all who bought tickets and supported this inaugural DVSA 50/50 draw. All proceeds go to support the school and our art programs.

Happenings & Highlights



Roof Raised

And... voila—a new roof! With leaks becoming more persistent, the call went out last Fall to our community for help with our No Leaks, Just Art campaign, aimed at raising funds to repair a damaged, cracking and peeling top surface on the school. The community responded—with great enthusiasm along with some touching notes reminding us just how important this school is to many in our region. We're pleased to say the roof work is now complete and it's just as promised—all art, no leaks. Thank you to everyone who generously supported this venture.



Sandra Brewster Leads The Way

A highlight of the school year, acclaimed Canadian multidisciplinary artist and 2025 Sobey Award Nominee, Sandra Brewster visited DVSA in May for the inaugural talk in a new annual series. *The Arthur Greenblatt Artist Talk Series* welcomes leading national and international artists to our community to speak to critical issues in contemporary art. Named in honour of Arthur Greenblatt, our former Executive Director, the series reflects his commitment to removing barriers between the community and visual arts. Thank you to the H.G. Bertram Foundation for providing funding for this new initiative.

Watch Sandra's highly engaging presentation on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@DundasValleySchoolofArt



First Time Grads

May also marked a historic milestone for DVSA—the first-ever graduation of students from DVSA's Studio Fine Art Practice & Theory diploma program. After three years of full-time study, the first cohort received their diplomas at a celebratory and at times, emotional ceremony. The progress of all our enrolled diploma students was also marked by two special exhibitions—one in the DVSA Galleries featuring work from all three cohort years while Piques & Valleys Gallery in Dundas hosted a special off-site show by the graduating class. Congrats graduates!

View both exhibitions online at dvsa.ca/album/all-galleries/

