

TRAIL VISIT POST

On a crisp winter day, I had the distinct privilege of walking the AOG Art Trail—a truly unique fusion of nature, art, and history that stretches over 3 kilometres in an ever-changing dialogue between culture and landscape. The trail, open year-round and accessible by foot, ski, or snowshoe, invites visitors to meander through a landscape that is as much a canvas as the sculptures, paintings, and photographs it hosts.

The art trail features works from a wide array of artists—from Inuit to Zimbabwean creatives, blending a global tapestry of human expression. The outdoor gallery is an immersive experience: the artworks interact with the natural environment, sometimes contrasting sharply with the landscape, sometimes blending seamlessly into it.

What immediately strikes you when visiting the Art Trail is how art is integrated into the very fabric of the place, with detailed stonework, sculptures, and installations responding to the surrounding environment. Whether it's Bill's son's favourite stone from his childhood integrated into a piece or a painting weathered on plywood having to be printed on more durable material, each piece seems to breathe with the natural world, able to react to the passing of time due to Bill's ongoing relationship with the living artists.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the trail is how it encourages interaction. Art should be seen, but also experienced—touched, listened to, walked around, and reflected upon. There's an infectious sense of childlike curiosity that the trail invites, urging visitors to look closer, touch, and feel, letting the artwork resonate beyond a mere visual experience.

“Tax The Rich”

One of the most distinctive and powerful features of the Art Trail is its emphasis on typography. As you stroll along the path, recurring motifs of engraved quotes, often etched into the stone or set against the backdrop of trees, blue skies and sometimes snow. These typographic elements give the artwork a literary dimension that feels very personal. It's not just about the visual; it's also about the words that echo throughout the journey.

“Every Child Matters”

The recurring engravings seem to reach out to the viewer, their messages embedded deep within the stones. They challenge you to consider the ways in which language and symbolism influence our perceptions of place. The text is both a physical and intellectual presence on the trail, challenging the viewer to interpret meaning from the words and the landscapes they inhabit.

“Something Is Going To Happen”

The use of typography isn't just decorative—it's deeply conceptual. These quotes compiled by Bill over the years, often philosophical, sometimes reflective, occasionally provocative—are

carved from the very “cores” of the natural world. As a viewer, you’re invited to pause and engage, to read, reflect, and connect the written word with the surrounding visual narrative.

“Perfect for Storming The Castle”

Bill Gibbons, former dairy and maple syrup farmer - retired now, has seamlessly blended his agricultural past with his passion for art, commissioning the transformation of found materials—especially farming equipment—into striking sculpture like a *20-foot cello sculpture*. Gibbons has recently ventured into creating his own works, such as the *Taxes and Pitchforks*, offering a powerful commentary on the disparities induced by wealth hoarding and labour exploitation. **Stay Tune for Growing Collections interview series, where we learn more about people like Bill Gibbons, who have supported the practices of Black Artists by acquiring work through BAND and beyond.**

- Lamesha Ruddock, BAND Gallery

250 CAMPAIGN

BAND Gallery is a home for Black art in Toronto dedicated to launching Black artists and curators and connecting local talent with global audiences and vice versa.

As we prepare to reopen our permanent Parkdale home, we invite you to join our 250 Friends of BAND Campaign: 250 supporters contributing \$20/month by August 31, 2025. Your support fuels Black artists, sustains daily operations, and drives the connections that give BAND meaning.

You’ll receive monthly newsletters highlighting Black arts and culture in Canada and the diaspora, access to curated dialogues with artists and curators, exclusive previews of exhibitions, invitations to art excursions, and opportunities to explore Black arts mapping in Ontario and beyond.

Reach out to Lamesha at lamesha@bandgallery.com or call 647-701-4323 to preserve a vital cultural space for Black art in Canada today.