

A Q&A with Brian Usher, Founder & Executive Director, ArtBridgeCanada



Question: *You’ve had a fascinating trajectory - founding ARABELLA in 2008, working in leadership and organizational psychology, and now establishing ArtBridgeCanada. What prompted you to launch this new initiative at this particular moment?*

Response: “Why am I doing this now? Because I’ve seen how powerful creativity and human connection can become when people are given the right platform. ArtBridgeCanada feels like the natural next step after all I’ve learned along the way.”

Question: *When you introduced ARABELLA, you were responding to a distinct need: artists in your community sought broader audiences amid shifting economic realities. How did you envision the magazine in contrast to the established art world?*

Response: “With **ARABELLA**, we wanted more than just another art publication. Artists were telling us they needed fresh avenues to reach people, and we knew their stories weren’t always being told by the traditional academic art establishment. We focused on design and narrative elements that would capture the human experience - not only to help art lovers understand the work on a deeper level, but also to celebrate the personal journeys behind each piece.”

Question: *Your background in organizational psychology and leadership suggests a deep belief in the power of understanding individuals. How has this shaped your perspective on cultivating artistic communities and enterprises?*

Response: “My experience in **Psychology and Leadership Development** taught me that meaningful change, whether in a company or a creative space, hinges on empathy. Leaders who truly listen and value people’s authentic selves foster trust, collaboration, and innovation. It’s a lesson I’ve carried into every endeavor - creating environments where individuals feel understood and supported.”

Question: *ArtBridgeCanada seems to bring these threads together - art, community-building, and a platform that elevates creative voices. How do you see this non-profit influencing the cultural landscape?*

Response: “That’s precisely why I founded **ArtBridgeCanada**, a federally registered non-profit designed to connect and empower Canadian artists. The aim is to ensure they can share their work, expand their audiences, and spur cultural conversations. In doing so, we reinforce the idea that art is not a luxury or afterthought, but a pillar that can strengthen communities and stimulate thoughtful dialogue.”

Question: *Your work seems motivated by a desire to broaden perspectives, whether through art or organizational culture. How would you summarize the core of your mission?*

Response: “At the heart of it, I care about helping people see the world in new ways. It might be guiding leaders to appreciate the human dimension of their teams or giving artists a platform to tell their stories. The goal is to inspire understanding, nurture creativity, and foster spaces where everyone’s contribution is seen as essential. That’s the vision I’m working toward - more empathy, more meaningful connections, and a richer cultural fabric for all.”