



# Impact Story: Paved Arts

by  
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Saskatchewan  
Arts Alliance



# PAVED ARTS

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## **Arts Work Series - PAVED Arts**

*Written and photographed by Dave Margoshes*

Paved Arts, one of the mainstays of Saskatoon’s visual arts community, traces its beginnings to the amalgamation in 2003 of the Photographer’s Gallery and Video Verité. In the 15 years since, Paved has continued the tradition of artistic excellence its founding partners, with their own distinguished histories, had been known for.

The gallery and its companion production entre are housed in a renovated former restaurant on 20th Street in the city’s rapidly gentrifying Riversdale neighbourhood, one of the city’s poorest neighbourhoods – and

its trendiest. PAVED shares the space, and in many ways is joined at the hip, with AKA Artist-Run, another cutting edge gallery, and BlackFlash Magazine, one of Canada’s foremost arts publications and one of the country’s longest-lived magazines of any sort. Together, they make 424 20th Street West one of the hottest address on Saskatoon’s artistic map.

PAVED is an acronym for the five sisters of contemporary art methodology: Photography, Audio, Video, Electronic and Digital. To that mix could also be added Conceptual, as manifested in a recent show, Lines of Flight, in which visiting artists Andrew Maize, Lou Sheppard and Shaheer Tarar made use of aerial photographs and satellite imagery to explore concepts of space, perception and identity.

PAVED’s roots go deep into Saskatoon’s thriving photography scene in the ‘60s and ‘70s. There’s still quite a bit of photography going on in the city but more recently, according to executive director Travis Cole, “we’ve pivoted toward electronic and digital.”

PAVED and AKA, as artist-run galleries, put their focus on the making of art work, rather than selling it, leaving that to the commercial galleries. “We’re not involved in the art market as such,” notes David Lariviere, PAVED’s artistic director. But they do pay fees to artists showing their work at the galleries. “Artists should be able to make a living on the basis of their art but not on the exchange of commodities,” Lariviere argues.



Artist Jessica Morgun (left) working on a painting on the billboard on the PAVED Arts building. The evolving painting is part of the current Lines of Flight: subterranean show.

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He notes too the difference in mandates between artist-run and commercial galleries. The latter exist to serve a broad general public; artist-run galleries are directed toward the artists themselves, 'where artists try out ideas; commercial galleries are where art goes to meet the buying public.'

PAVED's impact is greatest on its artist members, usually numbering between 200 and 300. A key part of what the gallery offers is the production centre upstairs, with video, audio and digital suites and a wet darkroom. "Outside of what we have, many of our members don't really have access to this kind of equipment," Cole notes. Use of the suites and their equipment is inexpensive for members (membership for artist is \$50 annually) and workshops are free

– there are as many as 18 a year, allowing members to interact with visiting artists and develop "new levels of skill sets."

But "a large part of what we do is audience development through public education," he adds. "We see ourselves as demystifying art. We play a role in the community by providing media literacy and hands-on workshops that aren't available elsewhere."

A large part of that "public" is the heavily indigenous population of Riversdale. "We understand where we are," Cole says, adding, with a smile: "We're a couple of white boys working on 20th Street." As a result, "we're engaged in an ongoing decolonization project. We'd like our membership to reflect the larger community." To that end,

PAVED has begun a partnership with Chokecherry Studios, a new artist-run, youth-led indigenous group, and is working toward hiring a full-time indigenous curator. "We're not an island," Cole says. "It's important that we work with others."

Check out: <https://www.pavedarts.ca/>

*Dave Margoshes is a fiction writer and poet living in the rural Saskatoon area after many years in Regina. He was a newspaper reporter and editor, in New York, San Francisco, Calgary, Vancouver and points between, before escaping to the literary life.*