

ATLANTA CONTEMPORARY STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2028





CONTENTS

3	OUR MISSION
3	OUR WORK
4	OUR VISION
4	OUR VALUES
5	OUR HISTORY
6	OUR STORY
7	CENTER ARTISTS AND SHAPE DIALOGUE
8	RECONNECT WITH PURPOSE
9	STRENGTHEN OUR OPERATIONS
10	ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS
11	INTERESTED PARTIES FEEDBACK
12	METHODOLOGY

Artwork:

(cover) Sergios Suárez (Bottom Left) | Genevieve Gagnard (Bottom Right)

This page: Sonya Yong James

OUR MISSION

Atlanta Contemporary advances contemporary art by supporting artists, fostering experimentation, and connecting audiences to new ideas through dynamic exhibitions and programs.

OUR WORK

We activate our mission through our Studio Artist Program, which provides space and opportunities for artists to extend the depth and reach of their creative production, and by presenting exhibitions and public programming that highlight global, national, and local artists and foster cultural dialogue.

OUR VISION

Atlanta Contemporary envisions a vibrant, inclusive arts ecosystem where bold artistic voices shape culture, spark dialogue, and connect communities through the power of contemporary art.

OUR VALUES

Innovation

We present experiences that reflect contemporary culture. We do this by inviting creatives to conceive, explore, and showcase artistic ideas.

Access

We provide a community-focused environment that fosters inclusivity and respect.

Quality

We uphold the highest standards of artistic, programmatic, and organizational excellence.

Influence

We present exhibits and programs that create national conversation and amplify the careers of participating artists.

Collaboration

We embrace and work with a wide variety of organizations, neighbors, partners, and communities to advance contemporary art in a variety of forms.



Artwork: Yehimi Cambrón

OUR HISTORY

Nexus/Atlanta Contemporary Art Center

Major Milestones & Achievements



1970s

- Nexus, Inc. incorporated by James Frazer at 1185 Virginia Ave NE
- Nexus Press launched

1980s

- \$2M capital campaign closed - Purchase and phased renovation begins at 535 Means St.

1990s

- Nexus Contemporary Art Center opened at 535 Means St.
- Participated in the Atlanta Cultural Olympiad in conjunction with the 1996 Summer Olympics
- Selected to participate in a multiyear grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation

2000s

- Name changed to Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Inc.
- Nexus Press is closed, after producing more than 150 titles

2010s

- Free Admission, Every Day launched, ensuring everyone access to contemporary art
- \$600K capital campaign closed coinciding with 40th anniversary - Major renovation of facilities completed

2020s

- After COVID-19, upgraded ventilation systems and established new protocols, allowing the ability to re-open earlier than other Atlanta cultural institutions on July 7, 2020
- Recognized as Regional Regranting Partner of The Andy Warhol Foundation

OUR STORY

Founded in 1973 as Nexus, a grassroots artists' cooperative, Atlanta Contemporary has since become one of the Southeast's leading contemporary art centers. We play a vital role in Atlanta's cultural landscape by presenting consequential artists and creatives from the local, national, and international art scenes through our various exhibitions, project spaces, and programs each year. Atlanta Contemporary is a 501(c)3 nonprofit and receives donor support through the efforts of individual, community, and institutional stakeholders. We offer free admission every day to increase accessibility to the community of artists and arts enthusiasts in the metro-Atlanta area.

Atlanta Contemporary provides 13 on-site studio spaces to working artists through the Studio Artist Program. We commission new works, paying particular attention to artists who have not had a significant exhibition in the Southeast. We organize ongoing programs and events to foster connections to contemporary art, including signature programs: Open Studios, Contemporary Kids, and Contemporary Talks.

Organizational Priorities

CENTER ARTISTS AND SHAPE DIALOGUE

By centering artist voices and deepening our programming, Atlanta Contemporary will increase our impact and reinforce our role as a space for dialogue, experimentation, and discovery. Through a clear curatorial vision and expanded opportunities for creative engagement, we will support artists and deliver bold programming that reflects our values.

Our Goal

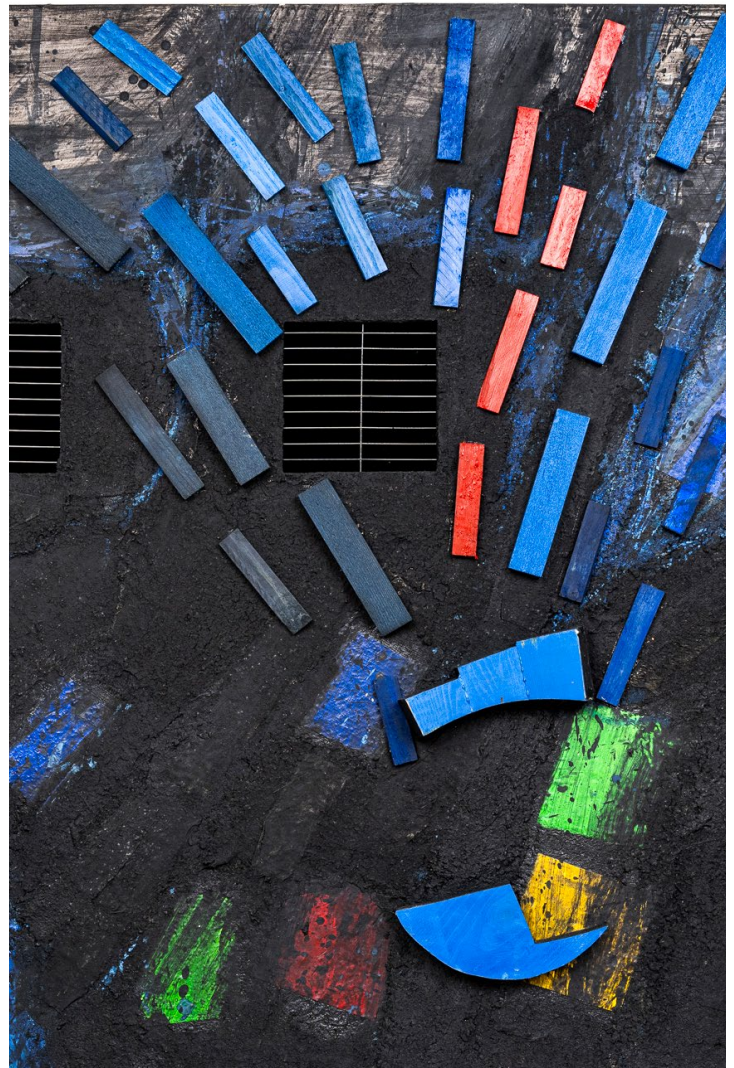
Clarify Atlanta Contemporary's curatorial vision to guide bold programming that features the highest quality artists, uplifts all artists, and catalyzes conversation throughout the contemporary art world and beyond.

Key Strategies

1. Establish a clear and cohesive artistic vision to ensure mission alignment, artistic integrity, and programmatic cohesion.
2. Expand artist support through increased resources and engagement pathways.
3. Refine public programs to increase accessibility, meet audience needs, and align with curatorial focus.
4. Invest in platforms that document the legacy and extend the reach of AC's work.

Metrics of Success

- Artist satisfaction
- Curatorial committee participation
- Studio artist engagement
- Program attendance
- Program frequency
- Archive or publication outputs



Artwork: Donald Locke

RECONNECT WITH PURPOSE

To restore Atlanta Contemporary's community connection and evolve our national profile, we will clarify and express our identity with intention. By telling our story with consistency and relevance, we will deepen public engagement, attract new supporters, and reinforce our role in Atlanta's cultural landscape.

Our Goal

Increase Atlanta Contemporary's visibility and community connection by reimagining our brand identity, sharing our story with purpose, and creating deeper engagement pathways for artists, audiences, and supporters.

Key Strategies

1. Define and activate a bold, mission-aligned brand identity that reflects AC's unique role in the arts ecosystem.
2. Use storytelling to build connection and illustrate impact across audiences.
3. Cultivate AC's network of supporters through membership, partnerships, and programming.
4. Demonstrate and communicate the value of community investment to deepen trust, reinforce transparency, and ensure supporters see the impact of their engagement.

Metrics of Success

- Individual donor growth
- Membership participation
- Event attendance
- Repeat visitors
- Social media engagement
- Website traffic
- Partnership activations
- Media mentions



STRENGTHEN OUR OPERATIONS

To thrive in the years ahead, Atlanta Contemporary will invest in the people, systems, and infrastructure that sustain our mission. These strategic investments will strengthen our internal capacity, improve day-to-day operations, and prepare the organization for lasting impact.

Our Goal

Build a resilient, future-ready organization by enhancing staff structure, securing financial sustainability, and improving internal systems that support growth and adaptability.

Key Strategies

1. Expand staff capacity to support sustainability and align the team with strategic priorities.
2. Establish a multi-year fundraising development plan to ensure long-term stability and strategic flexibility.
3. Strengthen internal operations through systems and tools that support efficiency and accountability.
4. Invest in facility planning to address current needs and prepare for future growth.

Metrics of Success

- Staff retention
- Operating reserve growth
- Earned revenue growth
- Board participation



Artwork: Courtney Brooks

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

An Environmental Scan of eight national peer organizations to the Atlanta Contemporary was conducted, enabling us to better understand the existing conditions of both the organization and, to some degree, the industry more broadly. The environmental scan provides context for the strategic planning process helping to identify both challenges and opportunities.

Takeaways + Opportunities

Atlanta Contemporary is a long-standing and vital part of the region's contemporary art landscape. Despite operating with one of the smallest budgets among its peers, it offers a robust slate of programs, from artist studios to regranteeing initiatives, that set it apart both locally and nationally. However, the organization's ambitious programming outpaces its current capacity, pointing to the need for greater staff and financial resources to support sustainable growth.

Clarifying Mission & Strengthening Communications

A refreshed mission statement and website are essential next steps. A clear, compelling mission communicates Atlanta Contemporary's unique value and purpose to funders, audiences, and supporters. While the current website is visually distinctive, it lacks clarity around who the organization serves, what it offers, and how supporters can engage. A refreshed site should act as a dynamic hub for program promotion, donor engagement, and community connection.

Building a More Resilient Funding Model

Like many arts organizations of its size, Atlanta Contemporary relies heavily on grants. To ensure long-term sustainability, the organization must diversify its income—especially by growing individual giving and exploring earned revenue strategies. With an endowment already in place, developing a formal policy for its use and growth is also key to supporting future investments.

Expanding Board and Staff Capacity

The organization's lean staff and small board limit its ability to grow. Adding curatorial capacity and strengthening development staffing will support both program execution and fundraising. A board development strategy can bring in new voices, expertise, and philanthropic leadership essential to driving the next chapter.

Aligning Programs with Resources

Now is a timely moment to reassess the programmatic vision. Atlanta Contemporary should determine which programs to prioritize, how to scale them appropriately, and how to align each with the staffing and revenue needed to thrive.

With intentional planning, deeper investment in people, and clear public communication, Atlanta Contemporary can build on its legacy and ensure its future as a vital and vibrant space for contemporary art.

INTERESTED PARTIES FEEDBACK

Atlanta Contemporary engaged a diverse group of stakeholders—including artists, partners, community members, donors, and staff—through surveys, listening sessions, and one-on-one conversations. These reflections helped illuminate Atlanta Contemporary’s unique strengths, areas for growth, and opportunities to better serve its community and mission.

Support for Emerging Voices

Atlanta Contemporary is widely recognized for championing emerging and Southeastern artists. Its reputation for offering critical early opportunities has made it a trusted platform for launching creative careers.

Accessibility and Approachability

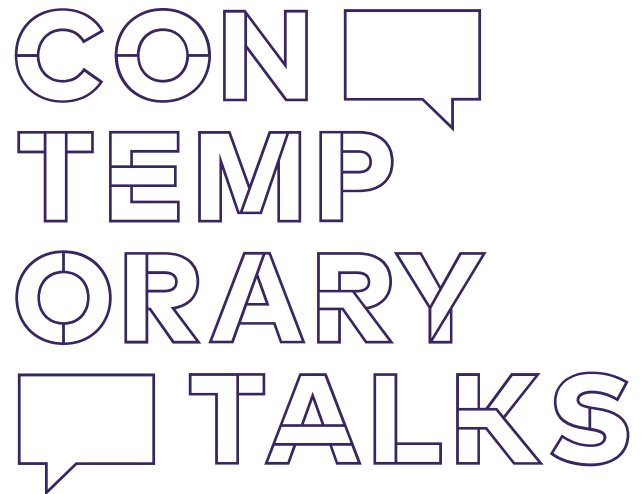
Free admission and a welcoming atmosphere are deeply valued by the community. These features reinforce the organization’s identity as an inviting space that engages curiosity without intimidation.

Commitment to Collaboration

Partners appreciate Atlanta Contemporary’s openness to shared work—whether through space, staff support, or co-produced programs. These collaborations are frequently described as generative, affirming the organization’s role as a reliable partner in the city’s creative landscape.

Need for Programmatic Cohesion

Stakeholders expressed interest in more clearly connected programming that reflects a defined curatorial voice and offers conceptual entry points for a wider audience.



Appetite for Learning and Dialogue

There is strong interest in more public-facing educational offerings - such as artist talks, lectures, and workshops - that extend beyond exhibitions and invite broader participation from Atlanta’s diverse communities.

Desire for Greater Visibility

Stakeholders envision Atlanta Contemporary playing a more active and visible role in the city’s cultural ecosystem and national art scene. Suggestions include participation in citywide events, expanded outreach, and efforts to amplify the organization’s curatorial voice.

METHODOLOGY

In March 2025, Atlanta Contemporary engaged Purpose Possible to facilitate a strategic planning process. Guided by a steering committee, we identified key questions, stakeholders to engage, and opportunities to reflect deeply on our mission and impact. Throughout the spring, Purpose Possible gathered feedback through surveys, one-on-one interviews, and an environmental scan. In late May, we convened a retreat with the full board and steering committee to explore findings and shape direction. Follow-up sessions in June allowed the committee to refine the plan's focus and finalize its core strategies. This document reflects the insights, aspirations, and shared vision that emerged through that collaborative process.

Our steering committee was made up of the following individuals:

Odessa Archibald*

Immediate Past Board Chair

James Ford-Hutchinson*

Shane Foye*

Everett Long*

Board Chair

Conrhonda E. Baker

Community Foundation for
Greater Atlanta

Donovan Johnson

Johnson Lowe Gallery

Chip Moody*

Floyd Hall

Executive Director

Alexandria Drohobyczer*

* Board member at time of plan development

Purpose Possible Consultant Team

Taryn Janelle

Saskia Benjamin



ATLANTA CONTEMPORARY

535 Means Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30318 • (404) 688-1970
atlantacontemporary.org

Artwork: Hasani Salahe (top right); From left to right: Shanequa Gay, Victoria Dugger, Nam Wan Choi