

Cale Fair used continuing education to network and learn about the art world

Director of strategic partnerships, Nuvango Gallery and Goods

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We're a concept art gallery and fashion lifestyle brand that has a retail location on Queen West. We manufacture all our products at our head office in the Junction. A traditional art gallery is located on the second floor at the Queen West location, and the main floor has all our products, which range from fashion leggings, tank tops and T-shirts to throw pillows, art prints and iPhone cases.

My job has involved overseeing the Nuvango launch, including the full renovation of the space in the Burroughes Building, hiring staff and getting things up and running. I also handle retail partnerships and collaborations - generally sales. We do a lot of white-label custom work for brands like The Bay and Red Bull as well as strategic marketing partnerships in which both brands stand to gain something.

I attended Conestoga College in Kitchener, where I took radio and television broadcasting. Seven years ago I joined the organization GelaSkins, which rebranded as Nuvango.

I'd spent four years in the radio business and felt a disconnection from that world. I took off for a year, and I could have gone freelance in the media business. But this company was starting up in Toronto and it was on the tech side, which was really interesting to me - plus there was full-time work available.

To be honest, I wondered at first if I would bounce between businesses. But this one kept growing and thriving, and I was able to work on projects with big companies from around the world. I'm just a small-town guy trying to hustle in the city, so I kept going with it.

I had more or less zero knowledge of the art world prior to joining the company. I really cut my teeth learning about art on my own accord. I had been with the company for six years, but I still knew there was more to learn.

In 2014, I was heading up artist relations for Nuvango - we're an open community for artists to create products on demand - and we were in networking mode, so I wanted to brush up on my art education. I decided to take the continuing ed program at U of T in art and art buying. There was an in-class portion, but it also included going to different art galleries and studios. It was a very casual process where the professor, Natalie Ribkoff, who's an art buyer for TD, went through the basics, taking us through the different art eras.

We were able to go places like the Heffel Gallery in Yorkville and Max Dean's studio in the east end to talk about the creative process, experiences, how artists and galleries make money and why they do what they do. Natalie gave a context for how art is bought and moved around, and then the artists talked about how they make a living.

There were a lot of people in the class who wanted to educate themselves about buying art because they were interested in it but didn't know where to start. For me, I was able to network a little bit. Given that we operate in a contemporary pop art area, it was cool to get exposure to the fine-art world.

Overall it gave me an appreciation for the art world and the scene in Toronto. There's stuff on the high-end side that is really interesting, and through my current role we get to see so many people on the ground floor hustling to build up their careers.

It just expanded my world.

<https://nowtoronto.com/lifestyle/class-action/cale-fair/>