

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Vancouver Art Gallery establishes Audain Curator of British Columbia Art

Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery announced today the appointment of curator Grant Arnold to the inaugural position of the Audain Curator of British Columbia Art, thanks to a \$2 million gift from the Audain Foundation.

The Gallery received a \$2 million gift towards its Endowment Fund from the Audain Foundation in 2004. Investment income from this gift has enabled the Gallery to establish an endowed position. This endowed curatorial position will increase research and scholarship into the art of British Columbia.

“I firmly believe in the importance of understanding our cultural heritage,” said Michael Audain, Chairman of Polygon Homes Ltd. “The Vancouver Art Gallery is the leading visual arts organization in British Columbia and I am pleased to support the Gallery’s vision to serve future generations.”

Grant Arnold will be the first Audain Curator of British Columbia Art. Arnold is currently Curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery (1992 to present), where he participates in the Gallery’s exhibition and collecting activities. He was previously Senior Curator at the Art Gallery of Windsor and Extension Coordinator at the Mendel Art Gallery. Over the past seventeen years he has organized more than thirty exhibitions of historical, modern and contemporary art.

Arnold is currently working on co-curating a retrospective of architect Arthur Erickson. His most recent work has been on the exhibitions *Real Pictures: Photography from the Collection of Claudia Beck and Andrew Gruft* (January 29 to May 29, 2005) organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and *Rodney Graham: A Little Thought* (February 5 to May 8, 2005), jointly organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the Vancouver Art Gallery. Grant Arnold will conduct a special tour of *Rodney Graham: A Little Thought* at 2pm, Sunday, March 6.

“I’m thrilled to publicly recognize the important work of the curatorial team through the establishment of the first endowed position in the history of the Gallery,” said Director Kathleen Bartels. “As an institution dedicated to excellence, we have a responsibility to continue to raise the level of scholarship and research into the art of our region. Thanks to the Audain Foundation, we are able to give greater attention to this important work.”

One of the Gallery's five core artistic values is to promote the artistic heritage of British Columbia and regionally-based artists. In recent years the Gallery has held numerous exhibitions focusing on artists from, and influenced by, this region including: *Stan Douglas (1999); Paul Wong (2002); Liz Magor (2002), E.J.Hughes (2003); Nk'mip Drawings (2003); Oliver Lang (2003); Robert Arndt (2004); and, Robert Smithson in Vancouver (2004)*. Future exhibitions are planned by the Gallery on Brian Jungen as well as a major survey, tour and website on Emily Carr.

The Gallery also presents exhibitions that examine art from this region in a broader context, highlighting common ground such as the landscape, culture, memory and identity. Recently such exhibitions have included: *Down from the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast (1998); These Days (2002); This Place: works from the collection (2002); Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art (2004); and, A Modern Life: Art and Design in British Columbia, 1945-1960 (2004)*. A major exhibition on Haida Art is currently in the planning phase.

In addition to focusing on British Columbia, the Gallery is progressively expanding its international reach and actively collaborates with other cultural institutions and prominent organizations such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and the New Museum, New York. Gallery staff also work in partnership with external curators and scholars, presently including Nicholas Olsberg (formerly of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal), Thomas Weski (Chief Curator, Haus der Kunst, Munich) and Connie Butler (Associate Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles).

The Gallery will continue to raise its level of expertise through long-term planning and consultation with leading academics and practitioners. In 2005 this will include working with Tony Bennett, (Professor of Sociology at the Open University, London), Dr. Henry Giroux (well-known cultural studies philosopher and current Global Television Network Chair in Communication Studies at McMaster University, Ontario) and Toby Jackson (Head of Public Programs and Education at the Tate Modern, London, England).

The Gallery's Endowment Fund was established in 1998 to create a permanent and predictable financial base from which to fund the Gallery's various initiatives. The Audain Foundation's \$2 million gift has raised the Endowment Fund to a total of more than \$5million (CDN). The Endowment Fund is invested in perpetuity and is managed by the Vancouver Foundation.

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