

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Vancouver Art Gallery Celebrates the Revolutionary Roots of Early Twentieth Century Canadian Painting

VANCOUVER, BC -- The **Vancouver Art Gallery** will present three exceptional exhibitions celebrating the Canadian artists who embraced the influence of European Impressionism and led the revolution in Canadian painting that followed. On view from **January 31 to April 19, 2009**, ***Legacies of Impressionism in Canada: 3 Exhibitions*** focuses on Quebec artist **Maurice Cullen**, his contemporaries and those who were influenced by them. Tracing the work of this groundbreaking group of Canadian artists, ***Maurice Cullen and His Circle***, ***Maurice Cullen: Intimist*** and ***Exploring Light: Canadian Landscape Paintings from the Collection*** present the creative output of these artists as they explored the Canadian landscape and the world beyond with new and exciting perspectives.



Maurice Galbraith Cullen
Brittany Farm, circa 1893
oil on canvas
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery,
Gift of Dr. Rodrigo A. Restrepo

Maurice Cullen and His Circle, organized by the **National Gallery of Canada**, is centred on the work of some of Canada's finest landscape painters, **Maurice Cullen, William Brymner, James Wilson Morrice** and **Edmund Morris**. Working at the turn of the twentieth century, these professional associates and good friends benefitted from mutual support and influence. The exhibition presents nearly 40 paintings created by the artists while abroad and in Canada, revealing their separate interests and styles as well as their commonalities. The exhibition also includes the work of **Robert Pilot** and **A.Y Jackson**, artists directly influenced by Cullen and his colleagues.

"The paintings in this exhibition represent an extremely important moment in Canadian art history. It is here that we see the beginnings of Canada's modernist painting tradition," said **Vancouver Art Gallery director, Kathleen Bartels**. "Nothing would ever be the same after these adventurous young artists returned to Canada full of new ideas and ways of looking at our landscape. The historic results of their travels and innovations are as significant as the works themselves are a delight to look at."

Part of an international wave of young art students who flocked to Paris between 1867 and 1914 to receive formal training, Cullen and his circle were among the first to apply the revolutionary techniques of European painting to the Canadian landscape. The four artists arrived in France from Quebec fast on the heels of Impressionism's explosive transformation of the European painting tradition. Artists Edgar Degas, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisley had already achieved considerable success and organized exhibitions of their work in Paris to great acclaim. The bright fresh colours and loose brush strokes of this new movement were highly attractive to the young Canadians, who embraced the techniques for their paintings of Paris city life, as well as the French countryside, the Netherlands, England, Italy and North Africa.

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY
750 Hornby Street,
Vancouver
www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

MEDIA CONTACT

Andrew Riley
Public Relations Manager
604-662-4722
ariley@vanartgallery.bc.ca

Dana Sullivant
Director of Marketing and
Communications
604-662-4721
dsullivant@vanartgallery.bc.ca

Although their years in France were successful, all of the artists returned to paint in Canada – with Morrice returning only for visits while maintaining a residence in Paris. Picturing the Canadian landscape through the lens of Impressionism and other techniques studied in Europe, the artists captured the country's light and atmospheric conditions in new and unique ways. The glare of snow in the sun, the enveloping white of blizzards and other uniquely Canadian subjects became the focus of the artists who strove to apply new perspectives to the northern landscape.

The companion exhibition, **Maurice Cullen: Intimist**, pays particular attention to Cullen's intimately-scaled works. The twelve exceptional paintings from a private collection include representative works from the artist's entire career, which uniquely reveal the artist's particular view of nature and European training. Differing from Cullen's larger scenic landscapes on view in the other exhibitions, **Intimist** provides a look at his smaller compositions, presenting a not often experienced side of the artist's work. Included are a turn-of-the-century view of Montreal's Saint Catherines Street, unique for its vertical orientation, and a painting of Cullen's birth place, Saint Johns, Newfoundland.

Exploring Light: Canadian Landscape Paintings from the Collection presents late 19th and early 20th century oil paintings from the Vancouver Art Gallery collection. This exhibition of work by some of Canada's most important painters provides examples of how the legacy of Impressionism melded with modernist ideas allowed a distinctly Canadian approach to painting to emerge. Through the work of such artists as **Emily Carr, Maurice Cullen, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson** and **James Wilson Morrice**, the exhibition reveals the important influence of European painting on the creation of the modernist view of the Canadian landscape.