
Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG)

Associate Director & Chief Curator

With a dramatic expansion program underway, VAG seeks a curatorial visionary with experience presenting and shaping diverse contemporary and modern art collections, and a track record for groundbreaking exhibitions.

The Vancouver Art Gallery has embarked on a dramatic paradigm-shifting transformation and expansion that responds to Vancouver as a cosmopolitan city at the nexus of diverse communities, cultures and interests. The curatorial team will continue to build on the museum's internationally aspirational and acclaimed exhibitions of historical and contemporary art from Vancouver and beyond.

The museum seeks an innovator who will:

- lead an accomplished team of staff and guest curators,
- develop exhibitions of art and visual culture that reveal a commitment to scholarship through publications and innovative interpretation methods,
- shape experiences of art that excite and transform the perspectives of the museum visitors and the international art world by presenting ideas that challenge and encourage dialogue,
- engage artists, collectors, gallerists, academics, free-lance curators and others in enhancing VAG's collections and in developing its exhibition program.

In close collaboration with the Director, the Chief Curator and the curatorial team will bring Vancouver's finest visual art to the world and the world's finest visual art to Vancouver.

BACKGROUND

The Vancouver Art Gallery is the largest art museum in Western Canada, with a collection of over 11,000 works representing the most comprehensive resource for visual culture in British Columbia. Established in 1931, the collection continually grows through purchases and donations: it boasts over 200 seminal works by painter Emily Carr and other Canadian modernists from the Group of Seven to the Quebec Automatistes; a foundational collection of photography; the Lawrence Weiner Archive; Jeff Wall, Ian Wallace, Rodney Graham, Stan Douglas and others who defined Vancouver photo-conceptualism; a strong collection of pop and conceptual art; and diverse works by subsequent generations of contemporary artists. While the collection is internationally recognized for its art of British Columbia, the collection also includes distinctive strengths of contemporary and historical works by North American, European and Asian artists. The founding of the Institute of Asian Art at VAG reflects the importance of Vancouver's diverse Asian communities as well as VAG's commitment to building collections of the contemporary art of China, Japan, Korean and India in particular. Acquisitions of works by Mariko Mori, Fiona Tan, Eikoh Hosoe, O Zhang, Song Dong and Wang Jianwei to name a few indicate VAG's commitment to this initiative.

VAG's acclaimed exhibitions have been presented in a former provincial courthouse for the last 34 years, and in 2021 the Vancouver Art Gallery will relocate to a new purpose-built museum designed by internationally renowned architects Herzog & de Meuron. This is the firm's first museum project in Canada. Gallery space will double to 85,000 sq. ft. and total area will

comprise over 310,000 sq. ft. that includes a 40,000 sq ft open-air public courtyard where visitors are protected from the weather, 23,000 sq ft of classroom and studio spaces, a 350 seat theatre, library/archives, a restaurant, shop, vault and the museological infrastructure required of today's museums.

The museum presents a vibrant schedule of changing historical and contemporary exhibitions (currently 16 – 20 annually), the majority of which are organized by VAG curatorial staff, and on occasion by commissioned artists or guest curators. Select exhibitions that respond to specific programmatic needs are borrowed by VAG from leading international museums. Internationally renowned artists who have been featured at the VAG include Lee Bul, Douglas Gordon, Thomas Gursky, Bharti Kher, KimSooja as well as historical figures such as Paul Cezanne, Claude Monet and Pablo Picasso. About 600,000 people annually visit the museum and attendance is expected to climb to over 1 million visitors after the new museum's opening. VAG currently employs 200 staff with a curatorial department of 16. Over 400 docents and volunteers support VAG's mission in various ways. With the opening of the new Vancouver Art Gallery in 2021, the current C\$ 18m annual operating budget is projected to increase to C\$30m and the staff complement is expected to increase by about one third.

Vancouver is the largest city in British Columbia, with an urban population of over 600,000 and a greater metro area population of over 2.4 million (the 3rd most populous region in Canada). The city itself is the 4th most densely populated in North America, although 3/4 of people in Metro Vancouver live outside of the city proper. Metro Vancouver's population is diverse: about 3% of residents are of First Nations ancestry, 53% of British and European origin, and 30% of Asian ethnicities. Canada prides itself on being a mosaic of cultures that together celebrate cultural individuality and diversity. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Global Liveability Ranking which scores 140 cities on five lifestyle categories, six of the top 10 livable cities in the world are in Australia and Canada. Vancouver is ranked #3.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The new Chief Curator will play a pivotal role in shaping and implementing the museum's curatorial approach to presenting the finest visual art of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and the world to museum visitors. This will be accomplished primarily through innovative exhibitions, interpretation and publications, as well as through original research and strategic enhancement of collections.

Reporting to the Director, primary responsibilities of the Chief Curators will include:

- Work with the Director and members of the curatorial team to establish the direction, goals and priorities for the VAG's collections, acquisitions, exhibitions, research, publications and interpretation based on the institution's core artistic values.
- Present an agreed upon program of permanent collection installations and VAG curated historical and contemporary exhibitions as well as those organized in collaboration with or by other institutions. Manage the process of exhibition development in collaboration with colleagues throughout the institution, including a robust publications program of 8-10 books, brochures and digital publications annually, and an active regional, national and international touring exhibition program.
- Develop a systematic plan to strengthen VAG's collections through strategic acquisitions of historical and contemporary works, long-term loans and be responsible for it through

scholarly research and conservation initiatives. Assess the aesthetic and historical importance of artists and specific works, including the authenticity, provenance, condition and importance of works within a art history. With the Director, conduct acquisition negotiations, assuring that all appropriate standards and procedures for such acquisitions are followed.

- Enhance and expand the museum's international network and partnerships with museums, collectors, artists, curators, academics and other stakeholders relevant to VAG's collection and exhibition program. The emphasis will be on identifying opportunities to exchange exhibition projects, loans and expertise; acquisition of new works; and cultivating and securing patronage for the museum for specific art initiatives in collaboration with the museum's development staff. To this end, the Chief Curator will serve on appropriate committees, juries and teams to assert VAG's ongoing leadership.
- Collaborate with the Engagement & Strategic Initiatives staff to develop education and public programs and events that align with the exhibition schedule, with an emphasis on engaging, complex and immersive art experiences.
- As work on the new Herzog & de Meuron building advances, provide appropriate planning, support and consultation to shape the displays, utilization of galleries and other spaces; protect and install art, etc.
- Serve as an advocate and representative for VAG's mission, exhibitions, publications, research, programs and collection, ensuring that the museum's reputation for innovation and scholarship are continually advanced; sustain a local and international reputation and profile through publishing, lecturing, participating in symposia, membership in professional organizations, and other pertinent activities.
- Prepare departmental budgets, staffing plans, professional development plans and periodic reports on exhibitions, the collections, acquisitions, etc.
- Contribute directly to the exhibition program, collections research and publications, advancing the VAG's innovation and scholarship.
- Cultivate an internationally respected, high functioning team of staff and manage the department's annual work plans and day-to-day activities.

QUALIFICATIONS and PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will:

- Have substantial experience working in institutions with extensive collections and a demonstrated track record of curating and organizing compelling and scholarly exhibitions, including nationally and internationally travelling shows; experience with both historical and contemporary as well as Asian art is preferred; established Canadian and international networks and knowledge of diverse contemporary art forms and Indigenous art is highly desirable.
- Have an advanced degree in art history or cultural studies, with an appropriate specialty in art that is relevant to the Vancouver Art Gallery. A Masters degree is required as is significant exhibition experience and published writing. An understanding of present-day technologies and their application in the museum context would be advantageous.

- Be an outcome-oriented, hard worker with high energy and initiative; a “doer” with willingness to work hands-on; experience in program evaluation, planning and management are essential.
- Be a mission-driven individual with a commitment to VAG’s core values and transformative goals, open to experimentation and thinking “outside the box”; predisposed to juxtaposing ideas and objects in new and unexpected ways, including across disciplines, incorporating different realms of creativity beyond the visual arts and identifying links between the historical and contemporary.
- Be a good listener and strategist; comfortable receiving input from many sources, and able to analyze and formulate disparate information into sound, well-organized goals, strategies and actions; a partner able to flexibly collaborate with people and organizations with diverse expertise, experience, cultures and personalities; a tactful negotiator; exceptional written and oral communication skills.
- Excellent administration, organizational and budgetary skills.
- An emotionally mature individual with strong self-awareness and a good sense of humour.

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