

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, January 13, 2002

E.J. Hughes
January 30 to June 8, 2003



Images Left to Right: E.J. Hughes, *Steamer Arriving at Nanaimo*, 1950, oil on canvas private collection, E.J. Hughes, *Indian Church, North Vancouver*, 1947, oil on canvas, private collection, E.J. Hughes, *Coastal Boats Near Sidney, B.C.* 1948, oil on canvas, College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia.

Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery starts the new year with a major retrospective honouring the work of British Columbian landscape painter E.J. Hughes. A true son of British Columbia, Hughes’ stylized realism has earned him a unique place in the history of Canadian art. Opening on Thursday, January 30, the exhibition includes work from the 1930’s to 2000 and highlights evocative symbols of life on the west coast—ferries crossing the Georgia Strait, picturesque fishing villages and farm houses, flaming arbutus trees and imposing coastal mountains.

Hughes remarkable career as an artist, which continues to this day, spans 70 years and encompasses his work as a gifted printmaker, successful muralist, outstanding Canadian war artist and prolific painter. His paintings depict land, sea and small moments of daily life with a rare clarity and vividness. Hughes has a distinguished reputation for work underscored by a passion for the beauty of the west coast of Canada.

“Hughes is at his best depicting British Columbia’s unique beauty” said Ian Thom, Senior Historical Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery. “Hughes has a deep affection for the British Columbian landscape and a vision that is unmistakably his own.”

Despite the changing face of the visual arts, Hughes has remained steadfast in his exploration of a unique and personal approach to realism. The artist’s distinct style, marked by the use of flattened space, skewed perspective and simplified shapes, defies parallels with other artists or easy categorization within artistic genres.

“The Vancouver Art Gallery first exhibited the work of E.J. Hughes in 1935, acquired its first Hughes painting in 1949 and organized the first retrospective of his work in 1967,” said Kathleen Bartels, Director, Vancouver Art Gallery. “It is therefore a great privilege for the Gallery to produce the largest exhibition of his work to date.”

The Vancouver Art Gallery has the most significant holding of E.J. Hughes’ work in public hands. It is also the only public collection that contains a complete record of the development of a painting from sketch, to cartoon to final canvas. This exhibition offers visitors the first retrospective look at E.J. Hughes’ work in more than 20 years.

Born in North Vancouver in 1913, E.J. Hughes studied under Charles H. Scott, Jock Macdonald and Frederick Varley at the Vancouver School of Applied Art and Design. After graduating in 1933, and following two years of post-graduate studies, Hughes undertook print and mural projects with fellow art students. In 1939, Hughes joined the military and spent six years expanding his artistic skills as an official war artist. After his discharge from the military in 1946 he returned to the west coast of Canada, settled in Shawnigan Lake on Vancouver Island with wife Fern Smith and began a lifelong study of the province and its landscape as a professional artist.

Always a quiet achiever, Hughes was the inaugural recipient of an Emily Carr Scholarship on the recommendation of Group of Seven member Lawren Harris. By 1951, Hughes was represented in public collections in Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver—an achievement unparalleled by his contemporaries at the time. For more than thirty-five years he was represented by Max Stern of the Dominion Gallery in Montreal. In 2001, E.J. Hughes received the Order of Canada. His achievements and rare success are due to his singular approach to representing Canada with passion and originality.

E.J. Hughes lives on Vancouver Island where he continues to refine his vision of life in the place that has been his home and inspiration for 90 years.

The *E.J. Hughes* exhibition is curated by Ian Thom, Senior Historical Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery and the national authority on E.J. Hughes' practice. Ian Thom is also the author of a new publication, entitled *E.J. Hughes*, which accompanies the exhibition and was co-published with Douglas and McIntyre. The exhibition will travel to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in November 2003 and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria in February 2004.

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When: January 30 to June 8, 2003

Where: Vancouver Art Gallery
750 Hornby Street
Vancouver BC V6Z 2H7

Hours: **Winter hours** (October 21, 2002 to April 20, 2003)
Closed Mondays, Tuesday to Sunday & Holidays 10am to 5.30pm
Thursdays 10am to 9pm

Summer hours (From April 21 to October 13, 2003)
Monday to Sunday & Holidays 10am to 5.30pm
Thursdays 10am to 9pm

Admission: Adults \$12.50
Seniors \$9.00
Students \$8.00
Children (12 & under) Free
Family \$30 (2 adults, 2 children, 13 years +)
Thursday evening suggested donation \$5.00

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Images: Digital images for professional media use are available at the Vancouver Art Gallery's FTP site (<ftp://ftp1-vag@vanartgallery.bc.ca>). Contact Julie-Ann Backhouse, 604 662 4722, for password access. CD also available on request.

Major Sponsors:



The Vancouver Art Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, the Government of Canada through the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage Museum Assistance Program, the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the Vancouver Arts Stabilization Program (VAST) and the Gerald and Sheahan McGavin Capital Grants to the Arts.