

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



William Shakespeare's First Folio published in 1623 gifted to UBC Library and now on display at the Vancouver Art Gallery

*Special exhibition on view for a limited time
from January 15 to March 20, 2022*

January 12, 2022, VANCOUVER, BC// Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw) and Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔ) Nations.

For All Time: The Shakespeare FIRST FOLIO celebrates the University of British Columbia Library's recent acquisition of a complete first edition of William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies—an extremely rare book published in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death and credited with preserving almost half of his plays.

UBC acquired the First Folio, formerly owned by a private collector in the U.S., through Christie's New York with funding provided by a consortium of donors from across North America and with the generous support of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The opportunity to purchase a First Folio arose in early 2021. Katherine Kalsbeek, head of rare books and special collections (RBSC) at UBC Library, knew that with so few copies left in private

hands the library had to act. “The First Folio is a cornerstone of English literature and with this donation, we are able to bring this cultural treasure into public ownership,” Kalsbeek said. “Adding a First Folio to the UBC Library collection represents a milestone in terms of our development as both a library and as a university.”

“Preserving this precious book in UBC Library makes it accessible for future generations, inspires new knowledge, and furthers our commitment to engage in world-class research in the arts and humanities,” said Santa J. Ono, UBC president and vice-chancellor.

In partnership with the Vancouver Art Gallery, this tangible piece of cultural heritage will be exhibited to the public starting January 15, 2022 along with three subsequent seventeenth-century Folio editions of Shakespeare's plays, marking the first time all four Folios have been displayed in Vancouver.

“We are thrilled to co-present and host this capsule exhibition of the Folios at Vancouver Art Gallery. This project fits with the Gallery’s history of projects that explore the intersections of disciplines, media and popular culture; and places art in broader cultural contexts,” shares Anthony Kiendl, Vancouver Art Gallery CEO and Gallery Director. “The Gallery serves as an essential site in our community for us to come together, learn and discuss the ideas of our times—and Shakespeare’s work has provoked centuries of debate. This provides a compelling opportunity to come together with our partners and create something that none of us could accomplish singlehandedly on our own.”

The First Folio, as it's also recognized, includes 36 of Shakespeare’s 38 known plays, edited by his close friends, fellow writers and actors. It is the first collected edition of Shakespeare’s plays and the foundation of his enduring legacy and reputation. When Shakespeare died in 1616, only about half of his works had appeared in print. Eighteen plays—including *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *Julius Caesar*—remained unpublished in any form. The First Folio thus not only gave us their first appearance in print but was also the means by which they were preserved and passed on to posterity.

Cultural properties of the First Folio’s magnitude and capacity to engage the public’s imagination are not evenly distributed around the world. Of the estimated 235 copies that remain worldwide, there is only one other copy in Toronto, Canada. UBC’s acquisition of a First Folio, now on display at the Vancouver Art Gallery, provides great public access to one of the world’s greatest English language cultural treasures.

“Having the book here in Vancouver on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh people allows us to do what scholars around the world have been doing for a while now, and that is to think about Shakespeare's work in place-based terms,” shared Dr. Patricia Badir, professor of English and head of the department of English language and literatures, UBC. “The book’s presence here will provide us with opportunities to think about how Shakespeare's works have been agents of colonialism and provoke us to think about the ways in which Shakespeare's plays can help us think through local iterations of global questions about sexuality and gender, religious tolerance, politics and power, race and social justice, and even climate justice.”

For All Time will be accompanied by an audio mobile guide featuring the voice of Founding Artistic Director, Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival Christopher Gaze.

The Vancouver Art Gallery will also launch a three-part webinar series on William Shakespeare’s plays. In 1606, during an outbreak of the bubonic plague when theatres were shuttered in England, Shakespeare wrote three of his most famous tragedies: *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In recognition of the cyclical nature of history and our own global pandemic situation, the Vancouver Art Gallery focuses on these plays during our 2022 webinar series ***Contemporary Shakespeare*** in collaboration with UBC and with Bard on the Beach.

Upcoming public programs include:

King Lear – Wednesday, January 26, 2022 at 12 pm

Macbeth – Wednesday, February 23, 2022 at 12 pm

Antony and Cleopatra – Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 12 pm

For further information, please visit vanartgallery.bc.ca/events.



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Arts
Library

Major Sponsor

The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation

Community Partner

Bard on the Beach

Media Partners

Global BC

Vancouver Sun

For All Time: The Shakespeare First Folio is co-organized by the University of British Columbia and the Vancouver Art Gallery and is curated by Gregory Mackie, Associate Professor of English and Norman Colbeck Curator, UBC Library Rare Books and Special Collections, and Katherine Kalsbeek, Head, UBC Library Rare Books and Special Collections.

Image credit: UBC Library Communications

-30-

MEDIA CONTACT:

Larah Luna, Director of Marketing and Communications

lluna@vanartgallery.bc.ca 788.939.4319

ABOUT UBC

The University of British Columbia is a global centre for research and teaching, consistently ranked among the top 20 public universities in the world. Since 1915, UBC's entrepreneurial spirit has embraced innovation and challenged the status quo. UBC encourages its students, staff and faculty to challenge convention, lead discovery and explore new ways of learning. At UBC, bold thinking is given a place to develop into ideas that can change the world.

ABOUT VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is given to the accomplishments of Indigenous

artists, as well as to those of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art founded in 2014. The Gallery's exhibitions also explore the impact of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a charitable not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səɫilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and to the work of the Gallery.

vanartgallery.bc.ca

Facebook: @VancouverArtGallery

Twitter: @VanArtGallery

Instagram: @VanArtGallery