

The Vancouver Art Gallery Receives Significant Gift of Artwork by Contemporary Artist Guud san glans Robert Davidson from the Entwistle Family

The gift includes 23 works spanning 30 years, deepening the Gallery's holdings of this pivotal Haida artist



September 4, 2025, VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the x̣ẉṃə̣θ̣ḳẉə̣ỵə̣m (Musqueam), Ṣḳẉx̣ẉụ́7̣mesh (Squamish) and ṣə̣ḷiḷẉə̣ṭạł (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

The Vancouver Art Gallery today announced a significant donation of 23 works by celebrated Haida artist **Guud san glans Robert Davidson** (b. 1946) from TELUS President and CEO **Darren Entwistle** and his family. Davidson, the great-grandson of artist Charles Edenshaw and a protégé of Haida master Bill Reid, is widely recognized for revitalizing Northwest Coast artistic traditions through contemporary interpretation.

“Guud san glans Robert Davidson is among the most influential artists working in Canada and beyond,” says **Eva Respini**, Interim Co-CEO and Curator at Large at the Vancouver Art Gallery. “This remarkable gift from the Entwistle family significantly strengthens our holdings of Davidson’s work. Each painting and sculpture offers a lens into what Davidson has termed a ‘contemporary-traditional’ aesthetic that spans decades. We are honoured to steward these vital works and excited to share them with the public.”

“Through the donation of these major works of art by acclaimed Haida artist Guud san glans Robert Davidson that we have collected over the past 25 years, my family and I are honoured to deepen our support of the Vancouver Art Gallery and publicly accessible art for our fellow Canadians,” says **Darren Entwistle**. “Our passion for art emanates from my Father who first started collecting Indigenous art in the 1950s as he was building Canada’s nationwide telecommunications network in some of our country’s northern most regions. Our love for the paintings of Robert Davidson reflects the innovative

artistry, breathtaking aesthetic and insightful meaning inherent in the creations of this enormously talented artist. It also mirrors the nature-positive attributes and potent environmental sustainability story that is exemplified in the TELUS brand that I have spent the past 25 years of my professional life helping build within our communities, alongside my passionate TELUS colleagues. My family and I appreciate and respect the important way in which First Nations' art pays homage to our country's nature-based heritage and advances the beauty of our diverse cultural composition in such an engaging manner. We are grateful to know that the Vancouver Art Gallery will ensure these inspiring and powerful works are studied, celebrated and preserved for the benefit of our citizens and future generations."

The Vancouver Art Gallery has been exhibiting Davidson's work from the outset of his career, beginning in 1967 with his inclusion in the groundbreaking survey of Northwest Coast art, *Arts of the Raven*. Other highlights include a major mid-career survey in 1993, *Eagle of the Dawn*, and a 2023 exhibition of his graphic works from the 1960s to the present, *Guud san glans Robert Davidson: A Line That Bends But Does Not Break*.

"This gift allows us to fill an important gap in our collection of Davidson's two-dimensional works that became evident when my colleague Mandy Ginson and I were working on *A Line That Bends But Does Not Break*," says **Richard Hill**, the Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art. "At that time, in 2023, we held a comprehensive representation of his career up to the mid 1990s, but the period of the past several decades in which he has experimented boldly and brilliantly with the traditional forms of Haida design was missing. We hoped that our exhibition might inspire a few donations from this period, but we never dared hope that we could fill that gap with the donation of a single major collection. We are extremely grateful and absolutely thrilled."

The gift comprises a dynamic selection of original paintings, masks and two-dimensional works that significantly strengthen the Gallery's collection with 15 important works from the twenty-first century—a period of notable transformation in Robert Davidson's practice.

"This gift is deeply meaningful to me. Art has always been our way of recording history and carrying forward the voices of our ancestors. To know that these works will be cared for by the Vancouver Art Gallery is important because it ensures our stories and spirit will continue to live and inspire future generations," says **Guud san glans Robert Davidson**. "What excites me most about this collection is that it encompasses 30 years of my work and showcases my journey into modern abstractions where I began to break formline into its most simple form. The breadth and depth of this group of works depicts the resilience and richness of our culture and the evolution of my own work over the years. I am grateful to the Entwistle family for this generous donation."

In the early 2000s, Davidson began to move beyond symmetrical compositions, embracing a broader use of colour and form, as seen in *Halibut Halibut Halibut* (2000) and the painted drum *Second Variation on Tri Neg Drum* (2001). By the mid-2000s, his work evolved toward abstraction and minimalism, while continuing to draw from the Haida visual language. Works such as *Chief of the Underworld* (2006) and *Sea Anemone* (2008) reflect this shift, emphasizing individual figures, larger forms and a two-tone palette.

More recent works, including *Whirlpool Kwaa K'iilee* (2018) and *Whimsical* (2018), demonstrate a continuing interest in detailed and figurative expression in a fluid, graphic style. This is further exemplified in *Diving Killer Whale* (2019), which merges the clarity of formal reductivism with the complexity of Davidson's evolving aesthetic. Both *Diving Killer Whale* (2019) and *Halibut Halibut Halibut*

(2000) will be featured in the exhibition *We who have known tides*, opening Nov 7 at the Vancouver Art Gallery. This is an exciting opportunity for audiences to witness these significant works firsthand.

TELUS's decades-long relationship with Indigenous art, including commissioning installations for TELUS Garden, underscores its ongoing role as a champion of British Columbia's cultural heritage. This latest donation by Darren Entwistle and his family further amplifies this legacy by enhancing public access to significant Northwest Coast artworks.

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Images:

Robert Davidson, *Portrait of an Eagle Transforming*, 1989, gouache on paper, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the Entwistle Family

Robert Davidson, *Halibut Halibut Halibut*, 2000, gouache on paper, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the Entwistle Family

Robert Davidson, *Whirlpool Kwaa K'iilee*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the Entwistle Family

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ABOUT ROBERT DAVIDSON

Robert Charles Davidson (b. 1946, Hydaburg, AK), known by his Haida name *G̱uud san glans* ("Eagle of the Dawn"), is a leading figure in the renaissance of Haida art. His early artistic education was provided by his father and paternal grandfather who taught him how to carve argillite when he was 13. He served an 18-month apprenticeship under Haida master Bill Reid from 1966 to 1967, and studied design, painting, pottery and sculpture at the Vancouver School of Art from 1969 to 1970. Over the course of his 50-year career, Davidson's diverse production has encompassed monumental wood carvings, bronze sculpture, paintings, prints, drawings and jewelry. His work has consistently engaged with the histories and traditions of creative production on the Northwest Coast, while also further developing and refining the aesthetic language of Haida art.

Davidson has been exhibiting his work since the early 1970s. Solo exhibitions have been organized by the Museum of Vancouver (1971); Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver (1979); Maple Ridge Art Gallery (1983); Arthur Ross Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (1992); Vancouver Art Gallery (1993, 2022); Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, Portland (1998); Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver travelling to McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg; McCord Museum, Montréal; and National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2004–07); Kelowna Art Gallery (2005); Surrey Art Gallery (2010); Seattle Art Museum travelling to the National Museum of the American Indian, New York (2013–14) and Gordon Smith Gallery, North Vancouver (2015).

Davidson's work has also been included in numerous group exhibitions including presentations at the Vancouver Art Gallery (1983, 1998, 2006, 2020, 2021); Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa (1988); Charles H. Scott Gallery, Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design, Vancouver (1989, 1994); National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (1991, 1992) and the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver (1999), amongst others.

Davidson has also participated in numerous exhibitions at commercial galleries who represent his work such as Douglas Reynolds Gallery, Spirit Wrestler Gallery and Coastal Peoples Fine Arts Gallery, Vancouver. He has been the recipient of honorary degrees from the University of Victoria (1992); Simon Fraser University, Burnaby (1994); and Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver (1998), as well as honours and awards including the National Aboriginal Achievement Award (1995); the Order of Canada (1996), the Governor General's Award for Visual Arts (2010) and the Audain Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts (2010).

Davidson's work can be found in the public collections of Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; Glenbow Museum, Calgary; Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; Seattle Art Museum and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

ABOUT THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931 on the ancestral and unceded territories of the x̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's celebrated 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 Centre for Global Asias (formerly 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 Gallery's new Art of Wellbeing lab furthers its commitment to community by promoting the role of art in fostering health and wellbeing. Developed in collaboration with healthcare professionals, researchers and Indigenous Elders, the lab creates opportunities for individuals to engage with art in ways that support mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Committed to inclusivity and accessibility, the Gallery welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to share perspectives, build community and shape our collective future through art.

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 B.C. Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.