

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Big Picture

March 15 to September 1, 2003



Image: **Cindy Sherman**, *Untitled #66*, 1980,
chromogenic print, Vancouver Art Gallery Major Purchase
and Acquisition Funds

Vancouver, BC – Opening at the Vancouver Art Gallery on March 15, *The Big Picture: Recent Acquisition from the Collection of Alison & Alan Schwartz*, presents inspiring photo-based work by some of the world's leading contemporary artists.

The Big Picture, based on the Gallery's recent \$3.5-million (CDN) acquisition, brings together work from 20 highly regarded European, British and North American artists including Matthew Barney, Lothar Baumgarten, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Rineke Dijkstra, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Dan Graham, Andreas Gursky, Jenny Holzer, Louise Lawler, Gabriel Orozco, Thomas Ruff, Thomas Schütte, Cindy Sherman, Thomas Struth, Jeff Wall and Rachel Whiteread.

At a point in history where lens-based imagery pervades the visual arts, *The Big Picture* provides a timely overview of contemporary photographic practices. The exhibition includes a total of 75 photo-based works ranging in scale from intimate to monumental and focuses on two aspects of contemporary image-making: the photograph as a record of life and the photograph as a fictive medium. Produced between the late-1960s and 2001, the work in *The Big Picture* is located at the convergence of photojournalism, fashion photography, street photography, photoconceptualism and digital photography.

"*The Big Picture* is an exhibition with global reach, drawing together powerful images from some of the world's most recognized photo-based artists," said Kathleen Bartels, Director, Vancouver Art Gallery. "Thanks to the generosity of Alison and Alan Schwartz, the Gallery's collection is now one of the most comprehensive photo-based collections in North America and we are pleased to present our most recent acquisition to the public for the very first time."

The Big Picture captures rare perspectives on the contemporary world and explores how the individual, society and the landscape are represented through the lens. The images portray streetscapes, built environments, fictional scenarios and fragile moments in individual lives. The works reference and reinterpret art history, architecture, advertising and popular culture. From hypnotic to provocative, somber to spirited, *The Big Picture* highlights photography's ability to both document and fictionalize the world in which we live.

"This acquisition represents a perfect alignment of the collecting goals of the Vancouver Art Gallery and those of one of Canada's most thoughtful and acute collectors of contemporary art," said Bruce Grenville, Senior Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery.

The recent addition to the collection represents the most significant acquisition by the Gallery in over 50 years and has laid the foundation for the Gallery to establish itself as the leading centre for the exhibition and study of photo-based art. The acquisition includes a total of 62 works by 16 internationally acclaimed artists from the collection of Alison and Alan Schwartz. The acquisition is valued at \$3.5-million (CDN).

Since the early eighties, the Vancouver Art Gallery has been actively acquiring photography and photo-based art from internationally renowned artists, particularly Vancouver artists. For this reason, *The Big Picture* includes additional works by Bernd and Hilla Becher, Rodney Graham, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff, Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall and Ian Wallace already in the permanent collection. These existing holdings, together with the new acquisition, form an exhibition of photo-based work with extraordinary scope and depth.

Alan Schwartz is an internationally respected collector and an executive at Yorkton Securities in Toronto. He is a member of the Alfred Stieglitz Society at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and was a Vice President of the Board of Trustees of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Mr. Schwartz's decision to disperse part of his collection demonstrates, in a single gesture, a spirit of Canadian generosity that will be a cultural legacy for generations.

The artists represented in *The Big Picture* are highly sought after by international dealers and collectors in Europe, Britain and North America. Together they represent some of the most outstanding creative minds working in the realm of photo-based art over recent decades. Their global relevance and status is reflected in the calibre of galleries exhibiting their work. A selection of current exhibitions include—Jeff Wall, solo exhibition at UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (January 11 to April 13, 2003); Thomas Struth, major retrospective at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (February 4 to May 18, 2003); Matthew Barney, *The Cremaster Cycle* at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (February 21 to June 11, 2003); Rachel Whiteread as part of *Days Like These: Tate Triennial Exhibition of Contemporary British Art 2003* at the Tate Modern, London (February 26 to May 26, 2003). A retrospective of the work of Thomas Ruff will also be held at the Tate Modern, London (May 9 to July 6, 2003).

The Big Picture is curated by Bruce Grenville, Senior Curator and Melanie O'Brian, Assistant Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery. A media preview will be held at the Vancouver Art Gallery on Wednesday, March 12 at 11am. Bruce Grenville, Senior Curator, will lead a curator's tour of *The Big Picture* on Sunday, March 23 at 2pm. All works in *The Big Picture* are part of the Vancouver Art Gallery's permanent collection.

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