

May 9, 2003

## Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art

Seattle, May 9, 2003— Four institutions, five curators and 33 artists come together across 2,400 miles to present *Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art* ("*B2V*"), opening this fall at the Seattle Art Museum (Oct. 9, 2003, through Jan. 4, 2004) and traveling to the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego in January 2004, Vancouver Art Gallery in June 2004 and the CCAC Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco in October 2004. *B2V* explores a revealing and animated selection of recent art created on the western edge of North America, stretching from Baja California, Mexico, to the United States and Canada. Unlike regional biennials, *B2V* is a tightly focused survey of representational artworks that respond to and engage with the West Coast's physical and social landscapes. The exhibition features approximately 33 artists—both established and emerging figures on the art scene—and includes several new pieces commissioned especially for the exhibition.

Though Los Angeles and, more recently, Vancouver have become internationally recognized art centers, the West Coast of North America has never before been the subject of a major survey exhibition. *B2V* will focus on recently made work (produced within the last two to four years) in a wide range of media, including painting, sculpture, installation, photography, drawing, video, text pieces, web-based works and performance. The exhibition includes established artists Stan Douglas, Roy McMakin, Marcos Ramirez and Larry Sultan and emerging artists such as Chris Johansen and Michelle O'Marah.

The artists in the exhibition are interested in popular forms and genres, from landscape and portraiture to vernacular signage and music videos. Their work thoughtfully reinterprets myths and reexamines histories related to West Coast cultures as diverse as the First Nations of British Columbia and the contemporary youth tribes of Los Angeles and San Francisco. The exhibition invokes patterns of immigration in the region as well as utopian visions of the "good life" and the unique topography of West Coast cities—part urban, part suburban and part wilderness. The art in *B2V* not only embodies a range of West Coast sensibilities, it also offers revealing portraits of the people and places on the western rim of North America and presents evidence of creative collaborations and shared aesthetic concerns among artists living and working in the region.

The *B2V* curatorial team consists of Ralph Rugoff, Director, and Matthew Higgs, Curator, CCAC Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts; Toby Kamps, Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Lisa Corrin, Deputy Director, Seattle Art Museum; and Daina Augaitis, Chief Curator/Associate Director, Vancouver Art Gallery. The five curators present an articulate case for the need to redefine regionalism in art centers and to expand regionalism beyond ideas of national identity.

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*B2V* will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog featuring the artists and their works. In addition to a lead essay by Ralph Rugoff and entries by the other curators, the publication will include essays by Matthew Coolidge, Director of the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Los Angeles; Douglas Coupland, an artist, novelist and cultural essayist based in Vancouver; Matthew Stadler, a Portland-based novelist and literary editor of NEST magazine; and Torolab, a Tijuana-based architecture and design consortium, on the themes of art and life on the West Coast of North America.

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This exhibition has been organized by the Seattle Art Museum; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Vancouver Art Gallery; and CCAC Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts.

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