

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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VANCOUVER ART GALLERY CELEBRATES 75TH YEAR WITH PERMANENT COLLECTION EXHIBITION SERIES AND WEB PUBLICATION

VANCOUVER, BC — On **February 4**, the **Vancouver Art Gallery** will launch the first installment of a yearlong series of exhibitions celebrating the history and diversity of the Gallery's permanent collection. The first of four exhibitions, ***75 Years of Collecting: British Masters, Group of Seven and Pop Icons*** will be on display until **May 14** and draws on the nearly 9,000 works in the Gallery's collection representing more than two centuries of art making. A web-based publication accompanies the exhibition and is available online and through electronic kiosks in the exhibition space. The first of its kind at the Gallery, the online publication allows users to delve deeply into the history of selected works and learn how they came into the Vancouver Art Gallery's permanent collection.

The ***75 Years of Collecting*** exhibition series presents the collection from many perspectives allowing the Gallery to configure the collection in new and unexpected ways. Each of the four exhibitions will include narratives that have informed the growth of the collection. ***75 Years of Collecting: British Masters, Group of Seven and Pop Icons*** focuses on three areas: works purchased with the Founders' Fund, Group of Seven works and donated works.

Established in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery began to build its permanent collection with the Founders' Fund, the generous gift of eleven donors led by businessman H.A. Stone, the first president of the Vancouver Art Gallery Association. Stone, along with Charles H. Scott, an artist and director of the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, travelled to Europe in the spring of 1931 to purchase art for the Gallery's collection. The result of their expedition was seen at the Gallery's opening exhibition in October 1931, where virtually all of the 55 paintings, 33 watercolours, four sculptures, and 23 prints and drawings on exhibit had been purchased by Scott and Stone.

Over the following two years, the Founders' Fund was used to purchase more than 140 works, including late 18th, 19th and early 20th century works by British artists Frank Brangwyn, Edward Burne-Jones, David Cox, George Morland, Alfred James Munnings, J.M.W. Turner and David Wilkie. By 1951, more than 150 works were purchased with the Fund.

A significant number of works in the Founders' Fund collection also represent a commitment to the acquisition of Canadian art and the emergence of a recognizable national style, characterized by the work of the Group of Seven and their contemporaries. A.Y. Jackson's *Road to St. Fidele*, acquired by the Gallery in 1932, marks the first acquisition of work by the esteemed group of Canadian painters. In the years that followed, works by Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. Macdonald and Frederick Varley were added to the collection. Other early Canadian painters from the permanent collection and presented in this exhibition include Emily Carr, Henrietta Mabel May, Tom Thomson and Elizabeth Wyn Wood.

75 Years of Collecting: British Masters, Group of Seven and Pop Icons also includes key works of art donated to the Gallery over the past 75 years. As a not-for-profit institution, the Gallery is reliant on the generous support of donors. The extraordinary body of work displayed in this section reveals the significant role that collectors and donors have played in shaping the Gallery's growth, especially the singular importance of individuals such as J. Ronald and Jacqueline Longstaffe, Claudia Beck and Andrew Gruft, John and Eve Davidson, and W. Maurice and Mary Margaret Young, among many others. Artists in this section of the exhibition include: B.C. Binning, Robert Davidson, Gathie Falk, Antonia Hirsch, Ken Lum, Bruce Nauman, Raymond Pettibon, Robert Rauschenberg, Bill Reid, Cindy Sherman, Gordon Smith, Andy Warhol and Lawrence Weiner.

The web-based publication accompanying **75 Years of Collecting: British Masters, Group of Seven and Pop Icons** is linked to the Vancouver Art Gallery website: www.vanartgallery.bc.ca. Extremely visual and encompassing in scope, the publication consists of more than 600 pages of information, blending large-scale images of artworks, artist biographical information, bills of sale, invoices, conservation records and associated correspondence. Beginning with 30 works of art for the February 4 launch, the publication will grow to include 75 items by the opening of the second module of the **75 Years of Collecting** exhibition series in the summer of 2006.

75 Years of Collecting: British Masters, Group of Seven and Pop Icons is curated by Bruce Grenville, senior curator and organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery.

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