

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Vitality of Abstract Art the Focus of New Vancouver Art Gallery Survey

Work by Vancouver's contemporary artists to share the walls with Abstraction's pioneers

VANCOUVER, BC – The **Vancouver Art Gallery** is tracing the international roots of abstract art, its historic influence in Canada and current expression in Vancouver's contemporary art scene in the major survey ***Enacting Abstraction*** on view from **February 14 to May 10, 2009**. Drawn from the Gallery's permanent collection and punctuated by important loans of work by Vancouver artists, the exhibition tracks abstraction from the early twentieth century to its vibrant present. Blending the work of influential pioneers and current artists, ***Enacting Abstraction*** demonstrates how artists are reconfiguring, extending or critiquing the legacy of abstract art.

"Abstraction is one of the most important artistic developments of the twentieth century and its effects have been profound," said Vancouver Art Gallery **chief curator/associate director Daina Augaitis**. "***Enacting Abstraction*** gives the Gallery an opportunity to share our important collection of abstract art, while showing how this tradition lives on in the work of some of the city's most exciting contemporary artists."

The rejection of the figurative in favour of an abstract portrayal of the world in the early twentieth century created radically new possibilities for artistic expression. Through their use of bold forms, textures and colours, artists created a new visual language. The exploration of the expressive, spiritual and conceptual potential of colour, line and shape became a central component of Modernism, which continues to occupy artists working today.

From the highly emotive brush work of the early Expressionist painters, to the hard-edge forms of Geometric Abstraction, the austere qualities of Minimalism and process-based works of Conceptualism, ***Enacting Abstraction*** demonstrates how artists use the strategies of abstraction to serve their own needs. The exhibition provides exceptional examples of the art form's various incarnations in eight sections including: West Coast Abstraction; Expressionism; Geometric Abstraction; Op Art; The Monochrome; Minimalism; Conceptualism and Process Art; and Mark Making.

Enacting Abstraction includes the earliest example of Canadian abstraction in the **Vancouver Art Gallery** collection, a painting titled *The Way*, 1927 by **Bertram Brooker**. Also included are early works of Canadian West Coast abstraction by **Lawren Harris, B.C. Binning, Jack Shadbolt, Gordon Smith** and **Takao Tanabe**, as well as paintings by Montreal-based artists **Jean-Paul Riopelle, Paul Emile Borduas** and **Jean-Paul Mousseau** – members of the legendary **Les Automatistes** who held Canada's first group exhibition of abstract art. Other highlights include the geometric work of Montreal-based **Guido Molinari**, the conceptual painting of **Garry Neill Kennedy, Eric Cameron** and **Gerald Ferguson**, artists associated with the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, the

groundbreaking work of major American figures **Dan Flavin, Helen Frankenthaler, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Ad Reinhardt** and **Frank Stella**, as well as a major painting by British Op artist **Bridget Riley**.

This historic artwork is presented along with more recent work from the Gallery's collection by Vancouver artists **Neil Campbell, Rodney Graham, Ken Lum** and **Landon Mackenzie** as well as works on loan to the to the Gallery by Vancouver artists **Eli Bornowsky, Mat Bushell, Andrew Dadson, Devon Knowles, Elizabeth McIntosh, Monique Mouton, Mina Totino, Ian Wallace, Jeremy Hof** and **Kika Thorne**.

The exhibition is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Daina Augaitis, chief curator/associate director.

***Please see the attached PDF for a formatted version of the press release.**

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