

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Vancouver Art Gallery to Vastly Expand Programming for Families

VANCOUVER, BC – Beginning February 2009, the **Vancouver Art Gallery** will greatly increase its commitment to families with an entirely new series of smart, fun and engaging family-focused programs that will set a new standard for public art galleries in Canada. Developed by the Gallery's new director and curator of education and public programs, **Heidi Reitmaier**, and her team of educational professionals, the Gallery's new child-oriented programming will make art available to families in new and dynamic ways on an unprecedented level.

With the establishment of **Weekly Family Programs**, sponsored by HSBC Bank Canada, parents and their children can enjoy child-focused programming every Saturday and every other Sunday. Along with three massive new child-oriented weekends per year, families will be able to count on the Gallery to provide activities and the flexibility they need to help them engage their children with everything the world of visual art has to offer.

"As a parent and someone committed to arts education, I know how essential it is to generate interest in the visual arts at a young age and to make it exciting and relevant through programs aimed directly at the family," said Reitmaier who recently joined the Gallery from Britain's Tate Gallery. "By creating this new expanded roster of activities for families, the Gallery will give parents and their children more options, not only by increasing the amount of programming time dedicated to them, but also by increasing the diversity of what we offer to ensure that we are addressing the learning styles of all the children that come through our doors."

Beginning February 7, families will be able to explore the Gallery with **Art Agents every Saturday**. The Art Agent is a new type of art proponent. Armed with a bag full of materials to facilitate children's early encounters with art, Agents will be bold, whimsical, funny, informed and roaming the galleries every Saturday. They will assist families in finding new and inventive ways of looking and exploring together, motivating kids to talk about the art on display and helping them create their own masterpieces.

Also **every Saturday beginning February 7**, the Gallery will unveil **Art Tracks**. These unique child-oriented tours led by performance artists, actors, musicians and storytellers will introduce new ways of engaging with artworks, exhibitions and the Gallery itself. These special experiences will offer social and collective situations for kids to work directly with artists and creative practitioners, providing broader and more interdisciplinary ways of engaging.

On the **second and last Sunday of every month beginning February 8**, the Gallery will offer **The Making Place**, drop-in studio sessions providing families with new and creative ways to create and play. Held in the Gallery's fourth-floor education space, The Making Place will provide opportunities for kids to read, sing, play and work collaboratively and individually on projects inspired by exhibitions. From painting to weaving, the drop-in will be an explorative workshop with instruction, materials and inspiration for all kinds of art making.

Beginning in May 2009, the Gallery will host mega-weekends of child-oriented programming three times a year. The two-day events will offer both intimate and spectacular experiences to ensure that children have access to moments that are quiet and contemplative as well as active and awesome. The events will embrace performance-based work and emphasize participatory and collaborative activities created specifically for families to take place over the course of entire weekends. Providing families a sense of ownership and comfort in the galleries, the events will give kids access to artists, as well as fun and explorative ways of looking and creating. All of these experiences will allow children's creativity, imagination and opinions to flourish.

HSBC Bank Canada is the **Presenting Sponsor** of the Vancouver Art Gallery's **Weekly Family Programs**.

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