

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Engaging Interpretation **Upcoming lectures bring international perspectives to local issues**

Vancouver, BC – On April 28 and May 5, the Vancouver Art Gallery will present two thought-provoking lectures in its continuing program of special events entitled *Engaging Interpretation*. The lectures will feature presentations by two scholars who have achieved international renown for their investigations into the role of cultural institutions in contemporary society: Henry Giroux and Tony Bennett.

“Engaging Interpretation is one component of a bold and innovative project undertaken by the Vancouver Art Gallery to reconsider its role in the community and its relationship with the public,” said Kathleen Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “The Gallery’s ultimate objective is to revise and improve its interpretive programs to better serve, inform and engage the public, and create a more enriching experience for all Gallery visitors.”

Engaging Interpretation, the third phase of a four-step plan, introduces a number of learned advisors and international specialists who will contribute their opinions and ideas on how institutions like the Gallery can achieve these goals. The program comprises a series of readings, lectures, dialogues and events running from March through June 2005.

The first lecture will be given by Henry Giroux, one of the leading thinkers associated with the Critical Theory tradition in education. In a presentation titled *Public Pedagogy: From Neoliberalism to a Politics of Educated Hope*, Giroux argues persuasively for new approaches to public discourse and teaching that are open, inclusive and truly democratic as a means to crafting a more educated, critical and empowered society.

Henry Giroux currently holds the Global TV Network Chair in Communications at McMaster University, Canada. He has also held posts as Director of the Waterbury Forum in Education and Cultural Studies at Penn State University, Ohio and Director of the Center for Education and Cultural Studies and renowned scholar in residence at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He has published more than 200 scholarly articles and is the author of 40 books.

The second lecture, to be given by professor, author and cultural analyst Tony Bennett, is titled *Civic Laboratories: Museums and the Fabrication of Cultural Objects*. In this intriguing and insightful presentation, Bennett explores the influential role played by museums in shaping the perceptions, expectations and relationships of museum visitors to the objects within it, and examines the larger social, cultural and civic connotations of this phenomenon. It is a theme Bennett explored in depth in his groundbreaking 1995 book, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*.

Tony Bennett is currently professor of Sociology and Director, Economic and Social Research Council Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change at the Open University and the University of Manchester, England. Previously he was professor of Cultural Studies and Foundation Director of the Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy in the Faculty of Humanities at Griffith University, Australia. He has authored and co-authored several books addressing socio-cultural issues in contemporary society.

In addition to these lectures, the *Engaging Interpretation* program offers a series of public dialogs and discussion groups intended to facilitate further development of ideas and concepts raised in the course of the program. These include:

Practitioners in Dialogue: Three leading museum educators - Clare Kunny, head of Adult Programs at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California, Dr. Bernadette Lynch (via phone link), previously head of Public Programs, Manchester Museum of Art, England and Sarah Schultz, director of Education and Community Programs at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota - discuss issues of interpretation from their perspectives in England and the USA.

Between Closure and Opening: Cheryl Meszaros, head of Public Programs at the Vancouver Art Gallery, joins Tony Bennett and Sarah Schultz for a public dialog which will summarize the key issues addressed during *Engaging Interpretation* and explore new interpretive models and accessibility options for the Gallery. There will be a reception at the Gallery following this discussion.

Henry Giroux. Public Pedagogy: From Neoliberalism to a Politics of Educated Hope

Thursday, April 28, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, 7 pm

Tony Bennett : Civic Laboratories: Museums and the Fabrication of Cultural Objects

Thursday, May 5, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, 7 pm

Practitioners in Dialogue: Thursday May 5, 2 – 4 pm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Between Closure and Opening: Friday, May 6, UBC Robson Square, 7 pm.

Reception to follow at the Vancouver Art Gallery

Each lecture is \$15 per person, \$10 for Gallery members, seniors and students.

An *Engaging Interpretation* package including admission to all lectures and panels is available for \$40, \$30 for Gallery members, seniors and students. Reading group not included.

Call 604-662-4714 to purchase tickets.

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