

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver Art Gallery announces international Asian Art Council and two curatorial positions for the *Institute of Asian Art*

Vancouver, British Columbia (November 2, 2015) – The Vancouver Art Gallery is proud to announce the establishment of the inaugural international Asian Art Council to advise and guide the activities of the *Institute of Asian Art* (IAA), the Gallery's comprehensive initiative to advance scholarship and public appreciation of art from Asia through exhibitions, public programs and collection acquisition. The Asian Art Council includes the following members: Xu Bing, Artist, Beijing; David Chau, Collector, Shanghai; Vishakha Desai, Special Advisor for Global Affairs, Professor of Professional Practice in the Faculty of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, New York; Roobina Karode, Director/Chief Curator of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Delhi; Kimsooja, Artist, New York/Seoul; Lin Li, Collector, Hangzhou and Fumio Nanjo, Director of the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo.

The Gallery also appointments two key positions to the IAA. Zheng Shengtian, esteemed Chinese scholar, curator and artist, takes on the position of Adjunct Director for the *Institute*, and Diana Freundl is named Associate Curator, Asian Art, working as the Gallery's first curator with a focus on this field.

Led by the Gallery's Director Kathleen Bartels and Chief Curator/Associate Director Daina Augaitis, IAA was launched in fall 2014 with two major inaugural exhibitions of Chinese art: *The Forbidden City: Inside the Court of China's Emperors* and *Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art*. In summer 2015, the Gallery presented Mumbai-based artist Reena Saini Kallat's installation at the Gallery's *Offsite* public art space. IAA's programs will continue to evolve with exhibitions featuring the work of renowned Korean artist Lee Bul this fall and New Delhi-based Bharti Kher in the summer of 2016.

"We are thrilled to have this distinguished group represented in our inaugural Asian Art Council as part of our *Institute of Asian Art*, and we are grateful to them for agreeing to provide their invaluable guidance," said Kathleen Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. "It is an honour to have Zheng Shengtian spearheading the *Institute*, and I would like to express our gratitude for his advice and enthusiasm that has provided tremendous support for the Gallery's Asian art projects over the years. With Diana Freundl's curatorial expertise and vision, we look forward with great excitement to the fulfillment of the goals and aspirations of this significant initiative."

Prior to moving to Vancouver in 1990, Zheng Shengtian worked at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, as Professor and Department Chair for more than thirty years. He is the co-founder of the Chinese Canadian Artists Federation and Centre A (Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art). He is a former trustee of Centre A and the Vancouver Art Gallery. Currently Zheng is Managing Editor of *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* and Senior Curator for the Vancouver Biennale. He has organized and curated numerous exhibitions, including *Jiangnan—Modern and Contemporary Chinese Art Exhibitions* (Vancouver, 1998, co-curated with Hank Bull), *The Art of Proletarian Cultural Revolution* (Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, 2002), *Shanghai Modern* (Munich, Kiel, 2004), Shanghai Biennale (Shanghai, 2004), *China Trade* (Vancouver, 2006), *Reincarnation* (Toronto, 2007), *Art and China's Revolution* (New York, 2008), and *Yellow Signal: New Media Art in China* (Vancouver, 2012). He is a frequent contributor to periodicals and catalogues about contemporary Chinese and Asian art. Four volumes of his writing on art were published by the China Academy of Art Press in 2013. As an artist, Zheng has shown work in China, the United States, Canada and Russia since the 1960s. He received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Emily Carr University of Art + Design in 2013.

"I am honoured to be the Adjunct Director for the *Institute of Asian Art*. I respect and commend Director Kathleen Bartels and the Gallery's Board of Trustees for their vision and determination to realize this important initiative," said Zheng Shengtian. "The Vancouver Art Gallery is the first museum in North America to hold solo shows for twentieth-century Chinese masters like Li Kuchan, Chang Dai-chien and Pan Tianshou since the 1980s. It is also one the most active Western institutions to collaborate and showcase internationally renowned contemporary Asian artists such as Kimsooja, Huang Yongping, Michael Lin, Lee Bul, Song Dong, Zhang Huan, Yang Fudong and many others. I look forward to working to further enhance the programs."

Diana Freundl joined the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2013, during which time she has curated a series of installations for *Offsite*, the Gallery's public art project, including works by Shanghai-based collective MadIn Company and Mumbai-based Reena Saini Kallat. In 2014, she co-curated *Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art*, one of the inaugural exhibitions for the *Institute of Asian Art*. Previously, she had lived in Asia for 14 years. She was curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) in Shanghai, where she co-curated large-scale exhibitions such as *Night on Earth: Helsinki, Berlin, Shanghai* (2007); *MoCA Envisage II: Butterfly Dream* (2008) and *INDIA XIANZAI: Contemporary Art from India* (2009). In 2012, she co-curated *Virtual Voices: Approaching Social Media and Art from China* with Zheng Shengtian at the Charles H. Scott Gallery in Vancouver, Canada as part of *Yellow Signal*, a city-wide festival of new media art from China.

About the Vancouver Art Gallery

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of the most respected and innovative visual arts institutions in Canada and is committed to strengthening ties between artists and diverse communities throughout the city, province and beyond. As the largest public art museum in Western Canada, the Gallery features the work of ground-breaking contemporary artists from around the world and presents historical art of international significance. It is committed to exploring the art of Asia, and provides a global platform for British Columbia's dynamic artistic community, including the work of First Nations artists. Its growing collection represents the most comprehensive resource for art in British Columbia and is the principal repository for visual art produced in the region, as well as related works by other notable Canadian and international artists. The Gallery also places an emphasis on advancing scholarship through major publications and presents a multitude of public programs that offer new ways to consider art for visitors throughout the region and internationally.

Following an in-depth master planning process conducted in response to significant growth in the collection, exhibitions and attendance, the Gallery unveiled in September 2015 Herzog & de Meuron's conceptual design for a new and expanded home in downtown Vancouver. At twice the size of the Gallery's current space, the future facility will be a vital catalyst in enhancing Vancouver's cultural community and will serve as a centre for cross-cultural dialogue and exchange in the visual arts.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Debra Zhou, Communications Specialist
Tel: 604-662-4722
Email: dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca