

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Turning On to an Experimental Era in Painting
Vancouver Art Gallery Celebrates the Sixties with
Lights Out! Canadian Painting from the 1960s
February 18, 2012 – April 29, 2012

Vancouver, BC – It was the era of turning on, tuning in, and dropping out. A time of tumult and creativity. The sixties shook up politics, social mores, and culture – and ushered in an era of great creativity in Canadian painting. Opening at the Vancouver Art Gallery on February 18th, *Lights Out! Canadian Painting from the 1960s* celebrates the verve and energy of this decade as expressed on canvas. Featuring nearly ninety paintings, *Lights Out!* reflects the vibrancy of this exceptional era.

Canadian painting during the sixties was diverse and ranged from the colourfield works of Jack Bush and bold optical images of Claude Tousignant, to the haunting figurative works of Jack Chambers and Jean-Paul Lemieux. Drawing on the Gallery's rich collection of paintings from this era, *Lights Out!* showcases works by these painters and others, including Suzanne Bergeron, Greg Curnoe, Paterson Ewen, Yves Gaucher, Ann Kipling, Roy Kiyooka, Michael Morris, Michael Snow (whose important 1963 canvas provides the title for this exhibition), Takao Tanabe, Joyce Wieland and many others.

"It is wonderful to see these paintings from our permanent collection on display," said director Kathleen Bartels, "The Gallery has well over 200 canvasses from this important period in Canadian art-making, and we are delighted to give visitors the opportunity to see these exceptional works."

As Canada celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1967, modernist painting was strong in all regions of the country, but debates between the merits of figuration and abstraction were abundant. The important centres of activity - Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, London, Ontario, Regina and Vancouver - each contributed to the national dialogue in a distinct fashion. The exhibition gathers the paintings by region, enabling the visitor to explore the distinctions between the various areas. A particular strength of the collection is the Gallery's holding of Quebecois painting from the period, with superb examples of work by Guido Molinari, Yves Gaucher, Claude Tousignant and Jean-Paul Lemieux on display in this exhibition.

"This exhibition is a trip through a dynamic decade in Canadian painting," said senior curator Ian Thom, "This was an incredibly exciting period in visual culture in this country. The social and political ferment in the country was reflected in the contestation between abstraction and realism, nationalism and internationalism and debates about what painting could – and should – be. It was a time of great experimentation and this exhibition radiates that energy."



Greg Curnoe, *Myself Walking North in the Tweed Coat*, 1963, oil on plywood. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund, © Greg Curnoe Estate / SODRAC (2011)

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Senior curator Ian Thom will provide a tour of *Lights Out!* for media on Thursday, February 16th at 10am.

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Photographs for publication are available on request.

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