

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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OFFSITE: Kota Ezawa
February 2, 2012 – September 16, 2012

Vancouver, BC - Opening at the Vancouver Art Gallery's *Offsite* space at Georgia and Thurlow on February 2nd, San Francisco-based artist Kota Ezawa presents *Hand Vote*, a timely and iconic image of democracy. At a moment when calls for social reform are a topic of discussion both here in Canada and around the world, the large-scale wooden tableau depicts a diverse group of people raising their hands to vote in what appears to be a town hall meeting.



Kota Ezawa, *Hand Vote*, 2008, wood and paint. Courtesy of the Artist. Photo: Ryan Thayer.

Ezawa's *Hand Vote* is based on a stock photograph the artist found on the internet. A small version of this work was commissioned for the 2008 exhibition *OURS: Democracy in the Age of Branding* at Parsons The New School for Design in New York City. At *Offsite*, Ezawa has rendered the picture on a large-scale, monumentalizing the image: standing more than six metres high and over nine metres wide, *Hand Vote* towers over the street and passersby. Ezawa says, "There is a boldness to it. In my own trajectory as an artist, this is an important piece. When I first started I was best known as a digital animator. This is such a physical piece, and marks a real departure from my earlier works." The sculpture is made of Douglas fir, in keeping with the artist's desire to connect the work to this area.

In addition to wood sculptures such as *Hand Vote*, Ezawa's diverse projects include digital animations, slide projections, light boxes, paper cut-outs, etchings, and ink drawings. He is perhaps best-known for his computer-generated animations of popular television, film and photographic images. Often Ezawa's inspiration comes from images of what may be described as our collective cultural memory. Some of his noted works deal with culturally charged events, such as his 2002 animated remake of the verdict in the O.J. Simpson trial, and short film versions of the assassinations of Presidents Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy. In his hands, these well-known images become stylized and 'pared down', bringing the viewer's focus to the essentials of the image, and calling on the viewer to re-assess their relationship with the memory of the event.

Born in Cologne, Germany in 1969, Ezawa has been based in California since 1994. His work has been exhibited across Canada and the United States, including at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Art Institute of Chicago and Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

Offsite, the Gallery's outdoor exhibition space next door to the Shangri-La Hotel in downtown Vancouver, is dedicated to newly commissioned, innovative public art projects. Featuring work by acclaimed contemporary artists, the first four exhibitions were: the photo-based work of O Zhang in July 2009, a sculptural installation by Ken Lum in January 2010, a large-scale sculptural pavilion by

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artists Heather and Ivan Morison in October 2010 and Elspeth Pratt's *Second Date*.

Kota Ezawa will be speaking about *Hand Vote* at *Offsite* on Thursday, February 2nd at 6:30pm at the inauguration of the work.

On February 4th at 2pm, the artist joins curator Kathleen Ritter, artist Lorna Brown, and poet Stephen Collis in a panel discussion at the Gallery entitled *Unlikely Architectures*.

Offsite is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and funded by the City of Vancouver through the Public Art Program. The Gallery recognizes Ian Gillespie, President, Westbank; Ben Yeung, President, Peterson Investment Group; and the residents at Shangri-La for their support of this space. *Offsite: Kota Ezawa* is generously supported by our Visionary Partner: Michael O'Brian Family Foundation. *Offsite: Kota Ezawa* is curated by Kathleen Ritter, Associate Curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery.

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Photographs for publication are available on request.

For interviews with the artist, please contact Carolyn Jack.

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