

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Pacific Crossings: Hong Kong Artists in Vancouver* marks the 20th anniversary of the transfer of Hong Kong sovereignty through the lens of art**



Images: (left) Carrie Koo, *Sunset*, 1996, acrylic on canvas, Courtesy of the Artist, Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery (right) David Lam, *My favourite place - Canyon Park*, 1975, watercolour, Collection of Sam Wu, Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

A media tour of *Pacific Crossings* and *Howie Tsui: Retainers of Anarchy* will take place on **Thursday, March 2, 2017, 9:00am** at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Media attending please RSVP to Justin Mah (jmah@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

February 23, 2017, Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery is pleased to present *Pacific Crossings: Hong Kong Artists in Vancouver*, an exhibition showcasing the work of David Lam, Paul Chui, Carrie Koo and Josh Hon, created before and after their relocation to Vancouver throughout the 1960-80s. On view at the Gallery from March 4 to May 28, 2017, this exhibition focuses on the early stages of modern landscape and abstract painting in Hong Kong, as well as the cross-disciplinary performance and installation of the 1980s. Showcased are these four artists' predominantly modern and contemporary paintings, while examining the influence of a new environment on their work.

June 2017 marks the 20-year anniversary of the transfer of Hong Kong sovereignty from the United Kingdom to mainland China. In the lead up to the handover, tens of thousands of Hong Kong residents immigrated to Canada, many choosing to settle in Vancouver. Among them were a significant number of artists, including the four artists in the exhibition, all of whom chose to leave their burgeoning artistic communities and immigrate to Vancouver during the 1960s through to the late 1980s. Archival images and texts also provide insights into the social and cultural community-building that developed among artists in the years following their arrival in Vancouver. Most importantly, the exhibition presents diverse and distinct practices from an active art community that often resides on the periphery of the mainstream.

Organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery, *Pacific Crossings: Hong Kong Artists in Vancouver* is a program of the Vancouver Art Gallery's Institute of Asian Art, curated by Diana Freundl, Associate Curator, Asian Art.



Images: (left) Paul Chui, *North Series #4*, 2013, ink and pigment on paper, Courtesy of the Artist, Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery (right) Josh Hon, *Dead Water Convulsion 2*, 1984, oil on canvas, Courtesy of the Artist, Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

Artist Biographies

David Lam (Lam Chun Fai / 林鎮輝) Born in Hong Kong, Chinese Canadian artist David Lam (1932-2013) bridged the Chinese and Canadian art worlds, developing an aesthetic that mined both spheres.

Lam studied in Shanghai and later at LaSalle College in Hong Kong, working throughout his high school and post-secondary education as an illustrator for local magazines. During his studies he was mentored by Lee Byng, a Chinese-Canadian painter who contributed greatly to the development of art in Hong Kong through his involvement with local art organizations between the 1930s and 1950s.

After graduation, Lam worked as an Exhibition Specialist for the United States Cultural Center in Hong Kong and later as an Assistant Curator at the Hong Kong City Hall Museum. He was a co-founder of the Circle Group in 1964, a Hong Kong avant-garde collective that included a majority of the city's most progressive painters and sculptors.

Lam immigrated to Vancouver in 1965 where he was employed by Woodward's Department Store as a visual designer until pursuing art full-time in 1975. The Canadian Rockies and Hong Kong cityscape were the subjects of his paintings from the 1960s through the 80s. Lam utilized watercolour, acrylic, colour pencils and ink in his paintings to capture the city and natural landscapes of Asia and Canada.

Paul Chui (Chui Yung Sang 徐榕生) Born in Hong Kong in 1933, Chinese-Canadian artist Paul Chui studied calligraphy and Chinese ink painting in primary school where he was a student of ink landscape painter Lam Chin Shek.

After graduation Chui held positions in the art departments of three major television stations in Hong Kong, including lead set designer on *Enjoy Yourself Tonight*, the popular and longest running variety show on Hong Kong's Television Broadcast (TVB) network. While working in film and television Chui continued to paint and held his first solo exhibition in 1958. In the late 1960s he joined the Circle Group, a Hong Kong avant-garde collective that included a majority of the city's most progressive painters and sculptors. He was an active member of the modest Hong Kong art community until immigrating to Vancouver, Canada in 1973.

While Chui experimented with Western ideas of modern sculpture and mixed media on canvas throughout the 1960s and 1970s, his landscape paintings since the 1980s reflect a classical tradition of ink painting utilizing only ink and rice paper. Staying true to more conservative traditions of Chinese abstract *shanshui* (*mountain water*) painting, Chui places great emphasis on the rendering of mountains, with water seldom depicted in detail. His scenery, albeit non-representational, demonstrates a fascination with the mountain ranges of the Pacific Northwest and Central Canadian Rockies.

Carrie Koo (Koo Mei 顧媚) Born in 1934 in Suzhou, Southeastern China, Chinese-Canadian ink painter Carrie Koo was a celebrated singer and actress in Hong Kong, Thailand and mainland China before she went on to become a successful painter. Koo moved to Hong Kong with her family in 1951 and in the early 1960s, she studied part-time under ink painters Chao Shao An and Hu Nien Tsu. In 1973, Koo was accepted as a student of the renowned master of contemporary Chinese ink painting, Lui Shou-Kwan.

Koo developed her own style, painting mostly mountains shrouded in clouds and mist. Her landscapes are abstract, displaying subtle gradation of ink tones and rich textures realized through interweaving lines and layers of colour pigment and ink wash. In 1984 Koo immigrated to Vancouver to join her brother. After spending time in British Columbia and Alberta, Koo's work began to transition from expressive ink and colour pigment to depictions of snow-clad Canadian landscapes.

Koo has taught ink painting courses at the Chinese University in Hong Kong and at the Taiwan Normal University in addition to giving demonstrations and workshops throughout the United States and greater China. She has received several awards for her painting and has participated in many exhibitions throughout Asia and North America.

Josh Hon (Hon Wai Hong 韓偉康) Born in Hong Kong in 1954, Josh Hon holds a BFA in Painting and Photography from Pacific Lutheran University, Hong Kong; a MFA in painting from Central Washington University, Tacoma; and a partial MFA in Painting from University of Illinois. One of the most celebrated artists in 1980s Hong Kong, Hon faded from the art scene in the early 1990s when he immigrated to Hope, BC. However, his cross-disciplinary art practice that ranged from theatre performance to multimedia installation remains critically acclaimed in Hong Kong's art history.

Hon's paintings, installations, videos and performances translate forms, materials, text and gestures into enthusiastic expressions that reflect Hong Kong's fraught socio-political climate during the pre-Handover years. The body of abstract paintings he made in the 1980s, imply a political unease through the use of illusionistic space, an increased density through multiple layers of paint and ambivalent signs and shapes. Later as Hon's involvement in experimental theatre increased, his paintings began to incorporate more figurative elements.

Hon departed Hong Kong and the art world in the early 1990s. He continued to write, sketch and work with ceramics in his personal time while pursuing a career as a trauma counsellor. He currently holds a Master of Arts in Counselling and is a Registered Clinical Counsellor in BC.

About the Vancouver Art Gallery

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most respected and innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's innovative ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on the historical and contemporary art of British Columbia and international centres, with special attention to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists and the art of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art founded in 2014. The Gallery's programs also explore the impacts of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture. www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

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.

About The Institute of Asian Art

Responding to the city's geographic location on the eastern edge of the Pacific Rim, the Vancouver Art Gallery has been committed to presenting contemporary art of the Asia Pacific region for more than two decades. Launched in 2014, the Gallery's Institute of Asian Art (IAA) is a comprehensive initiative committed to advancing scholarship and public appreciation of Asian art.

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