

For Immediate Release

Stephen Waddell's solo exhibition *Dark Matter Atlas* to be presented at the Vancouver Art Gallery

Artist also curates a concurrent exhibition, highlighting works
from the Gallery's collection



June 3, 2016, Vancouver, BC – Vancouver Art Gallery is pleased to present **Next: Stephen Waddell – *Dark Matter Atlas***, an exhibition featuring new photographs by Vancouver-based artist Stephen Waddell, opening to the public on June 11, 2016. Over the past two decades, Waddell has become widely-known for his large-scale colour photographs that depict the human figure in urban space. His works consciously embrace the ambiguous territory between spontaneity and deliberation, objective document and personal expression. For this exhibition, Waddell has departed dramatically from the subject matter of his earlier work, and focuses on underground caverns in the United States, Canada and Lebanon, spaces once difficult to access that are now underground public parks.

Printed to a large scale on traditional black and white photographic materials, Waddell's surreal and compellingly beautiful pictures expand upon conventional conceptions of landscape. They recall a varied set of precedents from the modern era, including Nadar's 19th-century photographs of the catacombs beneath Paris and the photographs the sculptor Constantin Brancusi made of his studio in the 1920s and 30s. Their otherworldly character also evokes photography's inherent ability to bring us images of exotic or distant places we will never see in person. The fantastic nature of the caverns, and the evocative forms of the stalactites and stalagmites that fill them, find an uncanny echo in Waddell's accompanying pictures of stains and mineral deposits left by leakages in the parking garages and concrete basements that lie just below the surface of the contemporary urban environment.

The cavern photographs are the result of a complex and often laborious process of obtaining permission to work in the caverns and then hauling the required photographic equipment to the chosen viewpoint, which was sometimes more than 800 feet below ground. While it may seem that Waddell is showing us what these spaces look like, their appearance here is determined as much by the mechanisms of photography—lighting, camera, lens, film and photographic paper—as the physical forms the caverns have taken over eons of geological time. On this level, Waddell's pictures recall the ancient Greek philosopher Plato's well-known "allegory of the cave," in which shadows projected on the wall of a cave are mistaken for the objects that cast them and appearance is misunderstood as truth.

In addition, Stephen Waddell has guest curated an exhibition, *An Agreeable State of Uncertainty* (June 11 – September 5), comprised mainly of works from the Gallery's collection. Taking the themes addressed in the

work of the American photographer Harry Callahan as its starting point, this exhibition presents a wide range of approaches to the city, the body and the relationship between public and private space. Works in the exhibition include photographs, drawings, prints and paintings by artists such as Diane Arbus, Robert Frank, Leon Golub, Fred Herzog, Jack Shadbolt, Cindy Sherman, Aaron Siskind, Nancy Spero, Frederick Varley and Weegee,

NEXT: Stephen Waddell – Dark Matter Atlas (June 11 – September 5) is the eighteenth instalment in **NEXT: A Series of Artist Projects from the Pacific Rim**, organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Grant Arnold, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art.

Presenting Sponsor:



Visionary Partner for BC Artist Exhibitions:

David Aisenstat

Visionary Partner for Photography Exhibitions:

Miles, Maureen and Larry Lunn

An Agreeable State of Uncertainty is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and guest-curated by Stephen Waddell, with assistance from Grant Arnold, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art.

Also opening this month at the Vancouver Art Gallery:

Picasso: The Artist and His Muses (June 11 – October 2)

Harry Callahan: The Street (June 11 – September 5)

For more information please visit www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

A media preview of all four exhibitions will take place on June 9th at 9am. Please RSVP to Debra Zhou at dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca.

-30-

IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

MEDIA INFORMATION:

Debra Zhou, Communications Specialist

dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca, Direct: 604-662-4722, Mobile: 604-671-2358

About the **Vancouver Art Gallery**: 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. We thank everyone for their continuing generosity.