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## The Vancouver Art Gallery Proudly Tours *Howie Tsui: Retainers of Anarchy* to OCAT Xi'an Museum

*Exhibition of scroll-like, hand-drawn animation featuring martial arts fiction and fantasy to premiere in China this fall*



**October 31, 2018, Vancouver, BC** – The Vancouver Art Gallery proudly announces the solo exhibition *Retainers of Anarchy* by local artist Howie Tsui will be presented in China at OCAT Xi'an Museum from **November 3, 2018 to January 31, 2019**. Incorporating martial arts characters depicted in the epic tales of the *Condor Trilogy* written by Hong Kong writer Jin Yong, this exhibition first premiered to wide acclaim at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2017. Described by Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail* as “elegant in its execution and provocative, sparking endless contemplation,” *Retainers of Anarchy* is presented as a non-linear narrative in the form of a twenty meter hand-drawn animation.

“The Vancouver Art Gallery is tremendously proud to bring Howie’s outstanding exhibition to international audiences,” says Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “The Chinese premiere of *Howie Tsui: Retainers of Anarchy* represents one of the many ways in which the Gallery spotlights Canada’s own talent abroad. This presentation is also significant to the focus of Howie’s work that transcends geographical and cultural divides.”

*Retainers of Anarchy* is the result of hundreds of individual drawings, each one painstakingly detailed using fine brush and coloured inks. It gives life to heroes and villains who drift across the wide-screen to the accompaniment of a soundscape comprised of excerpts from martial arts television shows and sound effect libraries.

Born in Hong Kong and raised in Lagos, Nigeria and the Canadian city of Thunder Bay, Ontario, Howie Tsui, like so many Canadians, straddles many worlds. For more than a decade, he has chosen to explore Asian history and pop culture, creating ironic cross-references that bring unexplainable contradictions to the fore. In the spirit of previous work, the artist addresses ideas of resistance, here using the narrative tool of *wuxia*, a popular genre of Chinese fantasy fiction and film depicting martial

arts battles in ancient China. *Wuxia* often constructs stories around warrior heroes from lower social classes who uphold chivalric ideals against oppressive forces during unstable times.

For Tsui, *wuxia* provides not only a connection to a distant culture; it also offers multiple points of entry for a diverse audience. The result of Tsui's careful weaving of multifaceted source material is a visually complex, richly textured landscape of personal imagination, cultural appropriation and historical references. As a crowning achievement, *Retainers of Anarchy* dismantles geographical divisions and historic timelines, offering encounters with both legend and reality.

"OCAT Xi'an is pleased, in our fifth anniversary year, to join in partnership with the Vancouver Art Gallery, for the presentation of *Retainers of Anarchy*, which premiered as Howie Tsui's first solo museum exhibition in Canada," says Karen Smith, Director of OCAT Xi'an Museum. "This work drawing from mythic figures of the Song Dynasty reimagines these heroes in an innovative new way that will resonate with Chinese audiences, for many of whom these tales are deeply familiar."

*Howie Tsui: Retainers of Anarchy* is collaboratively organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery, Ottawa Art Gallery and Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. The Vancouver iteration was curated by Diana Freundl, Associate Curator, Asian Art. We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

For more information about the OCAT Xi'an Museum presentation of *Howie Tsui: Retainers of Anarchy*, visit: [http://www.ocat-xian.org.cn/a/en/zi/in/Howie\\_Tsui\\_Retainers\\_of\\_Anarchy/](http://www.ocat-xian.org.cn/a/en/zi/in/Howie_Tsui_Retainers_of_Anarchy/)

Image credits:

(left) Howie Tsui, *Retainers of Anarchy*, 2017, animation key frame drawing, 5-channel HD video installation, 4 channel audio, Courtesy of the Artist, Photo: Maegan Hill-Carroll, Vancouver Art Gallery

(right) Howie Tsui, *Retainers of Anarchy*, 2017, animation key frame drawing, 5-channel HD video installation, 4 channel audio, Courtesy of the Artist

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## IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

### MEDIA CONTACT

Hanah Van Borek, Communications Specialist

[hvanborek@vanartgallery.bc.ca](mailto:hvanborek@vanartgallery.bc.ca), ph: 604.662.4700 ext. 2403 or 778.322.8967

### About the Vancouver Art Gallery ([vanartgallery.bc.ca](http://vanartgallery.bc.ca))

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 ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs, and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is paid to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to the arts of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art that the Gallery founded in 2014. The Gallery's programs also explore the impacts of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture.

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.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Skwxwú7mesh* (Squamish), and *səɬilwətaʔt* (Tsleil-waututh) peoples, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and to the work of the Gallery.

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