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## **Alternative Japanese Housing Designs on Display at Vancouver Art Gallery**

**VANCOUVER, BC** — The **Vancouver Art Gallery** will highlight the ingenious architecture of temporary and semi-permanent dwellings in an upcoming exhibition. Kyohei Sakaguchi's installation **Zero Yen House**, named for the economic reality under which many of these dwellings are built, will be on display **September 23, 2006 to January 1, 2007** as a part of the *NEXT* series, a presentation of new art and ideas by artists from the Pacific Rim. Included in this installation is a replica of a homeless dwelling found in central Tokyo and examples of Sakaguchi's extensive research into informal architecture, including an archive of house plans, large-scale photographs, video documentation, technical drawings and books.

Sakaguchi, a 28-year-old Tokyo-based artist, graduated from the Department of Architecture at Waseda University, Tokyo in 2001. Though trained as an architect, Sakaguchi focuses on the creation of installation-based artworks and publications. His photo-based book *Zero Yen Houses*, published in 2004, is the first in the artist's series of books documenting informal architecture. This work highlights a subculture that builds cleverly designed residences from the refuse of mainstream society for little or no money. The plans for these homes are often shared and the dwellings themselves are sometimes sold. By documenting the output of this creative subsection of homebuilders, Sakaguchi hopes to reveal a humane approach to architecture in tune with immediate needs and available resources.

"Kyohei Sakaguchi's project lives in an in-between space – between a traditional survey of vernacular architecture and an enacting of the architecture he has found. In *Zero Yen House*, Sakaguchi explores an organic form of architecture with innovative designs derived from the human spirit and its desire for shelter, rather than conventional aesthetic and commercial considerations," said Bruce Grenville, senior curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Sakaguchi's *Zero Yen House* installation at the Vancouver Art Gallery explores and elaborates on his architectural research. As a central component, the artist has duplicated a home he discovered in

2000 on the banks of Sumida River in central Tokyo owned by a former engineer. Reconstructed from the artist's detailed drawings of the original structure, this ingenious dwelling uses an inexpensive solar panel to supply energy for six hours of lighting, television and radio. Because it is illegal to erect unapproved structures on public land in Japan, the dwelling is collapsible and mobile, possessing a structural plan that allows for accurate reassembly of every facet of the design. Images of homes presented in the installation do not include the owners of the dwellings. Instead, Sakaguchi focuses on the structural peculiarities of the dwellings in order to highlight the distinctiveness of each owner's vision and their various strategies for building a house. By doing this, he seeks to reveal a form of architecture created with the instinct, consciousness and capability of human beings not guided by preconceived ideas.

"Sakaguchi's *Zero Yen House* confronts issues that reach outside the specific field of architecture," writes Makiko Hara, guest curator of the exhibition. "The dignity, freedom and vitality of individuals existing in a degenerated urban society of advanced capitalism; the wisdom and creativity which can produce something by hand; the capability to manage the crisis of destitution and take action in a society highly regulated and institutionalized — these virtues, which at times seem all but lost, Sakaguchi finds embodied in the elegant functionality of homeless architecture."

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**Media contact:**

Andrew Riley, Public Relations Manager, 604-662-4722

[ariley@vanartgallery.bc.ca](mailto:ariley@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

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