

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver Art Gallery Announces Jillian Christmas as First-Ever Poet in Residence



January 4 2024, VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

The [Vancouver Art Gallery](#), one of North America’s most innovative visual arts institutions, announces today the appointment of acclaimed poet and multidisciplinary artist, Jillian Christmas, as its inaugural Poet in Residence. In her new role, Christmas will work alongside the Department of Public Engagement & Learning to extend Gallery programming while enhancing and elevating conversations that emerge through the Gallery’s exhibitions and with the public.

Jillian Christmas, renowned for her influential and emotive work as a poet, writer, educator, activist and curator, will bring a fresh and diverse perspective to the Gallery’s public programs. As a queer, Afro-Caribbean-Canadian, Christmas’ work considers themes of family, heritage and identity. She previously served as the spoken word curator of the Vancouver Writers Fest and Artistic Director of Vancouver’s Verses Festival of Words.

“The Vancouver Art Gallery is not just a space for viewing art; it’s a place where art is lived, breathed and experienced. We are honoured and excited to welcome Jillian Christmas as the Gallery’s first Poet in Residence,” said **Anthony Kiendl, CEO & Executive Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery**. “Her unique approach and interpretation of art through the lens of poetry will inspire vibrant conversations and engagement, adding a

new layer of depth and understanding to our exhibits and enhancing our shared understanding of what an art gallery can be.”

Christmas' residency, aptly named *Toward Delight*, represents a thoughtful and immersive public engagement initiative designed to enhance, understand and distill the works present in the Gallery. Her work will hold space for community reflection, conversation, and collaborative day-dreaming. Through this residency, she seeks to ignite a sense of wonder, inspire creativity, and celebrate the power of art to unite and uplift those who come to visit.

“Poetry has always been a conduit for shared understanding and a mirror reflecting our collective experiences,” said **Jillian Christmas**. “In this space, I look forward to engaging with Gallery exhibits and visitors to drive meaningful reflections and conversations and harness the power of words to illuminate, to question and to celebrate.”

Among her notable achievements, Christmas made history as the first Canadian to reach the finals of the World Poetry Slam in 2015, performing her slam poem *Black Feminist*, and in 2021, she was the recipient of the League of Canadian Poets' Sheri-D Wilson Golden Beret Award for spoken word poetry and the Dayne Ogilvie Prize for LGBTQ Canadian writers. Her debut collection, *The Gospel of the Breaking*, was published in 2020.

Christmas assumed the role on November 1, 2023, and will serve as Poet in Residence for the Vancouver Art Gallery until Spring 2024. Look forward to the upcoming program *A Day of Delight* on Friday, February 16, 2024, with Jillian Christmas at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

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

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Photo by K.Ho Photography

ABOUT VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's celebrated exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is given to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to those of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art founded in 2014. The Gallery's exhibitions also explore the impact of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a charitable 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 the ancestral and unceded territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations, 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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