

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Vancouver Art Gallery Receives \$1.6M in Support of Championing the Study, Display and Amplification of Asian Art

*The Institute of Asian Art is Renamed the Centre for Global Asias
to Reflect Broader Mandate*



The Gallery celebrates a decade of presenting some of the world's most exciting artistic voices; sharing stories that dissolve boundaries; and creating pathways to experiencing art

November 15, 2024, VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətaɫ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is celebrating a major milestone in its history: the 10th anniversary of the founding of the **Institute of Asian Art (IAA)**. In November 2014, the Gallery formalized its commitment to Asian art programming with the establishment of the IAA—a platform to celebrate Asian art and artists. Since then, the IAA has presented compelling exhibitions—breaking attendance records—as well as a breadth of inspiring programs such as multi-language tours, performances, talks, symposia and education workshops for visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

In this landmark year and milestone moment, the Vancouver Art Gallery is excited to announce that the Institute of Asian Art will be renamed the **Centre for Global Asias (CGA)**, a new name that recognizes Vancouver's unique location as one of the most important gateways to the Asia Pacific, and the Gallery as a leading cultural institution for the amplification of Asian art and thought—nationally and internationally.

During a 10th anniversary celebration last night, the Gallery revealed the new name and expanded mandate for the CGA, along with a dedicated **Centre for Global Asias Fund** of \$1.6 million to date, specifically aimed at continuing the Gallery's commitment to Asian art programming. This fund is initiated by a series of extraordinarily generous gifts from the following individuals and organizations: **Roger Lee; Xiang (Shawn) He** and **Yu Jue (Sylvia) Zhang; Visas Consulting Group;** artist **Henry Wang** and the **Chen Family**. These donations will directly support the Gallery's ongoing work, ensuring that this vital platform continues to present innovative exhibitions, foster meaningful engagement, serve as a forum for art education and connect contemporary Asian art to the most important social and cultural issues of our time.

"We are incredibly grateful for the unwavering support of these individuals and organizations, whose generosity will ensure the continued impact, growth and future of the Gallery's Asian art programming," says **Anthony Kiendl**, CEO & Executive Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. "Our vision is to profoundly affect the ways in which audiences in this country come to recognize and celebrate the cultures of Asia and to facilitate a deeper understanding between cultures."

Art historian, professor and philanthropist **Roger Lee** 李景才, whose major contribution is the cornerstone of the Fund, shared his thoughts on why supporting the CGA is so important: "I am deeply honoured to contribute to the Vancouver Art Gallery, in tribute to my parents **Marion Yuen Oi Joe Lee** 李周潤愛 and **Henry Bing Wah Lee** 李炳華 whose ancestral home was Toisan and Poon Yue, Guangdong Province. They inspired my passion for art and culture. As a third generation Chinese-Canadian, I am grateful for what Canada has given to me and allowed me to offer back. It is my hope that this gift will support emerging Asian artists and help foster a greater appreciation for Asian art through inspirational exhibitions, events and programs at the Gallery. The Gallery's programming empowers not just the local art community but the cultural landscape of Vancouver as a whole." Lee's career includes 32 years of teaching at the University of Regina, teaching Ancient Western Art, Modern Art, Asian Art and art history, theory and criticism. In 1975 Lee visited China on a tour with his parents, and, in 1981, he became the first art historian to teach Western Art history in China as part of a new city twinning initiative between Shandong Province and Saskatchewan.

The Gallery would also like to recognize **The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation** for its support at the inception of the IAA with the popular exhibition *The Forbidden City: Inside the Court of China's Emperors*. Now, ten years on, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation has generously given a \$84,000 grant to support Montréal-based artist **Karen Tam** in a year-long role as Artist Researcher at the Gallery. Working closely with the Gallery's Senior Curator **Diana Freundl**, Tam and Freundl's research will examine the lives and careers of Chinese artists who travelled to Canada in the early twentieth century. This is the first time the Gallery has received a research-specific grant focused on Chinese artists.

The Institute of Asian Art, now the Centre for Global Asias, has grown and evolved to become one of the most significant hubs in Western Canada for the exploration and representation of Asian art. The CGA will be a dynamic and dedicated platform committed to conducting and sharing research, engaging and inspiring audiences, informing the acquisition and representation of Asian art, connecting thought leaders, and as always, amplifying some of the world's most exciting artists.

During last night's celebrations, **Sirish Rao**—the Gallery's Senior Director of Public Engagement & Learning—announced the launch of the Centre for Global Asias: "We recognize the many Asias that exist, within the geography of Asia itself, and in the global diaspora. And indeed, there are Asias yet to be imagined and yet to come. The Centre for Global Asias will be a home for a pluralism of ideas, perspectives and artistic disciplines."

At the time of the IAA's founding in 2014, the Gallery presented two major exhibitions centering Chinese art: *The Forbidden City: Inside the Court of China's Emperors* and *Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art*, both of which attracted a record number of visitors. Since then, the Gallery has presented 27 exhibitions, 15 publications and over 100 events under the umbrella of the IAA, welcoming more than 2 million visitors to exhibitions and programs both off-site and in the Gallery. Recent achievements include *Poets, Locks, Cages* (2023), the first major exhibition in Canada dedicated to internationally acclaimed Iranian sculptor **Parviz Tanavoli**; a monumental survey of the lens-based works of Korean-Canadian artist **Jin-me Yoon** in *About Time* (2022); the first Canadian exhibition devoted to the work of China's preeminent couturière **Guo Pei** (2018); the first major retrospective of **Takashi Murakami's** paintings in Canada, *Takashi Murakami: The Octopus Eats Its Own Leg* (2018), and special talks featuring acclaimed Chinese artist **Cai Guo-Qiang** and boundary-pushing Malaysian calligrapher **Jameson Yap**. Significant artwork acquisitions include *TL;DR* (2020–22) by Japanese-Canadian artist **Ron Terada**; *Woven Chronical* (2014), by **Reena Kallat**; *Windows 97* (1997) by Chinese-Canadian artist **Paul Wong** and *The Book of Jestis* (2014) by Korean-Canadian artist **Hyung-Min Yoon**. In May 2025 the Gallery will present North America's first solo exhibition of Japanese artist **Otani Workshop: Monsters in My Head**.

For more information or to donate to the CGA, please visit: www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/centre-for-global-asias

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VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

For image requests, email media@vanartgallery.bc.ca

Image: Sitarist Mohamed Assani and friends perform at Indian Summer Festival at the Vancouver Art Gallery, July 2019, Photo: Pardeep Singh

ABOUT THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931 and located on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations, the Vancouver Art Gallery is Western Canada's largest public art museum. Our mission is to create—through art—paths to share perspectives, build and engage communities and shape our collective future together. This is expressed through exhibitions showcasing outstanding examples of historical, modern and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world; education programs that encourage dialogue and understanding; and publications that advance scholarship on a wide range of artistic subjects. Our permanent collection, representing the most comprehensive resource for visual culture in British Columbia, has more than 13,200 works. Committed to inclusivity and accessibility, we serve a broad public across the region. Each year, hundreds of thousands of children, youth, students, families, adults and seniors of all backgrounds benefit from our programs.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-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 the work of the Gallery.

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