

# Media Backgrounder and Fact Sheet

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts  
Government of British Columbia

## ***BRITISH COLUMBIA A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE VISUAL ARTS***

Possessing one of the most dramatically beautiful and diverse landscapes in the world, British Columbia has been an endless source of inspiration for generations of renowned artists. From the unique designs and sculpture of the province's Aboriginal inhabitants, to the most recent works by Vancouver's renowned photo-based artists, the landscapes, cityscapes and diverse peoples of the province have served as core subjects for generations of artists.

- **Greatest number artists per capita** – British Columbia is home to Canada's three cities with the highest concentrations of artists: Vancouver, Victoria and North Vancouver District Municipality:
  - Vancouver has the highest concentration of artists among large Canadian cities at 2.35 per cent, a level that is three times the Canadian average of 0.77 per cent.
  - Victoria has the second-highest concentration of artists at 1.87 per cent.
  - North Vancouver has the third highest concentration at 1.61 per cent.
- **Internationally renowned artists** – Few cities in the world can claim to be the residence of as many internationally renowned artists as Vancouver. Artists who live in the city and regularly present work in the world's premiere art museums include Roy Arden, Rebecca Belmore, Stan Douglas, Geoffrey Farmer, Gathie Falk, Rodney Graham, Brian Jungen, Evan Lee, Ken Lum, Scott McFarland, Steven Shearer, Ron Terada, Stephen Waddell, Jeff Wall and Ian Wallace.
- **Cultural confluence** – As Canada's gateway to the Asia-Pacific, British Columbia's thriving art scene is the result of a confluence of a multitude of cultural backgrounds. Fusing First Nations, Asian and European traditions, British Columbian artists approach their work from an extremely unique perspective that is recognized worldwide. The Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art – known as Centre A – is a significant player in highlighting contemporary visual art from both Asian and Asian-Canadian artists.
- **The "Vancouver School"** – Widely referred to as the Vancouver School, Vancouver is home to a number of photo-based artists associated with the rise of conceptual photography as one of the most important contemporary art forms of the 20th century. In particular, artist Jeff Wall's luminous backlit pictures beginning in the mid-1970s revolutionized the way photographic art could be presented. His work has recently been featured in major solo exhibitions around the world, including Tate Modern, London in 2005, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2007.
- **Aboriginal Art** – British Columbia's Aboriginal artists are internationally renowned for the distinctive beauty of their work. Drawing on strong centuries old traditions, hundreds of contemporary First Nations artists are currently working throughout the province producing

some of the most refined, unique and sought after art in the world. From jewellery and weaving to totem poles and sculpture, the province's Aboriginal artists are maintaining their vibrant cultures, while exploring and incorporating the techniques and practices of their fellow contemporary artists in the province and around the world.

- **Emily Carr** – British Columbia was home to one of Canada's greatest painters, Emily Carr. Before her death in 1945, Emily Carr's sizeable reputation as an artist, writer and creative innovator was nationally recognized. In recent years, the artist's iconic modernist paintings of British Columbia's coastal landscapes have gained international renown, further bolstering her as a singular figure in Canadian culture.
- **Schools and Artist Run Centres** – Vancouver has one of the most extensive and supportive systems of art education in the country. Home to the world renowned Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts and University of British Columbia's Critical and Curatorial Studies program, the city also possesses numerous artist run centres and galleries which foster the expansive creativity and rigorous thought for which the city and the province are known.
- **Vancouver Art Gallery** – With the largest membership of any art museum in Canada at more than 40,000, the Vancouver Art Gallery is at the centre of the city's cultural scene. The largest and most significant visual art museum in Western Canada, the Gallery provides a strong base for the exhibition of British Columbia's internationally renowned visual artists, presenting recent solo shows by Roy Arden, Rodney Graham, Brian Jungen, Scott McFarland and Jeff Wall. The institution also plays a central role in the promotion of the province's emerging artist, actively displaying and collecting their work. The Gallery balances its presentation of British Columbia art with major international exhibitions, presenting the work of acclaimed contemporary and historic artists, including the current exhibition *Leonardo da Vinci: The Mechanics of Man* on view from February 6 to May 2, 2010.

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### WEB RESOURCES

- HelloBC – Official Tourism Site of British Columbia – Artists and Art Galleries listing:  
<http://www.hellobc.com/en-CA/SightsActivitiesEvents/ArtsCulturalHistoricalExperiences/ArtistsArtGalleries/BritishColumbia.htm?Lev1=3&gclid=CL0o9YPSxZ4CFsReagodFXnCpw>
- BC Arts Council website: <http://www.bcartscouncil.ca>
- Vancouver Art Gallery website: <http://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/>
- Report summary of artists in large Canadian cities based on the 2006 Canadian Census:  
[http://www.hillstrategies.com/docs/Artists\\_large\\_cities\\_summary2006.pdf](http://www.hillstrategies.com/docs/Artists_large_cities_summary2006.pdf)

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**For assistance or more information:**

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