

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Vancouver Art Gallery Presents
Retrospective of Acclaimed B.C. Artist
Takao Tanabe

January 21 to April 17, 2006
Media Event Wednesday, January 25, 2006 at 8:30a.m.

Vancouver, BC – He has received the Order of Canada, the Order of British Columbia, two honorary doctorates and the Governor General’s Award in the Visual and Media Arts, engaging viewers with his lyrical abstractions and breathtaking landscapes. The Vancouver Art Gallery is pleased to present a landmark exhibition celebrating one of Canada’s premiere artists. *Takao Tanabe*, the artist’s first major retrospective and nationally touring exhibition, opens at the Vancouver Art Gallery on January 21 and will remain on display through April 17, 2006.

Comprised of more than 60 paintings and significant works on paper, the course of Tanabe’s career is displayed through abstract expressionist images, uncompromising abstractions and minimalist prairie vistas completed between 1950-1980, among more recent work. The exhibition articulates the integrity of the artist’s artistic vision and encourages viewer relationships with the natural environment.

“Throughout my life I have lived and worked in many places, but I’ve always been a painter and I always will be,” Tanabe remarks of his long career. “My work has brought me a lot of joy and to share more than 50 years of it with Gallery visitors will be a pleasure.”

The exhibition also reflects Tanabe’s importance as a contemporary artist and an innovator in Canada’s artistic community. As director of The Banff Centre art program he was central to the revitalization of the institution, establishing it as one of the most important art centres in North America. Tanabe was also influential in the creation of the Governor General’s Award in the Visual and Media Arts, and lobbied to recognize BC artists’ work through the establishment of the Audain Prize, better known as the VIVA Award, in 2004.

Takao Tanabe was born in Seal Cove – now part of Prince Rupert – in 1926, a region that would become a source of artistic inspiration in ensuing years. Although Canadian by birth, Tanabe was interned in British Columbia’s Kootenay region during World War II.

He attended the Winnipeg School of Art, where he studied with painter Joseph Plaskett. In 1953, after capturing the attention of Lawren Harris, he received an Emily Carr Scholarship, allowing him to study in London and travel extensively throughout Europe. Tanabe's studies and travels are influential in his work and emerged in his prairie paintings, highly reduced views of the landscape, generally executed in single painting sessions. Later paintings examine the landscape of British Columbia, creating commanding canvases capturing details of light and texture.

Takao Tanabe is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria with support from the Museums Assistance Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage. The exhibition is co-curated by Ian Thom, senior curator, Vancouver Art Gallery and Pierre Arpin, former director of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. The exhibition, which debuted at the Art Gallery of Victoria in October 2005, opens at the Vancouver Art Gallery on January 21, 2006, continues its tour to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, with a final stop at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. A fully illustrated 180-page publication produced by Vancouver Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Victoria and Douglas & McIntyre accompanies the exhibition. This publication was generously supported by The Jarizlowsky Foundation, Paul Kuhn Gallery and Equinox Gallery.

In conjunction with the exhibition, co-curator Ian Thom, Senior Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery will present a discussion of Tanabe's life's work on Sunday, February 5 at 2 p.m. at the Vancouver Art Gallery. The presentation is free with Gallery admission and will be followed by a book signing in the Gallery Store.

Members of the press are welcome to meet the artist and attend a special media preview of *Takao Tanabe* at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 25, 2006 at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

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