

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver Art Gallery Receives \$1.5 Million Gift for New Building



Donald Ellis



New Vancouver Art Gallery Design Rendering

February 24, 2020 Vancouver, BC - The Vancouver Art Gallery is pleased to announce a generous \$1.5 million capital campaign gift from **Donald Ellis**, a longtime supporter of the Gallery. Ellis, a Canadian art dealer, founded the Donald Ellis Gallery which has an international presence including New York. For the past four decades, Ellis has served private collectors, corporations and museums in Canada, the United States, Europe and in British Columbia to build remarkable collections. As a recognized authority in historical Indigenous art, among other notable accomplishments, Ellis has been a regularly featured appraiser of Indigenous art on the *PBS*, *BBC* and *CBC Antiques Roadshow*.

“Through his monetary and art donations over the past decade, Donald Ellis has been a generous donor to the Vancouver Art Gallery,” stated Daina Augaitis, Interim Director at the Gallery. “I’m thrilled that he is making such a remarkable commitment to showcase historical Indigenous art in the new Gallery building. His generosity brings us one step closer to realizing a new Gallery building.”

The Vancouver Art Gallery was among the first Canadian galleries to consider Indigenous

objects as art rather than ethnography. Continuing Doris Shadbolt's perspective, the Gallery has contributed considerably to the preservation and documentation of Indigenous art, particularly of the West Coast through major group and solo exhibitions and publications. Collecting Indigenous art is a more recent endeavour, one that was greatly aided last month with Ellis' recent gifts to the Gallery's collection including five finely carved Charles Edenshaw artworks. His capital campaign gift will be recognized in the historical Indigenous gallery in the new Gallery building.

"The artistic contributions of Indigenous Peoples over centuries—from the Coast Salish, the Kwakwaka'wakw, Haida (Xaat Kíl) and beyond— are essential to the history of Canada. I am deeply committed to the expansion of the Vancouver Art Gallery and the potential it has to advance reconciliation through art. By remembering the effects of history, art can be a healing act providing the public with opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of Indigenous history and culture," stated Ellis. "It is my hope that my contribution will inspire others in the community to participate and have a hand in shaping Vancouver's cultural identity."

This \$1.5 million gift illustrates the forward progression of the Gallery's capital campaign. Today's announcement brings the total amount raised from the private sector to \$86.5 million—the highest amount ever raised by an arts and culture organization in British Columbia. Including the initial support from the Province of British Columbia, the campaign has reached a total of \$136.5 million to date.

The new 300,000 square-foot purpose built Gallery will incorporate Passivhaus design, widely recognized as the most rigorous energy standard in the world making the Gallery a showcase for environmental sustainability in the Canadian and global cultural sector. Additionally, as a strong economic and tourism catalyst, construction of the new Gallery building will support the equivalent of 2,973 jobs. Once it is built, out-of-town visitors to the new Gallery are anticipated to contribute more than \$78.6 million annually to Vancouver's economy.

The new Gallery will be a creative and cultural gathering place for British Columbians, local members, the public and international visitors of all ages providing opportunities for public dialogue, education and life-long learning. It will reflect the diversity of our communities connecting people and improving the quality of life. Located at the intersection of West Georgia and Cambie Streets, the Gallery will incorporate over 80,000 square feet of exhibition space (more than double the current exhibition capacity) half of which is dedicated to the Gallery's permanent collection; two Free-Access Galleries; a 300+ seat Theatre; four classrooms, a Library/Archives; Gallery Store and Restaurant; and state-of-the-art museum facilities for art storage and preparation. The new Gallery building will firmly establish Vancouver as one of the world's leading cities for arts and culture.

Watch a [video](#) featuring Donald Ellis, Tarah Hogue, Senior Curatorial Fellow of Indigenous Art, Vancouver Art Gallery and Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, artist and author.

Image 1 – Donald Ellis, Photo: John Bigelow Taylor

Image 2 – Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada, © Herzog & de Meuron, Herzog & de Meuron, View across Queen Elizabeth Square

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About the Vancouver Art Gallery (vanartgallery.bc.ca)

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most respected and innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all 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 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 traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (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 to the work of the Gallery.

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