

e-flux Announcements

Hundreds of artworks acquired for permanent collection

Vancouver Art Gallery

August 28, 2024



Elizabeth McIntosh, *Work Out*, 2023. Oil and acrylic on canvas. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Audain BC Art Acquisition Fund. Photo: Rachel Topham Photography. Courtesy of Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is expanding its permanent collection with an impressive 349 recent acquisitions through purchases and donations, building on its collection of over 13,000 works by local and international artists. With the Gallery's new building on the horizon and a planned floor dedicated to presenting the permanent collection, the acquisitions represent the Gallery's ongoing commitment to growing, diversifying and showcasing the collection. A number of notable acquisitions include a charcoal installation by New York-based artist **Teresita Fernández**; a remarkable suite of seventeen masks by renowned Kwakwaka'wakw carver and activist **Beau Dick**; a monumental text-based installation by Vancouver-based artist **Ron Terada**; and an installation of functional water works by Canadian artist **Geoffrey Farmer**. A number of significant works by contemporary artists **Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill**, **Elizabeth McIntosh**, **Paul Wong** and **Caroline Monnet** have also recently been acquired.

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Tanya Leighton

“The Gallery is pleased to add such a breadth of remarkable works to its collection due to support from Canadian and international donors in 2023 and 2024,” says **Anthony Kiendl, CEO & Executive Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery**. “The depth and diversity of these new acquisitions enhance the collection and represent an exciting step forward for the Vancouver Art Gallery to better tell the stories of art from British Columbia and beyond. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of a number of individuals, these works will be available to the people of Vancouver and our city’s visitors from around the world, now and into the future.”

Dedicated space in the new Gallery will spotlight major acquisitions to the permanent collection, including the last work made by renowned Kwakwaka’wakw carver and activist **Beau Dick** (1955–2017). Presented to much acclaim at documenta 14 in 2017, *Undersea Kingdom* (2016–17) encompasses some of the most imaginative and compelling masks ever produced by the artist.

There are also plans to showcase works in the public spaces of the Gallery’s new building, including a major outdoor installation by internationally recognized artist **Geoffrey Farmer**. The installation, titled *Fountain*, is composed of several components, *Wounded Man* (2017), *Duvet* (2017), *Drinking Fountain* (2017) and *70 Planks* (2021), all of which were added to the collection as gifts. In its original configuration, *Fountain* (2017–21) was an immersive environment filled with working water fountains and sculptures. Created for the artist’s celebrated solo presentation at the Venice Biennale in 2017, the installation penetrated the architecture and courts of the Canadian Pavilion in moving and imaginative ways.

Major acquisitions by Vancouver-based artists include **Elizabeth McIntosh**’s striking new painting *Work Out* (2023) and **Ron Terada**’s epic installation *TL; DR*, (2020–22). Internet slang for “too long; didn’t read,” Terada’s series of 325 text-based paintings speak to our shared sense of frustration when faced with the overwhelming experience of today’s news. The installation aims to archive fleeting, click-bait headlines that are momentarily visible within the digital realm and quickly replaced. *TL; DR* is a well-recognized series within the artist’s practice of text-based works that have been exhibited internationally.

Supporting the Gallery’s strategic mission to grow its holdings of work by major international artists, a key acquisition to enter the collection in 2024 is *Island Universe 2* (2023) by American conceptual artist **Teresita Fernández**. Composed of sculpted pieces of charcoal arranged to resemble a map, Fernández’s panoramic work elegantly combines all of the earth’s landmasses, fusing them into one continuous, borderless terrain. Fernández’s large-scale installation speaks to themes of colonialism, land, migration and power.

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Acquired in 2024, *Rupert Lanes (after Wall)* (2019) is the first work by Montréal-based interdisciplinary artist **Deanna Bowen** to enter the Gallery's collection. Composed as a picture within a picture, Bowen's compelling photograph contrasts two views of an East Vancouver neighbourhood where the artist grew up in the 1970s and 80s.

Echoes from a Near Future (2022) by **Caroline Monnet**, a large-scale colour photograph recently exhibited at the Gallery in *Fashion Fictions*, also joined the collection in 2023. Drawing on Monnet's knowledge of Indigenous textiles and design, the photograph presents three generations of women and girls adorned in brightly coloured regalia created from unconventional materials used in the construction industry.

Several recent acquisitions can be seen in the Gallery's summer exhibition *Black and White and Everything In Between: A Monochrome Journey*. New acquisitions featured include **Mina Totino's** oil paintings *September* (2019) and *October* (2019); **Shannon Bool's** monumental tapestry *Crimes of the Future* (2020); and **Wang Tiande's** intricate ink painting *Visiting the Temple in Lu Mountain* (2021). Also included in the exhibition is the never-before-exhibited series *Chinese Cafes—The Five Energies* (1997) by the groundbreaking Vancouver-based artist **Paul Wong**. Inspired by the Taoist system of “the five energies” and their corresponding colours, Wong's print series was received as part of a major donation of 63 works by 16 artists gifted by **Rick Erickson and Donna Partridge** in 2023. Wong's earliest neon work, *Windows 97* (1997), also entered the collection in this period. Composed of large-scale portraits of Chairman Mao Zedong and Queen Elizabeth II and animated neon pieces representing the flags of China, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, this striking work was created by the artist in 1997, in the months leading up to the handover of Hong Kong.

The Vancouver Art Gallery houses the most comprehensive resource for visual culture in British Columbia. With these new acquisitions, the collection holds over 13,000 artworks, but currently only a small portion of the works can be viewed by the public at any time. The Gallery's new, purpose-built home in the heart of downtown Vancouver will offer expanded exhibition space, supporting the Gallery's commitment to exhibiting a diverse range of modern and contemporary art.

“The Gallery's curators have been working diligently to expand and diversify the Gallery's collection, a collection that is committed to supporting our mission and reflecting our shared artistic culture,” says **Eva Respini, Deputy Director & Director of Curatorial Programs**. “With our new building in sight, these acquisitions have been made with an eye to the future—where visitors will have more space and a bigger building to delve into our expanding collection of local, national and international artworks.”