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Moving Forward by Looking Back –

The First 30 Years of Collecting Art at the AGGV

As the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria moves towards the construction of *The Next Gallery*, a new exhibition, *Moving Forward by Looking Back – The First 30 Years of Collecting Art at the AGGV*, takes a moment to review the Gallery's past, with a critical eye, while it steps into an exciting future.

Using the unpublished manuscript, "Moss Street Years; or Three Decades of Controversial Hangings," written in 1981 by the AGGV's first Director, Colin Graham, as a guidebook, the exhibition examines elements of the collection through the lens of Graham's anecdotal ruminations on the collectors, artists and audiences engaged in the institution during his tenure as way to understand why our forebears made the decisions that they did about the collection, and how those decisions were received at the time.

Through Graham's words, we begin to understand the strengths of our collection: "We decided to give precedence to the purchase of work by leading Victorians. Next in order of priority came mainland British Columbians, and after that the rest of Canada. We felt it important that Victorians have an opportunity to study the work of the leading 20th century masters. Since on our budget it was impossible to buy their paintings, we decided to have them represented by their etchings and lithographs."

Graham's observations about his early collecting policy continued with, "I did not want the gallery collection to be confined by a Europe-centered view of human culture and hoped it would be possible to have as many civilizations and cultures represented as possible." While the real success of this intention is celebrated in *Millennia: Asian Art through the Ages*, *Moving Forward by Looking Back* does consider some of the other lesser-known non-European works that reside in the AGGV collection to this day.

Moving Forward by Looking Back - The First 30 Years of Collecting Art at the AGGV opens on February 25 with a free day long Public Open House and runs through September 4 in the Founders and Drury Galleries.

"The exhibition has been curated with an aim to understanding how artistic tastes and interests have evolved over time so that we can imagine how our collecting activity today will be interpreted by future generations," said AGGV Chief Curator and exhibition Curator Michelle Jacques.

Works in the exhibition include paintings, sculpture, prints, etchings and photographs from amongst others, Carole Sabiston, Pat Martin Bates, Emily Carr, Sophie Pemberton, Pegi Nicol MacLeod, A.Y. Jackson, Jack Shadbolt, Fredrick Varley, Johnny Inukpuk, Katsushika Hokusai and Rembrandt Van Rijn.

For more information visit aggv.ca

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