

Media Release

For Immediate Release
February 4, 2010

Thousands visit Art Gallery of Alberta during its opening days

EDMONTON, AB –The **Art Gallery of Alberta (AGA)** opened its new doors to an enthusiastic public this past weekend. During the first four days of opening events, close to 12,000 people took in the Randall Stout-designed building and exceptional historic and contemporary art exhibitions from **Friday, January 29-Monday, February 1, 2010**. The AGA's Membership has grown to an all-time high of **2,250 annual memberships** with the addition of more than 450 new Members in the two months leading up to the opening and 200 more in the first three days of the AGA being open.

“Given the new capabilities of the AGA--thanks to greater staff resources and the remarkable building--we are poised to build on the tremendous enthusiasm and support the AGA is receiving in Edmonton and throughout the province, “ says **Gilles Hébert, AGA Executive Director**. “The programming we are now in a position to offer will allow us to grow into a key destination for all residents and their guests.”

The Gallery's opening festivities began on Friday evening with a black-tie gala, the final fundraiser for the Gallery's capital campaign. The following morning, **January 30, 2010** was the official ribbon-cutting ceremony presided over by the **Chair of the AGA's Board of Directors, Allan E. Scott**. The dignitaries in attendance included Canada's Minister of Public Works and Government Services, **the Honourable Rona Ambrose**; Minister of Western Economic Diversification, **the Honourable Lynne Yelich**; Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, **the Honourable Norman L. Kwong**; Minister of Alberta Culture and Community Spirit, **the Honourable Lindsay Blackett**; and **His Worship Mayor Stephen Mandel** from the City of Edmonton, lead donor **Barbara Poole** as well as the Gallery's architectural team, Los-Angeles-based **Randall Stout Architects Incorporated**. Later in the day, more than 500 people from the regional, national and international visual arts community celebrated the opening during the nighttime Artists' and Industry Party.

The AGA officially opened for viewing on **Sunday, January 31, 2010 at 9 am** when the first of approximately 10,000 timed-ticket holders entered the building. In order to ensure the comfort and enjoyment of the large number of visitors, the AGA scheduled entry of 175 people into the building every 30 minutes until 9 pm that evening as well as **9 am-9 pm** on **Monday, February 1, 2010**.

Over the weekend, the AGA involved more than **75 volunteers**, working a total of **1,400 combined hours**. The local arts community, including the **Citadel Theatre, Edmonton Symphony Orchestra** and **Edmonton Opera**, supported the Gallery as they enlisted their volunteer base to help augment the AGA staff and volunteers.

The Gallery is now open with its regular hours and admissions. The first day of standard operation on **February 2, 2010**, the AGA welcomed **more than 300 visitors**, both one-time admissions and members. The AGA is open from 11 am to 7 pm Tuesday to Friday and 10 am to 5 pm on weekends and holidays.

Inaugural exhibitions feature significant historical and contemporary works by Canadian and international artists, including **Edgar Degas, Francisco Goya, Yousuf Karsh, Edward Burtynsky, Janet Cardiff** and **George Bures Miller**.

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The AGA also features a children's gallery, *The BMO World of Creativity*, the new **Singhmar Centre for Art Education** and an outdoor sculpture by Albertan **Ken Macklin** on the Gallery's *City of Edmonton Terrace*.

Art classes and school programs begin on **February 22, 2010**. During this first week, the AGA will host more than 400 students and 400 teachers for the *Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention Association (GETCA)* conference. Within the spring semester there will be approximately 20 arts education programs. There will be three family studios, four kids Saturday art classes, three youth classes, four adult classes, one older adult class and a combination of six community and outreach programs for the spring semester. An average of four school programs will run every day.

The more than 1,300 works in AGA's Art Rental and Sales collection, ranging in medium, sizes and subject matter are now available for purchase or rental. The inventory is in a constant state of renewal and change with new artists joining our core group every year.

The final event as part of the AGA's opening week is the first in the new series of late night art parties, **Refinery**. The lively new series will feature Alberta-based artists from multiple disciplines, including film, music, dance, photography and design. There are three *Refinery* parties planned for 2010, each themed around a different AGA exhibition. The **February 6** party is inspired by the opening exhibition, **EDGAR DEGAS: Figures in Motion** and will take place on three floors of the new gallery. All advance tickets are sold-out, but limited tickets will be available for purchase at the door.

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ABOUT THE ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA

The Art Gallery of Alberta is a centre of excellence for the visual arts in Western Canada, connecting people, art and ideas. The AGA is focused on the development and presentation of original exhibitions of contemporary and historical art from Alberta, Canada and around the world. The AGA also offers a full-range of art education and public programs. Founded in 1924, the Art Gallery of Alberta maintains a collection of over 6,000 objects and is the oldest cultural institution in Alberta and the only museum in the province solely dedicated to the exhibition and preservation of art and visual culture. The AGA recently underwent a major re-building project. Designed by Los Angeles architect Randall Stout, the 85,000 sq foot (7,900 sq metres) new AGA opens to the public on January 31, 2010. The new Gallery features three floors of premiere exhibition space; the City of Edmonton Terrace; the Singhmar Centre for Art Education; Zinc resto lounge; shopAGA; Ledcor Theatre and an Art Rental and Sales Gallery.

The Art Gallery of Alberta is a not-for-profit organization that relies on the support of its Members, donors, sponsors and government. The AGA is grateful for the generous support of the many public and private donors and sponsors who have made the AGA's New Vision possible, as well as the ongoing support of the City of Edmonton, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, The Canada Council for the Arts and our Members.

Media Contact

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