

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver Art Gallery presents the most extensive solo exhibition of
celebrated Coast Salish artist Susan Point



A media preview will take place on Thursday, February 16, 2017, 9:00am at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Media attending please RSVP to Debra Zhou (dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

February 2, 2017, Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery is honoured to present *Susan Point: Spindle Whorl*, the most extensive exhibition to date featuring the work by this pre-eminent Musqueam artist. On view from February 18 to May 28, 2017 at the Gallery, this exhibition covers the artist's prolific career of three and a half decades, including over a hundred print and sculptural artworks that take the spindle whorl as their starting point.

Since the early 1980s, Susan Point has received wide acclaim for her remarkably accomplished oeuvre that forcefully asserts the vitality of Coast Salish culture, both past and present. She has produced an extensive body of prints and an expansive corpus of sculptural work in a wide variety of materials that includes glass, resin, concrete, steel, wood and paper. The range of techniques she has employed is as diverse as her selection of materials, including screen and wood-block printing, wood carving, paper casting and industrial methods of cutting steel. At the same time, the scale of her work ranges from the intimacy of jewelry she produced in the early 1980s to the monumental public sculptures she first undertook in the 1990s and continues to make today.

The Coast Salish spindle whorl has been a persistent motif in Point's work since the beginning of her career. Comprised of a small (usually) wooden disk with a rod inserted through the centre, this tool was traditionally used by Coast Salish women to prepare wool that would be woven into garments and ceremonial robes. Point has drawn upon the spindle whorl to provide a formal structure for her art while combining this motif with a uniquely Salish vocabulary of circles, crescents and curved triangles, elements that distinguish the art of her people from the formline-based art of northern First Nations peoples.

“While Susan Point’s practice is informed by a profound respect for Coast Salish traditions, she has pushed the boundaries of tradition in her desire to articulate Salish culture in contemporary terms. Although her work has been highly visible in British Columbia for decades—in part through her important public commissions—no consideration of the full range and richness of her practice has ever been mounted by an art museum. *Susan Point: Spindle Whorl* is intended to address this deficiency and to acknowledge and celebrate her extraordinary accomplishment,” says Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “As this exhibition shows, Susan Point has continually pushed the traditional form of the spindle whorl in extraordinary new directions.”

“I have to say that I have been fortunate in that my artistic expression is rooted in my Coast Salish cultural foundation; however, I consider myself a contemporary artist. Traditionally, the Salish peoples on the Northwest Coast never ever exploited the stories or meanings behind their cultural pieces (which we now call art), as they were private portrayals of family and history. When I design and work on a piece, regardless of medium, there are countless stories, thoughts and memories that go through my mind. I am redesigning the artwork all the time...to challenge myself and to experiment and express my ways of always being original,” says Susan Point in her artist statement.

Susan Point: Spindle Whorl is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Ian Thom, Senior Curator-Historical and Grant Arnold, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art. It is accompanied by an extensively illustrated 160-page hardcover book with essays by Bill McLennan on the historic role of the spindle whorl in Musqueam culture, Kathryn Bunn-Marcuse on the perspective of Susan Point’s aesthetics, Myrtle McKay on the place of Point’s work in contemporary Musqueam culture, and Thomas Cannell discussing Point’s important role as a teacher, as well as a text by Grant Arnold. The book is co-published by Black Dog Publishing and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Artist Biography

Born on the Salish Sea in 1952, Susan Point grew up on the Musqueam First Nations Reserve. Originally trained as a legal secretary, she entered the art world in 1981 when she enrolled in a jewelry-making course at Vancouver Community College. She quickly moved from working with metals to printmaking—making her first screenprints on her kitchen table—and sculpture. At the same time, she began to research traditional Coast Salish art under the guidance of Michael Kew, her uncle by marriage and an anthropologist at the University of British Columbia’s Museum of Anthropology. Over the years, Point has produced countless works in a variety of media, such as wood, stone, glass, bronze, copper, bone and silver. Point’s work has been shown in over 60 group exhibitions (a number of them international) and 12 solo shows. Notable solo exhibitions include *Salmon People, Coast Salish Fishing on the Fraser River*, Gulf of Georgia Cannery, Steveston (2010); *Susan Point: Coast Salish Artist*, Spirit Wrestler Gallery, Vancouver (2000); *Susan Point*, Motherland Gallery, Fukuoka, Japan (1999); and *New Visions: Serigraphs by Susan Point, Coast Salish Artist at the Museum of Anthropology*, the University of British Columbia, Vancouver (1986).

Her work has also appeared in *Challenging Traditions: Contemporary First Nations Art of the Northwest Coast* at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, ON (2009) and *Visions of British Columbia: A Landscape Manual* at the Vancouver Art Gallery (2010). She has received over 35 commissions for public art pieces, notably at Vancouver International Airport, Stanley Park, Langara College, the University of British Columbia, Museum of Anthropology and the Victoria Conference Centre. She has had nearly 50 commissions from institutions, associations and private collectors.

Point is an Officer of the Order of Canada and holds numerous honours and awards, among them an Indspire Achievement Award, a YWCA Woman of Distinction Award, a BC Creative Achievement Award and a Civic Merit Award from the City of Vancouver. She holds Honorary Doctorates from the

University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia and Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

About the Vancouver Art Gallery

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 innovative ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on the historical and contemporary art of British Columbia and international centres, with special attention to the accomplishments of First Nations artists and the art of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art founded in 2014. The Gallery's programs also explore the impacts of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture. www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

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.

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(left) Susan Point, *Halibut (State I of II)*, 2007, screenprint on paper, Courtesy of the Artist

(middle) Susan Point, *Ravens and Moon*, 2001, etched glass, maple, granite, Salish Weave Collection of George and Christiane Smyth, Photo: Janet Dwyer

(right) Susan Point, *Bounty II*, 2014, red cedar, paint fused etched, glass, Collection of Summer Cannell, Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

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IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

MEDIA CONTACT

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