

**Media Release
For Immediate Release**

Celebrate 50 Years of Canadian Art at Glenbow Museum this Spring

Calgary, AB (February 3, 2006) – Glenbow Museum is celebrating fifty years of Canadian art with its spring exhibition, *Variations: Holgate, Group of Seven & Contemporaries*. From March 18 to June 4, 2006, *Variations* features many of Canada's most beloved and well-known artists from the first half of the twentieth century.

Variations features two exhibits: *Edwin Holgate: Canadian Painter*, a travelling exhibit from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and *Beyond the Group of Seven: Paintings by their Contemporaries from the Glenbow Art Collection* which draws from Glenbow's own extensive art collection. Glenbow is also pleased to present a third art exhibit this spring: *Art and Society in Canada 1913-1950*, organized and circulated by the National Gallery of Canada.

"This is a great opportunity to see Canadian art at its best – including stunning landscapes of the Group of Seven in the 1920s; powerful and emotional art from the Depression era; and colourful and spirited abstractions of the '40s," says Monique Westra, Glenbow's art curator. "The Edwin Holgate exhibit, which is our feature exhibit, includes his best work – his famous evocative portraits and his spectacular nudes."

Edwin Holgate: Canadian Painter, travelling from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, is the first major retrospective on this important Canadian artist featuring over 125 works including paintings, drawings, prints and book illustrations. Edwin Holgate was invited to join the Group of Seven in 1929. Trained in Paris, he gained a reputation for his monumental paintings of nude figures set in Canadian wilderness landscapes and for portraits that show his expressiveness and sensitivity. There is a distinct local connection for this national travelling exhibit as several of the works are on loan from Calgary art collectors.

Glenbow Museum is drawing from its own art collection to present *Beyond the Group of Seven: Paintings by their Contemporaries from the Glenbow Art Collection*. The Group gained renown for the landscape movement that has dominated our perceptions of art between the First and Second World Wars and the decades that immediately followed. Their work was so popular that it overshadowed the many equally capable and interesting artists' painting at that time. *Beyond the Group of Seven* provides an opportunity to see past the Group's work to compare the pursuits of other artists and increase our awareness about the diversity of artistic practice in the first half of the twentieth century.

Art and Society in Canada 1913-1950, organized by the National Gallery of Canada, includes approximately 45 works by many of Canada's most well-known artists from the first half of the twentieth century. At that time, many artists, dedicated to the ideals of nationalism, social awareness and a liberated society, believed that art could affect and shape society. This exhibit explores three distinct artistic approaches that played important roles in shaping Canadian art: the Group of Seven, the Social Realists and *Les Automatistes*.

As part of Glenbow Museum's ongoing initiatives to bring the museum to life, a wide range of activities, programs and events are being developed to examine this period of creative and nationalistic exploration. Live jazz performances, improv-style plays, and films will further examine this vibrant artistic time in Canadian history.

Learn more about Glenbow Museum at www.glenbow.org or by calling (403) 268-4100 for details on hours, admission prices and further programming details.

Variations: Holgate, Group of Seven & Contemporaries is presented at Glenbow Museum by TransAlta and supported by the Calgary Region Arts Foundation, the Calgary Herald, CBC Calgary, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and Calgary Hyatt Regency.

Edwin Holgate: Canadian Painter is organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Art and Society in Canada 1913-1950 is organized and circulated by the National Gallery of Canada/Organisée et mise en tournée par le Musée des beaux-arts du Canada.

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Backgrounder
Edwin Holgate: Canadian Painter
Part of the exhibition, Variations: Holgate, Group of Seven & Contemporaries

Edwin Holgate (1892-1977) was a central figure in the development of modern Canadian art. He was a versatile artist - at once a portraitist, a painter of the human figure, landscapist, printmaker, book illustrator, war artist, draftsman, muralist and teacher. Travelling from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, *Edwin Holgate: Canadian Painter* is the first major retrospective on this artist exploring the many sides of this multifaceted artist. Of significant note is that a number of the loaned works in this national travelling exhibit come from Calgary art collectors.

A lover of the outdoors, Holgate painted many views of the Quebec countryside. In 1926, together with A.Y. Jackson, he travelled to the Skeena River area of British Columbia, where he sketched and painted the Gitksan people and their villages. Although landscape was a traditional subject matter, Holgate searched for a modern way to interpret it, focusing above all on form, structure, volume and colour to give visual impact to his work. These concerns he shared with the Group of Seven artists, who invited him to become a member in 1929.

Combining his commitment to landscape with his longstanding interest in the human figure, Holgate produced a number of important paintings and prints of outdoor female nudes. By placing nudes into a wilderness setting, Holgate gave his work a unique spin while offering a variation on the landscape aesthetic of the Group of Seven. While the female nude has a long history in art, its appearance within the context of a Group of Seven exhibition at that time was unprecedented. At a time in Canada when nudes in art were still considered controversial and could provoke moral outrage, Holgate's paintings of nudes were not only accepted but greatly admired.

But unlike most of the other Group artists, Holgate was as accomplished a portraitist as he was a landscape painter. Visitors will recognise one of the most famous portraits of Canadian art – Holgate's riveting portrait of *Ludivine*, 1930 in which he captures the haunting expression of a young girl in mourning, painted only days after the death of her parents.

Throughout his career, Holgate also became known for his wood engravings, earning him a place as one of Canada's foremost printmakers. A veteran of both World Wars, Holgate also became known for his war art.

A catalogue, *Edwin Holgate*, published by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts also accompanies this exhibit. *Edwin Holgate: Canadian Painter* is organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Variations: Holgate, Group of Seven & Contemporaries, on at Glenbow Museum from March 18 to June 4, 2006, includes *Edwin Holgate: Canadian Painter* organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and *Beyond the Group of Seven: Paintings by their Contemporaries from the Glenbow Art Collection*.

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Backgrounder
Beyond the Group of Seven
Part of the exhibition, Variations: Holgate, Group of Seven & Contemporaries

This exhibit featured as part of *Variations* is drawn from Glenbow Museum's own art collection. *Beyond the Group of Seven* provides an opportunity to see past the Group's work to compare the pursuits of other artists and increase our awareness about the diversity of artistic practice in the first half of the twentieth century in Canada.

The Group of Seven gained much acclaim for the landscape movement that dominates our perceptions of art between the First and Second World Wars and the decades that immediately followed. Their work was so popular that it overshadowed the many equally capable and interesting artists painting at that time. This impression created an artificial image of the period's homogeneity when in fact it was a time of plural voices, regional momentum and diverse artistic expression.

Within the first half of the twentieth century, many new art societies, alliances and groups formed; some artists were members of several groups at the same time, even if their causes seemed different. Among the many parallel groups and societies to form between 1907 and 1960 included: Canadian Art Club (1907-15), Group of Seven (1920-1932), Beaver Hall Hill Group (1920-21), Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour (formed 1925), Canadian Society of Graphic Art (formed 1923), Canadian Group of Painters (formed 1933), Les Automatistes (1941-1954), Contemporary Art Society (1939-1948) and Painters Eleven (1950-1960).

Through viewing highlights from Glenbow's art collection, *Beyond the Group of Seven* gives us an opportunity to compare the pursuits of many artists who have often been overshadowed. Broadly studied under the term of 'modernism,' the first half of the twentieth century in Canada saw artistic pursuits as diverse as regional landscape art, industrial themes, portraiture, urban and rural architecture, aesthetics and abstraction.

Variations: Holgate, Group of Seven & Contemporaries, on at Glenbow Museum from March 18 to June 4, 2006, includes *Edwin Holgate: Canadian Painter* organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and *Beyond the Group of Seven: Paintings by their Contemporaries from the Glenbow Art Collection*.

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Backgrounder
Art and Society in Canada 1913-1950

The National Gallery of Canada's exhibit, *Art and Society in Canada 1913-1950*, features approximately 45 unforgettable works by many of Canada's most beloved and well known artists. The exhibit explores different ideas about the role of art in the first half of the twentieth century.

At that time, many artists, dedicated to the ideals of nationalism, social awareness and a liberated society, believed that art could affect and shape society. *Art and Society* explores three distinct artistic approaches that played important roles in shaping Canadian art: the Group of Seven, the Social Realists and *Les Automatistes*.

In the 1920s, the Group of Seven wanted art to reveal Canada to Canadians and further the growth of the country. For them, it was the "North" which distinguished Canada from Europe and the vigorous portrayal of its land would help to forge an independent nation out of a colonial past. Their art was to play an essential role in discovering and fostering new, uniquely Canadian, values and identity. In many ways, art was a spiritual quest for the Group of Seven. Even during the economic crises of the 1930s some Group members affirmed that art should not involve itself with the political and social issues of the day but cultivate both national and universal values.

It was precisely these ideas which were repudiated by the next generation of artists that emerged in the 1930s, the Social Realists. For these younger artists, the idealism of the Group and their focus on landscape seemed escapist and superfluous in light of the increasing threats to freedom and the economic, social and political crises of their times. By depicting the lives of ordinary people suffering from social oppressions, Canadians could bear witness to the harsh realities of the day. Social Realist artists worked to integrate art and society, where art was used to promote humanistic values and address political struggles. Their goal was to attain a more just and egalitarian society.

In the 1940s, the realism of the thirties gave way to abstraction. A group of French Canadian artists known as *Les Automatistes*, led by Paul-Émile Borduas, rejected the oppressive religious and political conformity of Quebec society, seeking nothing less than a new world - a society made up of free peoples. They expressed their ideas in their 1948 manifesto, *Refus global*, and in their art. The boldness and freedom of abstract art, drawn spontaneously and automatically from the subconscious, became a metaphor for personal liberation.

Through their distinct approaches, the Group of Seven, the Social Realists and *Les Automatistes* presented the differing ideals of artists over three generations on the role of art in shaping society.

Art and Society in Canada 1913-1950 is organized and circulated by the National Gallery of Canada / Organisée et mise en tournée par le Musée des beaux-arts du Canada.

This exhibit is on at Glenbow Museum from March 18 to June 4, 2006 in conjunction with *Variations: Holgate, Group of Seven & Contemporaries*.

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Programming Highlights during Variations Exhibition

The Complete History of Canadian Art Abridged

“It’s history without all the boring stuff!”

Saturdays and Sundays from March 18 to June 4

1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

2nd floor lobby

Included with museum admission

What do you get when you cross a canoe, a paint splatter and a who’s who of Canadian art history? Discover the answer and more in this energetic improv-style show that is guaranteed to have visitors of all ages laughing and learning about some of Canada’s most memorable artworks and the artists who created them.

This program can also be booked as a school program on weekdays.

A *Live Interpretation* program supported by Petro-Canada and the Alberta Museums Association

Live at Glenbow

Every Saturday from March 18 to June 4

2:00 p.m.

2nd floor lobby

Included with museum admission

Join us every Saturday to enjoy the rhythms of the jazz age, Canadian style! Listen to stylish jazz renditions by members of the Mount Royal College Music Program as accompaniment to your Canadian art experience.

Canadian Art – Off the Wall!

Wednesday evening tours

April 6, May 4, June 1

Members \$16, Non-members \$20

Also available upon request to groups of 12-35 people (subject to availability)

Call 268-4110 for bookings.

Canada was established as a nation in 1867. Her identity, however, took a little longer and wasn't merely established by politicians signing a piece of paper. Canada's identity was forged by involvement in the two world wars, by symbols such as the maple leaf and beaver, and by the artists that captured the landscapes and people. Join interpreter Sean Bowie for a visual, cultural and historical journey through the pivotal events and societal changes that influenced and shaped the artists who created some of the works that defined our nation.

Variations Film Series

Tuesdays, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Selected Thursdays, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

(Film series begins on March 21 until June 1)

Burlington Resources Theatre at Glenbow Museum

Included with museum admission

Drop in for some cinematic art! Join us at Glenbow for a series of short films selected to reflect the art, artists and society of *Variations: Holgate, Group of Seven & Contemporaries*.

Visit www.glenbow.org for film titles, descriptions and times.

Discovery Room

Included with museum admission

Reveal your artistic side! Drop by our art-based open studio to create, explore and discover with your family any day of the week. The *Discovery Room* changes and evolves with every new special exhibition. For group bookings or more information, call 268-4110.

Activities focus on *Variations: Holgate, Group of Seven & Contemporaries*. Place yourself into a serene Canadian landscape to create your own photo portrait. Explore collage printmaking using a variety of textured materials or transform recycled magazine images into beautiful works of art. Want to bend reality? Create a self-portrait using your true or distorted reflection. The *Discovery Room* has activities for all ages and interests.

Please note: Parents or guardians must remain with their children (12 years and younger) while visiting the *Discovery Room*.

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