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VANCOUVER'S ART SCENE GETS A BOOST

VANCOUVER'S HISTORIC Chinatown, located in what is commonly said to be Canada's poorest postal zone, may seem an unlikely place for an international collection of contemporary art. Yet this is exactly where Bob Rennie, Vancouver's premier real-estate broker and condominium marketer, opened his collection and offices last fall, in a building purchased and renovated for that purpose. Cities like Miami, Basel and Berlin already boast private collections that allow public access, but the Rennie Collection is the first of its kind in Vancouver, where there are few major collectors of contemporary art.

Rennie started acquiring early 20th-century Canadian and American art more than 30 years ago, deciding in the 1990s to focus on international contemporary art, particularly works that address issues of identity and social injustice, and that use appropriation. He currently serves as chair of the North American acquisitions committee for Tate Modern in London. Among the largest private holdings

of contemporary art in Canada, the Rennie Collection comprises over 1,000 works by 170 artists, including John Baldessari, David Claerbout, Martin Creed, Gilbert & George, Mary Heilmann, Thomas Houseago, Brian Jungen, Mike Kelley, Louise Lawler and Ian Wallace. To date Rennie has collected 40 artists in depth, including Rodney Graham, Kerry James Marshall and Mona Hatoum, who was the subject of the inaugural exhibition, "Mona Hatoum: Collected Works," which spanned the years 1988 to 2006.

The Rennie Collection is located in the 1889 Wing Sang Building, the oldest structure in Chinatown. Rennie joined the structure with another erected in 1912, preserving that building's original exterior brick wall. The composite building now contains both office space and 20,000 square feet for exhibitions, with a basement project room and roof garden. The collection is overseen by Rennie, his life partner Carey Fouks and director Wendy Chang; they intend to mount two or three exhibitions a year with accompanying catalogues. Catherine Grenier, deputy director at the Pompidou, wrote the Mona Hatoum essay, and L.A.-based writer Andrew Berardini provided one for the current Richard Jackson exhibition [May 1-Sept. 25].

Other changes are afoot for new art in Vancouver. The Vancouver Art Gallery, the city's largest venue for contemporary and historical art, has announced expansion plans that would more than double its current size. And the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology

recently expanded its galleries and contemporary art programming. For now, the Rennie Collection is open two days a week on a rotating schedule by appointment. It's a much-needed addition to Vancouver's art options, and will likely attract international attention to the city's small but active contemporary scene.

—Rachel Rosenfield Lafo



Above, Martin Creed, *Work No. 851: Everything Is Going to Be Alright*, 2009. Left, rooftop garden with Thomas Houseago's *Untitled Striding Figure*, 1, 2007, and Dan Graham's *Two Half Cylinders*, 2008.

