

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Jeff Wall at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

Montréal, January 27, 1999. From February 12 to April 25, 1999, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal presents the exhibition *Jeff Wall – Pictures 1990-1998*. This is the artist's first ever solo exhibition in Québec.

Jeff Wall, "painter of modern life"

Jeff Wall is unquestionably one of the leading Canadian artists of the latter part of this century. Since the late seventies, he has employed the photographic medium to create a powerful, meticulous body of work largely inspired by a re-reading of the masterpieces of Western painting. He is to this turn of the millennium what an artist like Manet was for the last turn of the century, "the painter of modern life," to use Baudelaire's expression. It is not just by chance that he is identified this way, for his work is very much intended as a social critique of life today. Curator Réal Lussier sums up Wall's approach as follows: "Making use of strategies from the world of advertising, along with a movie director's approach, the artist sets out to reconcile the great pictorial tradition with the picture he paints of contemporary society." The artist's "signature" readily recognizable in his works up to the early nineties was, in fact, his use of light-boxes illuminated like large transparencies.

Masterpieces in the great photographic tradition

Starting in 1990, Wall's work became increasingly complex, in terms of both the subjects and the forms of production and use of ever more sophisticated technology (digitization, touch-ups and computer-generated special effects). In composition and theme, his current works form a continuation of his earlier concerns. They include landscapes (*The Pine on the Corner*, 1990; *River Road*, 1997) and genre scenes (*Insomnia, A Hunting Scene*, 1994). He has also introduced allegory (*The Giant*, 1992), dark humour and the grotesque (*The Vampires' Picnic*, 1991; *Dead Troops Talk (A vision after an ambush of a Red Army patrol, near Moqor, Afghanistan, winter 1986)*, 1992), and still life (*An Octopus*, 1990; *A Sunflower*, 1995) in formal compositions. The nineties have seen the appearance of black and white in his work, reviving the great photographic tradition of Cartier-Bresson and Walker Evans (*Volunteer*, 1996; *Citizen*, 1996).

This exhibition mounted by the Musée provides an overview of Jeff Wall's production in the past decade. It comprises more than 30 major works, presented in the three main galleries reserved for temporary exhibitions, and is divided into five sections, including one whole gallery devoted to black-and-white works.

Jeff Wall was born in 1946 in Vancouver, where he continues to live and work. After taking art history at the University of British Columbia, Wall pursued his studies at the Courtauld Institute of Art. He next taught art of the 19th and 20th centuries at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. On returning to Vancouver, he taught first at Simon Fraser University and then at the University of British Columbia. His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions abroad. The most recent include those presented at the Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris, Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art and London's Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1995 and 1996. A major retrospective of his work was also held at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and the Art Tower Mito in Japan in 1997 and 1998.

Catalogue and reading room

A catalogue accompanies the exhibition. This 101-page publication includes essays by curator Réal Lussier and art historian Nicole Gingras, the list of works and a bibliography of the artist, along with 22 reproductions in colour and six in black and white. It may be purchased for \$44.00 at the Musée's Olivieri Bookstore and at other bookstores. As well, a reading room will be provided for visitors, who may also consult a Web site on the artist there.

The exhibition *Jeff Wall – Pictures 1990-1998* carries on the Musée's tradition of monographs devoted to photographers, such as Geneviève Cadieux, Angela Grauerholz, Andrés Serrano and Robert Doisneau.

Meet Jeff Wall on February 12

The exhibition opens officially on Thursday, February 11, 1999, at 6 p.m. The artist will give a lecture (in English) on Friday, February 12, at 5 p.m. sharp.

The exhibition received financial support from the Canada Council for the Arts, Canada Post Corporation and Pentacom SC&R.

- 30 -

Press kits and visual material available on request.

Information: Danielle Legentil
Media Relations Coordinator
(514) 847-6232