



THE HNATYSHYN FOUNDATION

PRESS RELEASE

ARTIST GEOFFREY FARMER AND CURATOR PHILIP MONK RECEIVE HNATYSHYN AWARDS

OTTAWA, November 3, 2011 – Gerda Hnatyshyn, C.C., President and Chair of the Board of The Hnatyshyn Foundation today announced the recipients of the 2011 *Hnatyshyn Foundation Visual Arts Awards*. The \$25,000 prize for outstanding achievement by a Canadian artist is awarded to Geoffrey Farmer of Vancouver, while the winner of the \$15,000 award for curatorial excellence in contemporary art is Philip Monk, Director of the Art Gallery of York University in Toronto. A total of \$225,000 has been awarded since 2006.

The award recipients were selected by a jury of arts professionals from across Canada:

- Catherine Crowston, Deputy Director / Chief Curator of the Art Gallery of Alberta;
- Barbara Fischer, Executive Director/Chief Curator, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto;
- Robert Fones, Visual Artist and Writer, Toronto;
- Angela Grauerholz, Director, Centre de design de l'*UQAM*, Professor, Artist, Montréal;
- Scott Watson, Director/Curator of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver.

Geoffrey Farmer currently lives and works in Vancouver, British Columbia. At once fragile and multiform, discreet and omnipresent, Farmer's work is the product of simple yet strategic manipulations. It operates on the same level as everyday experience: simultaneously rational and chaotic, undeniably concrete yet shaped by the imagination. In a voice that combines poetry and social commentary, his work conjures and reactivates a variety of narratives drawn from history, popular culture, art history and social environments. It also reflects an interest in the exhibition itself – both its fictional power and its temporal component. Farmer focuses on particular features of these diverse sources, notably concepts of work and process, transformation and performance.

Farmer has major forthcoming retrospective at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2013. Recent solo exhibitions include *Mondegreen* (with Jeremy Millar), Project Arts Centre, Dublin (2011); *Casey Kaplan*, New York (2011); *REDCAT*, Los Angeles (2011); *Walter Philips Gallery*, Banff (2010); *Catriona Jeffries*, Vancouver, (2010); *Museo Experimental El Eco*, Mexico City (2010); *Witte de With*, Rotterdam (2008) and a mid-career retrospective at the *Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal* (2008). His work has been included in the following group exhibitions, *People Things Enter Exit*, Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver (2011); *Istanbul Biennial* (2011); *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, CCA

Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco (2010); Nomads, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2009); Sydney Biennial (2008); The World as a Stage, Tate Modern, London (2007). His work was the focus of a monograph published by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in 2008.

In recommending Geoffrey Farmer for the Hnatyshyn Foundation Visual Art Award, the jury considered his original and steadfastly courageous practice. "Choosing to locate his art in activity, process and relationships, Farmer counters the idea that a museum is a static zone for inert objects. His installations can invoke the stage of Noh theatre or take place within the walls of the museum. Both topical and poetically dream-like, they set in motion assemblage and collage as ways of reading history and contemporary crises.

Since his monumental "Pale Fire Freedom Machine", a work which celebrates the forgotten proletariat, at the Power Plant in 2005, Farmer has gone on to have major installations at Tate Modern, the Biennale of Sydney and the Istanbul Biennial among other international venues. Despite his international following, Geoffrey Farmer pays much attention to the local scene. For a recent Vancouver City Public Art Commission, Farmer designed and opened a gallery on Vancouver's east side to show the work of artists, other than himself, and to unite the creative community. It is this great generosity that lies at the heart of his artistic practice."

The recipient of the 2010 Hnatyshyn Foundation Award for Curatorial Excellence in Contemporary Art is **Philip Monk**, Director of the Art Gallery of York University in Toronto. Previously he was curator at The Power Plant (1994 – 2003) and the Art Gallery of Ontario (1985 – 1993). Between 1977 – 1984, he was a writer and free-lance curator. As well as many catalogues, articles, essays, and reviews, he has published six books: *Struggles with the Image: Essays in Art Criticism* (1988); *Double-Cross: The Hollywood Films of Douglas Gordon* (2003), *Spirit Hunter: The Haunting of American Culture by Myths of Violence* (2005); *Stan Douglas: Discordant Absences* (2006); *Disassembling the Archive: Fiona Tan* (2007); *while I have lying here perfectly still: The Saskia Olde Wolbers Files* (2009). A book on General Idea is forthcoming. In 2009, he was the inaugural recipient of the Ontario Association of Art Galleries Lifetime Achievement Award.

In making the curatorial award recommendation, the jury praised his enormous, ongoing contribution to contemporary art in Canada and internationally, which he has addressed with outstanding rigour and intellectual acuity in numerous exhibitions, lectures and substantial publications. "The history of the Toronto arts community, in particular, is indelibly marked by his critical candour and dedicated curatorial work from the late 1970s on, having been the focus of many important group and solo exhibitions of artists such as Michael Snow, Ian Carr-Harris, Robin Collyer, Liz Magor, Shirley Wiitasalo, General Idea, Fastwurms, Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins and many others. Widely recognized as one of the most prolific and articulate writers on contemporary art in Canada, Monk is also internationally respected for his vigorous and innovative curatorial transformation of the Art Gallery of York University, one of Canada's pre-eminent University-based galleries, into a particularly vibrant, acutely current and challenging institution."

The Hnatyshyn Foundation offers its sincere congratulations to this year's recipients.

About The Hnatyshyn Foundation

The Hnatyshyn Foundation is a private charity established by the late Right Honourable Ramon John Hnatyshyn, Canada's twenty-fourth Governor General, to assist emerging and established artists in all disciplines with their schooling and training, and promote to the Canadian public the importance of the arts in our society. Its programs are funded by donations from government, foundations, corporations and individuals. The Department of Canadian Heritage has provided \$2.4 million in matching funds to the Foundation.

Information about *The Hnatyshyn Foundation Visual Arts Awards* is available on the Foundation's website www.rjhf.com, or by contacting:

Dawn Firestone
Executive Director
The Hnatyshyn Foundation
(613) 233-0108
director@rjhf.com