

**PRESS RELEASE****ARTISTS JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BURES MILLER AND  
CURATOR BARBARA FISCHER RECEIVE HNATYSHYN AWARDS**

**OTTAWA, December 2, 2008** – The recipients of the 2008 *Hnatyshyn Foundation Visual Arts Awards* are artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, while University of Toronto art gallery director and curator Barbara Fischer receives the curatorial award. The \$25,000 prize for outstanding achievement by a Canadian artist and the \$15,000 award for curatorial excellence in contemporary art were presented tonight in Toronto by Gerda Hnatyshyn, C.C., President and Chair of the Board of The Hnatyshyn Foundation, at a ceremony and reception held at the University of Toronto.

The award recipients were selected by a jury of arts professionals from across Canada: Christina Ritchie, Director of the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver; Jeffrey Spalding, President and C.E.O. of the Glenbow Museum, Calgary; Louise Dompierre, President and C.E.O. of the Art Gallery of Hamilton; Marc Mayer, Director of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; and Marlene Creates, Newfoundland artist.

Janet Cardiff, born in 1957 in Brussels, Ontario, and George Bures Miller, born in 1960 in Vegreville, Alberta, have been practicing artists, singly and in tandem, since the 1980s. In recent years their collaborative multimedia practice has been celebrated around the world and they have generated much excitement and pride as ambassadors for Canadian contemporary art. The artists currently live and work in Grindrod, British Columbia and Berlin, Germany.

In 2001 Cardiff and Miller became the first Canadian artists to win the prestigious Venice Biennale Special Award for their installation *The Paradise Institute*. In the same year Cardiff's solo work *Forty-Part Motet* was awarded the Millennium Prize by the National Gallery of Canada. The piece was so well received by the public that the National Gallery extended the exhibition by several months and the installation has been circulating internationally ever since. Recent works by the team include *The Secret Hotel* (2005), *Opera for a Small Room* (2005), *The Killing Machine* (2007), and *A Murder of Crows* (2008), which was one of the highlights of the 2008 Sydney Biennale. A solo exhibition of their work was also presented at the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, as well as Modern Art Oxford (UK), in 2008.

In recommending Cardiff and Miller for the Hnatyshyn Foundation Visual Arts Award, the jury highlighted the international impact of their artistic practice: "Since the 1990s, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller have made engaging, challenging installation works that have contributed enormously to the evolution of contemporary art. Their poetic, multifaceted exhibitions have moved and influenced a number of generations of art makers across Canada and throughout the world. Their intelligent, thoughtful and emotionally moving art embraces our human frailty and vulnerability through a mix of genres: film noir, sci-fi thriller and experimental film. Their unique use of binaural "surround sound" and haunting music creates enchanting immersive experiences. Cardiff and Miller draw upon boundless numbers of disciplines to weave together stories that confront the mysteries of the heart, the soul and the workings of the human mind."

The recipient of the 2008 Hnatyshyn Foundation Award for Curatorial Excellence in Contemporary Art is Barbara Fischer, lecturer, writer, and Executive Director / Chief Curator of the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at the University of Toronto. Barbara Fischer has an M.A. in art history from York University. She formerly held curatorial positions at the Open Space Gallery (Victoria, B.C.), the Walter Phillips Gallery (Banff Centre), the Art Gallery of Ontario, The Power Plant (Toronto) and the Blackwood Gallery (University of Toronto at Mississauga).

Ms. Fischer has curated numerous solo exhibitions of contemporary Canadian artists including John Greyson, Tanya Mars, Stan Douglas and Fastwurms, as well as group exhibitions of Canadian and international conceptual art, photo-based works, video and performance, sculpture, outdoor projects, painting and drawing. In 2009, Ms. Fischer will curate the official Canadian exhibition by artist Mark Lewis at the Venice Biennale of Visual Art, the most prestigious international venue for the visual arts.

In recommending Barbara Fischer for the curatorial award the jury praised the deep understanding of artists and their work that underlies her curatorial process. "Whether reexamining works of historical significance or introducing new work by an emerging artist, Barbara unites her deep-rooted connection to the issues that motivate artistic practices with dedicated scholarship. Her ability to apply broad art historical and theoretical knowledge to nascent ideas circulating among artists has enabled her to identify key features of emerging concerns. This same ability has given her writing both lucidity and intellectual authority. Barbara knows her community profoundly, which provides her with advance knowledge of the artistic questions that inspire that community and which, in turn, sustains the courage of her commitments. In her academic engagements Barbara has shown herself to be a generous teacher and mentor, inspiring emulation and deep respect, while demonstrating her commitment to the ongoing development of Canadian art practices at the highest level."

The Hnatyshyn Foundation is a private charity established by the late Right Honourable Ramon John Hnatyshyn, Canada's twenty-fourth Governor General. 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](http://www.rjhf.com)

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