

**For Immediate Release**  
**January 30, 2012**



*William Kurelek: The Messenger* delivers near-record attendance  
at Art Gallery of Hamilton season opening celebration

2.256

Over 2,200 visitors inundated the Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) for its Winter Opening on Sunday, January 29. The AGH honoured four exhibitions: *William Kurelek: The Messenger*, *Mark Lewis: Rush Hour, Morning and Evening, Cheapside*; *Mark Lewis: Fortel*; *Kristin Bjornerud: Safe Harbour*; and *Size Matters*. The final number of 2,256 visitors is just 106 people short of the attendance record that marked the Gallery's re-opening in 2005.

"We were absolutely delighted by the response from the public, many who travelled great distances to attend," says Louise Dompierre, AGH President and CEO. "We were gratified to have members of the Kurelek family join us for this celebration, as well as artists Mark Lewis and Kristin Bjornerud. Having our strongest attendance since our 2005 re-opening on a snowy Sunday afternoon in late January speaks volumes about the appeal of the exhibitions on offer."

The largest exhibition of the artist's work ever assembled, *William Kurelek: The Messenger* is a collaboration between the Art Gallery of Hamilton, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. It was co-curated by Tobi Bruce, Andrew Kear and Mary Jo Hughes. At the opening, Stephen Kurelek, the late artist's son, spoke poignantly about his father's work and shared insight into the meaning behind several of his paintings.

Hamilton-born artist Mark Lewis was in attendance at the opening, his first visit to Hamilton since the age of six months. Winner of the inaugural Gershon Iskowitz Prize in 2007, Lewis represented Canada at the 2009 Venice Biennale to great international acclaim. Kristin Bjornerud, also present at the opening, won the Brucebo Fine Art Foundation Scholarship, allowing her to spend three months in residence on the Swedish island of Gotland. Some of the works on view in her exhibition *Safe Harbour* were completed during this residency.

The Kurelek, Lewis, and Bjornerud exhibitions are part of *A League of Their Own*, a year-long celebration of visionary Canadian artists at the Art Gallery of Hamilton. The themed year is presented by TD.

Founded in 1914, the Art Gallery of Hamilton owns one of Canada's finest art collections. Over 160,000 people visited the Gallery in 2010.

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**To access high-resolution images of AGH exhibitions and programming**, please e-mail:  
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