

For immediate release

**Art Gallery of Hamilton and multimedia artist David Rokeby Brazil-bound
as Canada's representatives to famed São Paulo Biennial**

A three-member jury of Canadian senior gallery directors has selected a submission by Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) Chief Curator Shirley Madill featuring work by David Rokeby to represent Canada at the famous São Paulo Biennial, which takes place in South America's largest city from September 25th – December 19th, 2004. The jury received six proposals from the 27 Canadian visual arts organizations that were invited to submit applications to represent Canada in this prestigious international art fair. Founded in 1951, the São Paulo Biennial is South America's premier visual arts event and one of the largest international art biennials in the world. The Biennial building boasts 30,000 square metres of exhibition space (roughly the size of 5 ½ football fields).

"For the Art Gallery of Hamilton, this honour is on par with having a film screened at the Cannes Film Festival, coaching the Canadian Olympic hockey team, or winning a Juno," says AGH President and C.E.O. Louise Dompierre. "The Biennale presents only one show per nation, and our submission has been selected to represent Canada. In addition to the 10,000 visitors a day who experience the Biennale over three months, art critics and travel writers from all over the world will be sending word home that Canada is producing some very exciting art, and it's showcased in Hamilton."

The 26th São Paulo Biennial's Chief Curator titled this year's Biennial *Image Smugglers in a Free Territory*. He refers to artists as "image smugglers" and the Biennial as free territory and "no man's land" in which to build utopian settlements for the future. Canada's representation is jointly funded by the Canada Council, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Art Gallery of Hamilton.

David Rokeby's proposed work *Constellation* will use cameras in well-lit locations inside the Biennial to capture and isolate images of moving people. The collected images will be analyzed for colour, shape or speed of motion and then projected onto large screens that stretch across the length of the room. The images will constantly be changing, with the oldest images gradually disappearing under layers of more recently captured images of visitors to the Biennial.

"*Constellation* builds on the work that David presented at the Art Gallery of Hamilton in 2002 as part of our New Media Series," says Chief Curator Shirley Madill. "His art seizes the imagination and invites – and sometimes coerces –

visitors to become an integral part of the installation. In seizing the opportunity to respond to the theme of Image Smugglers, Rokeby's work instantly came to mind. His work presents media-space as a no man's land that opens new avenues for exploration of the undefined relationship between human beings and the computers that capture and analyze their images."

"I was greatly honoured when the Art Gallery of Hamilton decided to propose my work for the São Paulo Biennial," says David Rokeby. "And now, to actually have been chosen to represent Canada at this very important and exciting event is an even greater honour. I am surprised and thrilled! With an audience that mixes everything from elite international art collectors and critics to the warm and exuberant Brazilian public, the São Paulo Biennial is a particularly interesting context for an artist like myself, whose work often directly involves the audience as an integral part."

David Rokeby is a pioneer in interactive art and has seen the technologies he has developed for his art used for other applications. For example, his best known work, *Very Nervous System* (1986-90), uses video cameras, computers and synthesizers to create an interactive space in which body movements are translated into music. The technology he developed for this work is now widely used by composers, choreographers, musicians, artists and music therapists. A recipient of the 2002 Governor General's Award for Visual and Media Arts, Rokeby was one of three artists chosen to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale in Architecture in 2002. He has won Austria's Prix Ars Electronica Award of Distinction three times and was awarded the first BAFTA award for interactive art from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

This announcement also marks an important milestone for the Art Gallery of Hamilton and its growing international role in the art world. Recently, the AGH loaned works to exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Gallery staff members are also working on an exhibition showcasing Canadian artist Janet Cardiff's work with Denmark's Aarhus Kunstmuseum and another featuring works by Canadian Inuit artists and Finland's Saami Indigenous peoples.

The Art Gallery of Hamilton is undergoing major renovations that will transform an aging building into an international art destination and safeguard its 8,000-plus work permanent collection and visiting exhibitions from the leaks and inadequate environmental controls currently plaguing the building. The AGH will relaunch in April 2005 with two major exhibitions: *Lasting Impressions: Celebrated Works from the Art Gallery of Hamilton*, featuring the Gallery's significant Canadian works, and *Heaven and Earth Unveiled: European Treasures from the Tanenbaum Collection*; these exhibitions will then travel to galleries and art museums across Canada. During the construction period, the AGH will conduct workshops, hold events and feature exhibitions at off-site locations throughout Hamilton and area.