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P R E S S R E L E A S E

**RETIRED VANCOUVER CURATOR, ALVIN BALKIND,
RECIPIENT OF FIRST VIVA AWARD OF HONOUR**

On April 25, 1992 at 8:30 p.m. at a ceremony held at the Vancouver Art Gallery the VIVA Selection Committee will announce that Vancouver curator Alvin Balkind will be presented with first VIVA Award of Honour. This award is given every five years to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the visual arts in British Columbia. The award carries a cash value of \$50,000.

The VIVA Selection Committee is made up of artists, critics and curators who are asked by the Foundation to bring together a selection of unsolicited nominees to be discussed with respect to their appropriateness for this Award. In this sense it is not a competition and there is no request for submissions.

The recipient Alvin Balkind has been a seminal force within the Vancouver art scene since his arrival here in 1955. He was co-founder with Abraham Rogatnick of the New Design Gallery in Vancouver which led the way in showing advanced British Columbian -- and Canadian -- art.

His influence was most clearly felt during the years he was with the University of British Columbia from 1962-73 as curator of the Fine Arts Gallery. He mounted innovative exhibitions such as BAGGED PLACE (N.E Thing Co.); CHAIRS; ART BECOMES REALITY (the first American Pop Art show in Canada); JAPANESE CULINARY POP; WHOLE MESSAGE HOLOGRAPHY (first holography show in Vancouver) and a host of others. He was as well a major contributor to the Festival of Contemporary Arts at the University and an instructor in art gallery training. Most importantly he was a steady visitor to artists in their studios, giving particular encouragement to young artists, and urging them to push their ideas to the limit. As a result, his 'underground' gallery became such a brilliant focus of art in Vancouver during the sixties and early seventies as to send ripples of interest and excitement across Canada and down the Coast.

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His subsequent career took him first to Toronto where from 1973 to 1975 he served as Curator of Contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Ontario and then back to the west coast where he became Chief Curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery from 1975-78. From 1985-1987 he was Head of the Visual Art Studio at the Banff School of Fine Arts.

As an indefatigable follower of the Vancouver art scene he long since won a special place of respect and affection among artists. Throughout the years he has continued to demonstrate the diversity of his interests and the scope of his vision. Always beneath his characteristic panache has been his commitment to the fresh and original in its most varied and astounding forms. His role in creating a climate open to new art and sympathetic to venturesome artists has been a vital one.

Balkind was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and has been a model citizen of Canada since 1969. He studied at the John Hopkins University, Baltimore and the Sorbonne, Paris. He is the author of numerous essays and articles published in catalogues, magazines and books.

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A press kit containing a photograph and detailed biographical information is available upon request. Call Janice Whitehead, (604)254-1405.