DO NOT RELEASE BEFORE MAY 30, 2002

May 29, 2002

CONTACT:
Janice Whitehead
Fax 604-254-1314, Tel 604-254-1405
email preview@portal.ca

JEFF WALL, RATED ONE OF THE TEN BEST LIVING ARTISTS TODAY, RECEIVES $50,000 VIVA AWARD OF HONOUR

Each Spring, the Vancouver art community eagerly awaits the announcement of the annual VIVA awards for achievement in the visual arts. On Wednesday, May 29 at 8 pm at the Vancouver Art Gallery, this year's Selection Committee will announce that B.C. artist **JEFF WALL** has been chosen for the prestigious cash award. The Award of Honour, presented every five years, is given to an individual who has had an important, sustained influence on the visual arts in British Columbia

The VIVA Awards were established in 1987 by the Jack and Doris Shadbolt Foundation for the Visual Arts. In between the large Award of Honour, each year two smaller awards of $10,000 each are given to two mid-career artists who have demonstrated strong creative potential and a long-term commitment to their work.

A new jury is appointed each year by VIVA's trustees to conduct a province-wide search for the candidates and to select the winners. The names of each year's selection panel and the recipients are a closely-guarded secret until the last minute. Candidates for these awards must be working with visual arts media. The committee does not accept nominations for applications. Instead, the recipients are selected by a majority vote for their perceived creative potential and accomplishment. Following the selection, there is no criteria or stipulation for how the money may be used by the artists.

The well-known philanthropists and community arts supporters Doris Shadbolt and her late husband Jack Shadbolt have been reluctant to have their names prominently displayed in the title of the foundation. For both, the awards have been a way of giving back to the art community the support they have received. Jack Shadbolt , who died in 1999, was a significant artist, teacher and arts advocate, while Doris has been equally successful as a writer, historian, curator and critic.

more ....

SECRETARY
1556 William Street
Vancouver, BC
Canada V5L 2R2
Telephone 604-254-1405
Fax 604-254-1314

RECIPIENT OF THE 2002 VIVA AWARD OF HONOUR

JEFF WALL

The work of this year's VIVA winner represents the extent to which contemporary B.C. photography has captured international critical regard. Over the past 25 years, **Jeff Wall** has pioneered a unique form of narrative photography that has nearly single-handedly established Canada's international profile in photography. For many years, Wall received a broader reception in Europe than on his native continent. His work has been featured in well over 200 group exhibitions internationally, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art Barcelona, the Whitney, and the Art Institute of Chicago. He's also had many prestigious international solo exhibitions - over 10 in the last 2 years.

This is the artist who a panel of experts enlisted by *Art News* magazine voted *one of the top 10 living artists in the world in 1999*, and who has been feted in cover stories by *Art in America*, and features in *Time Canada*, *Harper's Bazaar* fashion magazine, and even a documentary film traveling the film festival circuit and appearing at the Vancouver International Film Festival. Yet only twice in the last 10 years has Wall received the critical solo attention deserved in Canada: one solo show in 1990 at the Vancouver Art Gallery and another in 1999 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Montreal. The 55-year old artist, who lives and works in Vancouver, Canada, isn't represented by a local gallery.

Jeff Wall is best known for his innovative use of the light box. Set in a lightbox frame similar to that of an advertisement, a TV or film screen, his large-scale or monumental photographs are backlit, appearing as spectacular, glowing icons or archetypes of modern life. There is nothing accidental about the timeless scenes Wall, referred to by some critics as "today's painter of modern life" (as Manet was in his day), presents to his audiences. Many of his photographs take many months or years to create. They are what he calls "cinematographic" narrative works. Wall painstakingly stages each of his tableaux, using photography like painting, choosing the location, characters, genre or storyline of each photograph and rehearsing with actors each shot, and often digitally manipulating and combining discrete images to create a whole. Some of his works are consciously modeled "updates" of famous artworks from the past: for instance, Wall's *Picture for Women, The Arrest, The Drain, Dead Troops Talk* recall specific works by, respectively, the genre painters Manet, Caravaggio, Cézanne, and Goya. Wall's purpose in staging & spectacularizing realistic scenes is to create a dissonance, forcing us to ponder what is natural and what is not in art, history, and philosophy, forcing us to engage in every manner of thought, much like the subjects in his work who are frozen always deep and still in the process of pure cogito.

more...

SECRETARY
1556 William Street
Vancouver, BC
Canada V5L 2R2
Telephone 604-254-1405
Fax 604-254-1314

RECIPIENT OF THE 2002 VIVA AWARD OF HONOUR

JEFF WALL

Wall's work stands as a rejection of the photographic tradition of the 20th Century as epitomized by Henri Cartier-Bresson, of photography as "artful reportage" dependent on capturing chance events as they occur in reality. Instead, Wall merges photography with fiction, acting equal part photographer, author and director over a narrative created over a span of time. In this way, he can pack his photographs dense with meaning, symbol and gesture.

Wall describes his pictures alternatively as "prose poems", "philosophical comedies", and "social critiques". His tone ranges from the playful – a meditation on our self-absorbedness in *The Stumbling Block* (1991), or the possibilities for an afterlife in *The Flooded Grave* (1998-2000) – to the serious – representations of urban poverty & malaise in *Abundance* (1985), *Diatribe* (1985) or the *Eviction Struggle* (1988), racism in *Mimic* (1982) or *The Holocaust Memorial* (1987), capitalism and the labouring classes in *Untangling* (1994) and *Outburst* (1989), war in *Dead Troops Talk* (1992) – and finally, the banal – in *Jello* (1995) two girls contemplate the suburban dessert of choice in their upper-middle class kitchen.

Trained in art history, not studio practice, Jeff Wall took his BA and MA at UBC and doctoral training at London's Courtauld Institute. For many years, he worked as a professor of art history, first at SFU, and until recently, at UBC. He maintains a large studio space in Vancouver.

- 30 -

High resolution scans available upon request.
Email requests to: preview@portal.ca or telephone 604.254.1405

SECRETARY
1556 William Street
Vancouver, BC
Canada V5L 2R2
Telephone 604·254·1405
Fax 604·254·1314