

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Howie Tsui: Retainers of Anarchy* incorporates martial arts and Hong Kong politics in a new twenty-five metre hand-drawn animation**



A media tour of *Howie Tsui: Retainers of Anarchy* and *Pacific Crossings: Hong Kong Artists in Vancouver* will take place on **Thursday, March 2, 2017, 9:00am** at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Media attending please RSVP to Justin Mah (jmah@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

February 23, 2017, Vancouver, BC – Opening on March 4, 2017, at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver-based artist Howie Tsui's solo exhibition *Retainers of Anarchy* is an amalgamation of martial arts characters and techniques woven together with threads of social and political realities of present-day Hong Kong. Presented as a non-linear counter narrative in the form of a twenty-five metre hand-drawn animation, this unique artwork offers an opportunity to reflect on notions of identity and nationhood given Hong Kong's political past and its more recent surge of political unrest.

Born in Hong Kong and raised in Lagos, Nigeria and Thunder Bay, Ontario, Howie Tsui, like so many Canadians, straddles many worlds. For more than a decade, he has chosen to explore Asian history and pop culture, creating ironic cross-references that bring unexplainable contradictions to the fore. In the spirit of previous work, the artist addresses ideas of resistance, this time using the narrative tool of *wuxia*, a popular genre of Chinese fantasy fiction and film depicting martial arts battles in ancient China. *Wuxia* often constructs stories around warrior heroes from lower social classes who uphold chivalric ideals against oppressive forces during unstable times.

In *Retainers of Anarchy*, Howie Tsui uses the genre as a tool of pointed critique, reflecting his particular interest in the paradox of how self-governed harmony can exist in places of lawlessness, such as the controversial Walled City settlement in Hong Kong, and conversely, how rampant corruption may flourish in governed states.

For Howie Tsui, *wuxia* provides not only a connection to a distant culture; it also offers multiple points of entry for a diverse audience. The result of the artist's careful weaving of multifaceted

source material is a visually complex, richly textured landscape of personal imagination, cultural appropriation and historical reference. As a crowning achievement, *Retainers of Anarchy* dismantles geographical divisions and historic timelines, offering encounters with both legend and reality.

Howie Tsui: Retainers of Anarchy is collaboratively organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery, Ottawa Art Gallery and Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. The Vancouver iteration is curated by Diana Freundl, Associate Curator, Asian Art.

About the Vancouver Art Gallery

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most respected and innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's innovative ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on the historical and contemporary art of British Columbia and international centres, with special attention to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists and the art of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art founded in 2014. The Gallery's programs also explore the impacts of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture. www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Image credits:

(left) Howie Tsui, *Retainers of Anarchy*, 2017, animation key frame drawing, 5-channel HD video installation, 4 channel audio, Courtesy of the Artist, Photo: Maegan Hill-Carroll, Vancouver Art Gallery
(right) Howie Tsui, *Retainers of Anarchy*, 2017, animation key frame drawing, 5-channel HD video installation, 4 channel audio, Courtesy of the Artist

-30-

IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

MEDIA CONTACT

Justin Mah, Communications Specialist
jmah@vanartgallery.bc.ca, Direct: 604-662-4722