

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 14, 2009

Museum of Vancouver exhibits its *Ravishing Beasts* A provocative exploration of the history and cultural relevance of taxidermy

Media Preview with Curator –
Wednesday, October 21, 2009, 10am to 12pm

VANCOUVER, BC - The Museum of Vancouver will launch *Ravishing Beasts*, a provocative, visual study of taxidermy, and a look at the Museum's own history of collecting. On view from **October 22, 2009 to February 28, 2010**, the exhibit features over 110 species, about two-thirds of its extensive natural-history holdings. Some of the animals have never been on public display; others have been in storage for over half a century. Surprisingly little is known about the animals, except that they were donated by Vancouver residents, primarily between 1894 and 1950. This is truly the city's collection.

"*Ravishing Beasts* is a rare opportunity to question taxidermy's cultural legacy, current value, and future relevance both within and beyond museums," says MOV guest curator **Rachel Poliquin**. "It is very much a 'question show.'"

Like many museums of its era, the Museum of Vancouver's original focus was natural history. Taxidermy and elaborate nature dioramas were used as teaching tools and seen as a way to study nature up close. With the advent of new technologies, nature documentaries, and a rethinking around how to present information to the public, natural history and taxidermy has been left behind.

"*Ravishing Beasts* is not just about taxidermy," says Museum of Vancouver CEO **Nancy Noble**. "It's a window into past museum practices and values—a timely exploration given the Museum of Vancouver's recent re-envisioning. We're now moving from a study of the exotic or the foreign to a study of ourselves—the city of Vancouver as we experience it today."

(more)

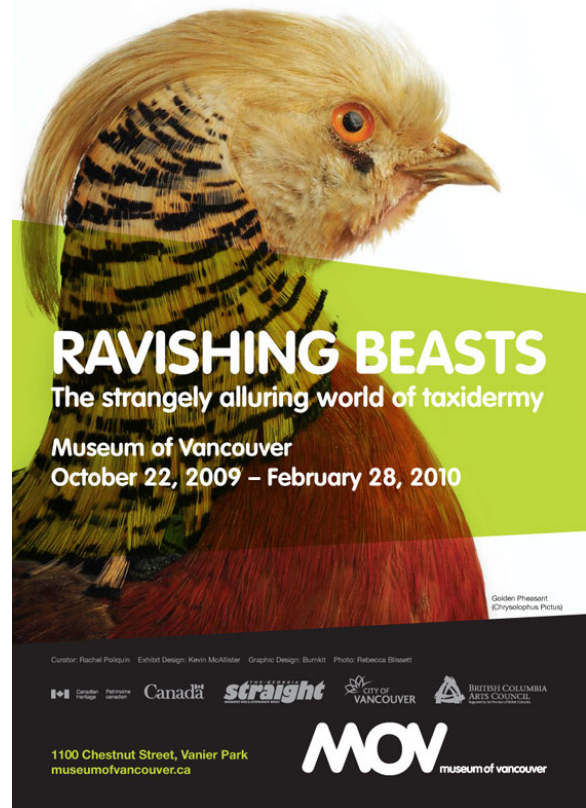


Exhibit Highlights

Taxidermy specimens, including:

- A White Rhinoceros head, measuring over five feet tall
- The now-extinct Passenger Pigeon, once the most abundant bird in North America
- “Lucky” the dog, acquired for the exhibit to represent the less common ‘stuffed pet’ genre of taxidermy

Topics explored include:

- Trophy hunting
- Taxidermy process and conservation
- The use of taxidermy in contemporary art and design. This section features works by Vancouver artist **George Vergette**, French artist **Pascal Bernier**, Dutch artist **duo Idiots**. In addition, a short documentary about German artist **Iris Schieferstein** is screened within the exhibit.

Accompanying Public Programs

- Opening Night Party – Oct 21, 7pm, open to the public, tickets \$15. MOV members free
- MOV Goes PSYCHO! – Oct 30, 7pm, \$15, Halloween event featuring guided tours of the exhibit and Alfred Hitchcock’s classic film *Psycho* (9pm). MOV members free.
- Curator-led Talks and Tours – held the first Thursday of the month at 7pm, October thru February. Free with admission.

About the Curator

Rachel Poliquin is writing a cultural and poetic history of taxidermy entitled *Taxidermy and Longing*, to be published by Harvard University Press in 2010. The book and the *Ravishing Beasts* exhibition emerged from Poliquin’s Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

This exhibition is presented in both English and French.

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Media Contact

Genny Krikorian, Marketing Officer

T: 604.730.5309 E: gkrikorian@museumofvancouver.ca

(Alt) Amanda Gibbs, Director of Audience Engagement

T: 604.730.5317 E: agibbs@museumofvancouver.ca



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