

Robert Davidson

*The Happy Blowhole*, 1992

yellow cedar  
17.8 cm x 37.5 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 92.50



# Robert Davidson

*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

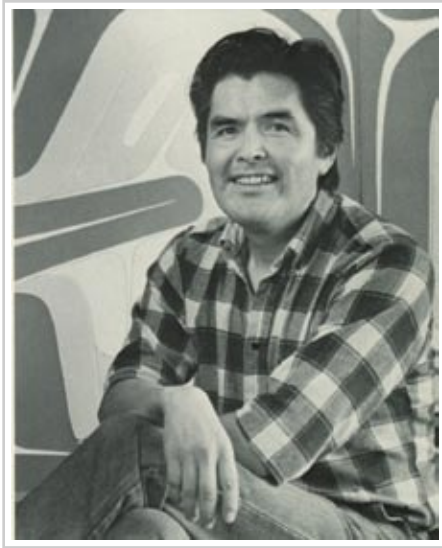


Image source: Vancouver Art Gallery Library:  
Canadian Artist Files

## Artist's Biography

Nationality: American-born Canadian  
First Nations Affiliation: Haida  
Born: 1946-11-04, Hydaburg, Alaska

Born in Hydaburg, Alaska in 1946, Davidson was raised in the village of Massett on Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). Although he grew up speaking English, as a boy he was extremely close to his grandmother, Florence Edenshaw Davidson, and from her he began to learn about the traditional ways of the Haida people. He began carving in 1959 at the suggestion of his father. As a teenager he came to Vancouver to go to high school and while in Vancouver began to study art and to carve argillite professionally. Through visits to local museums he was exposed to traditional Haida art for the first time and in 1966-67 he studied with senior Haida artist Bill Reid. While working with Reid he began to work in silver and to carve larger scale wooden objects. This experience, as well as his desire to give something back to the elders of his village, led Davidson to carve and erect, in 1969, the first totem pole in Massett for over fifty years. This practice had stopped with the outlawing of the potlatch earlier this century.

All of Robert Davidson's work is distinguished by great technical skill. It is, however, Davidson's willingness to expand the vocabulary of Haida art and to move beyond traditional borders which makes him an artist of major importance. His use of non-traditional media, colours and forms, built on his profound knowledge of the traditions of Haida art, engages Davidson in a dialogue with all contemporary artists who seek to establish a visual language for their own time. Davidson is also an important figure in the evolution of Haida ceremony, composing songs and—with his dance group, the Rainbow Creek Dancers—creating new dances. His involvement in ceremony has changed his approach to making masks and has led him to make drums and design button blankets and other ceremonial equipment.

Source: "Eagle of the Dawn," *Vancouver Art Gallery News Release*. June 8, 1993.

## Artistic Context

Nationality: American-born, Canadian

First Nations Affiliation: Haida

Training: Apprenticed to Robert Davidson Sr. and Bill Reid; Vancouver School of Art

Peers: Joe David; Reg Davidson

Group: Northwest Coast Art; 20th Century; 21st Century

Provenance: purchased from Derek Simkins Gallery in 1992; the artist

Subject: Haida Culture

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole*, 1992

**Other works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection**

Robert Davidson  
*T-Silli-AA-Lis, Raven Finned Killer Whale*, 1983  
silkscreen on paper  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David Young  
VAG 85.23

Robert Davidson  
*Sea Bear, Box Back*, 1969  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.106

Robert Davidson  
*Dogfish*, 1969  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.107

Robert Davidson  
*Thunderbird*, 1970  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.108

Robert Davidson  
*Thunderbird*, 1970  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.109

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale*, 1970  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.110

Robert Davidson  
*Chest End Design*, 1970  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.111

Robert Davidson  
*Human*, 1971  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.112

Robert Davidson  
*Raven with a Broken Beak and the Blind Halibut Fisherman*, 1971  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.113

Robert Davidson  
*Exhibition Invitation*, 1971  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.114

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Wolf Box, Front, 1972*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.115

Robert Davidson  
*Wolf Box, Back, 1972*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.116

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.117

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.118

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.119

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.120

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.121

Robert Davidson  
*Untitled, 1972*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.122

Robert Davidson  
*Raven and Fetus, 1973*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.123

Robert Davidson  
*Raven with Broken Beak, 1973*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.124

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale, 1973*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.125

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale Fin, 1973*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.126

Robert Davidson  
*Grizzly Bear, 1973*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.127

Robert Davidson  
*Mother's Memorial, 1973*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.128

Robert Davidson  
*Bentwood Box, 1973*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.129

Robert Davidson  
*Beaver, 1974*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.130

Robert Davidson  
*Sea Ghost, 1974*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.131

Robert Davidson  
*Frog, 1974*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.132

Robert Davidson  
*Raven with Broken Beak, 1974*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.133

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale, 1975*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.134

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Split Beaver, 1975*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.135

Robert Davidson  
*Raven with Broken Beak, 1975*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.136

Robert Davidson  
*Raven-Finned Killer Whale, 1975*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.137

Robert Davidson  
*Negative & Positive, 1975*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.138

Robert Davidson  
*Wedding Invitation, 1975*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.139

Robert Davidson  
*Moon, 1976*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.140

Robert Davidson  
*Eagle: Oliver Adam's Potlatch Invitation, 197*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.141

Robert Davidson  
*Eagle: Oliver Adam's Potlatch Gift, 1976*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.142

Robert Davidson  
*Sea Monster, 1976*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.143

Robert Davidson  
*Transformation, 1976*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.144

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Four Circles: Raven with Broken Beak, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.145

Robert Davidson  
*Four Circles: Eagle, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.146

Robert Davidson  
*Four Circles: Killer Whale, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.147

Robert Davidson  
*Four Circles: Frog, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.148

Robert Davidson  
*Raven Stealing the Moon, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.149

Robert Davidson  
*Butterflies, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.150

Robert Davidson  
*Ordination Invitation, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.151

Robert Davidson  
*Reflections, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.152

Robert Davidson  
*Beaver, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.153

Robert Davidson  
*Wolf, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.154

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Seal Bowl, 1978*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.155

Robert Davidson  
*Raven-finned Killer Whale, 1978*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.156

Robert Davidson  
*Dogfish, 1976*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.157

Robert Davidson  
*Hummingbird, 1978*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.158

Robert Davidson  
*Parnell Memorial: Eagle and Raven, 1978*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.159

Robert Davidson  
*Edenshaw Memorial Dedication Program, 1978*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.160

Robert Davidson  
*Design After Edenshaw*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.161

Robert Davidson  
*Dogfish Mother, 1980*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.162

Robert Davidson  
*Circle Eagle, 1979*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.163

Robert Davidson  
*Eagle, 1978*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.164

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Eagle*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.165

Robert Davidson  
*Eagle Spirit, 1980*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.166

Robert Davidson  
*Grizzly Bear, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.167

Robert Davidson  
*Mighty Mouse with Feat*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.168

Robert Davidson  
*Mighty Mouse with Feat, 1976*  
graphite on card  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.169

Robert Davidson  
*Northwest Coast Indian Artist Guild*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.170

Robert Davidson  
*Raven, 1978*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.171

Robert Davidson  
*Salmon Egg, 1977*  
graphite on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 86.172

Robert Davidson  
*Sea Bear Box Front, 1967-1969*  
graphite on paper  
Gift of the Artist  
VAG 88.26

Robert Davidson  
*Wolf, 1977*  
screenprint on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 92.14

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Eagles, 1991*  
gouache and watercolour on paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund  
VAG 94.3

Robert Davidson  
*The World is as Sharp as the Edge of a Knife, 1993*  
screenprint on paper  
Gift of Mr. Derek Simpkins  
VAG 94.9

Robert Davidson  
*Frog Crest, 1968*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.1

Robert Davidson  
*HAIDA Sea Bear, 1968*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.2

Robert Davidson  
*Marriage Announcement, 1969*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.3

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale, 1969*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.4

Robert Davidson  
*HAIDA EAGLE, 1969*  
ink on paperboard  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.5

Robert Davidson  
*Pole-raising Potlatch Invitation, 1969*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.6

Robert Davidson  
*Dogfish, 1969*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.7

Robert Davidson  
*Beaver*  
screenprint on paper, 1969  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.8

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole*, 1992

Robert Davidson  
*Sea Bear Box Front*, 1969  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.9

Robert Davidson  
*Sea Bear Box Back*, 1969  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.10

Robert Davidson  
*Dogfish*, 1969  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.11

Robert Davidson  
*Thunderbird*, 1970  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.12

Robert Davidson  
*Thunderbird*, 1971  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.13

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale*, 1970  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.14

Robert Davidson  
*Chest End Design*, 1970  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.15

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale*, 1970  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.16

Robert Davidson  
*Human*, 1971  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.17

Robert Davidson  
*Raven with a Broken Beak and the Blind Halibut Fisherman*, 1971  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.18

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Dogfish, 1971*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.19

Robert Davidson  
*Exhibition Invitation, 1971*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.20

Robert Davidson  
*Change of Address, 1971*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.21

Robert Davidson  
*Beaver, 1972*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.22

Robert Davidson  
*Wolf Box, Front, 1972*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.23

Robert Davidson  
*Wolf Box, Back, 1972*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.24

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.25

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.26

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.27

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.28

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Feather Design, 1972*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.29

Robert Davidson  
*Untitled, 1972*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.30

Robert Davidson  
*Raven and Fetus, 1973*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.31

Robert Davidson  
*Sara's Birth Announcement, 1973*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.32

Robert Davidson  
*Raven with Broken Beak, 1973*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.33

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale, 1973*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.34

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale Fin, 1973*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.35

Robert Davidson  
*Grizzly Bear, 1973*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.36

Robert Davidson  
*Mother's Memorial, 1973*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.37

Robert Davidson  
*Bentwood Box, 1973*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.38

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole*, 1992

Robert Davidson  
*Beaver*, 1974  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.39

Robert Davidson  
*Sea Ghost*, 1974  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.40

Robert Davidson  
*Frog*, 1974  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.41

Robert Davidson  
*Dogfish*, 1974  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.42

Robert Davidson  
*Raven with Broken Beak*, 1974  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.43

Robert Davidson  
*Killer Whale*, 1975  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.44

Robert Davidson  
*Split Beaver*, 1975  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.45

Robert Davidson  
*Raven with Broken Beak*, 1975  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.46

Robert Davidson  
*Raven-finned Killer Whale*, 1975  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.47

Robert Davidson  
*Negative and Positive*, 1975  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.48

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Wedding Invitation, 1976*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.49

Robert Davidson  
*Moon, 1976*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.50

Robert Davidson  
*Moon, 1976*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.51

Robert Davidson  
*Moon, 1976*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.52

Robert Davidson  
*Eagle: Oliver Adam's Potlatch Invitation, 1976*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.53

Robert Davidson  
*Eagle: Oliver Adam's Potlatch Gift, 1976*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.54

Robert Davidson  
*Sea Monster, 1976*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.55

Robert Davidson  
*Benjamin's Birth Announcement, 1976*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.56

Robert Davidson  
*Transformation, 1976*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.57

Robert Davidson  
*yaáhl alkaáy skát'lixaá raven with broken beak, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.58

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*quít eagle, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.59

Robert Davidson  
*sqaán Killer whale, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.60

Robert Davidson  
*Ulk'xaák'ust'aán frog, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.61

Robert Davidson  
*Raven Stealing the Moon, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.62

Robert Davidson  
*Butterflies, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.63

Robert Davidson  
*Ordination Invitation, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.64

Robert Davidson  
*Reflections, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.65

Robert Davidson  
*Beaver, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.66

Robert Davidson  
*Wolf, 1977*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.67

Robert Davidson  
*Moon, 1978*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.68

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Sea Bowl 1978*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.69

Robert Davidson  
*Raven Finned Killer Whale, 1978*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.70

Robert Davidson  
*Dog Fish, 1975*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.71

Robert Davidson  
*Hummingbird, 1978*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.72

Robert Davidson  
*Parnell Memorial: Eagle and Raven, 1978*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.73

Robert Davidson  
*Edenshaw Memorial Dedication Program, 1978*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.74

Robert Davidson  
*Bent Box Design, 1978*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.75

Robert Davidson  
*Eagle, 1979*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.76

Robert Davidson  
*Two Finned Killerwhale, 1979*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.77

Robert Davidson  
*Dogfish Mother, 1980*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.78

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson  
*Five views, Butterfly, 1981*  
screenprint  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.79

Robert Davidson  
*xa-adaa 7laa git'lang 7isis, 1981*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.80

Robert Davidson  
*Two Headed Eagle with Baby, 1982*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.81

Robert Davidson  
*Dogfish, 1982*  
screenprint on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.82

Robert Davidson  
*Change of Address, 1985*  
screen print on paper  
The Gordon McKee Collection, Gift of Mrs. Margaret McKee  
VAG 95.49.84

Robert Davidson  
*Every Year the Salmon Come Back, 1983*  
lithograph on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 97.61.19

Robert Davidson  
*Negative and Positive, 1975*  
screenprint on paper  
Gift of William and Shirley Corbeil  
VAG 2001.9

Robert Davidson  
*Sara's Birth Announcement, 1973*  
silkscreen on paper  
Bequest of Joan Lowndes  
VAG 2001.36.9

Robert Davidson  
*Cycles, 1979*  
silkscreen on paper  
Bequest of Joan Lowndes  
VAG 2001.36.10

Robert Davidson  
*Getting Ready to Take Flight, 1995*  
screenprint on paper  
Gift of J. Ron and Jacqueline Longstaffe  
VAG 2003.4.11

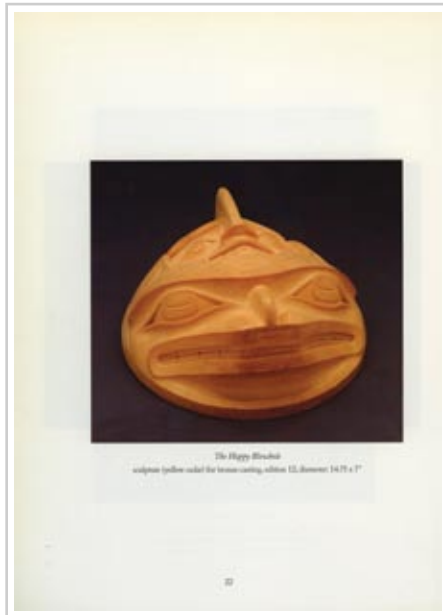
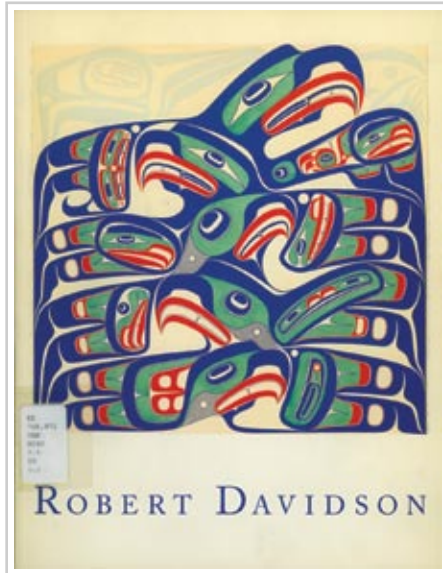
Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole*, 1992

Robert Davidson  
*Four Eagle Trout Heads* 1992  
screenprint on paper  
Gift of J. Ron and Jacqueline Longstaffe  
VAG 2003.4.12

Robert Davidson  
*Echoes from the Supernatural*, 1991  
screenprint on paper  
Gift of J. Ron and Jacqueline Longstaffe  
VAG 2003.4.13

Robert Davidson  
*Butterfly*, 1986  
screenprint on paper  
Gift of J. Ron and Jacqueline Longstaffe  
VAG 2003.4.14

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole*, 1992



## Bibliography

### Robert Davidson

Publication

1992

#### [transcription of excerpt]

*The Happy Blowhole.*

sculpture (yellow cedar) for bronze casting, edition 12, diameter: 14.75 x 7"

### ROBERT DAVIDSON: WALKING THE KNIFE EDGE

PETER MACNAIR

In this brief space, it is impossible to examine in detail the evolution of Robert Davidson's graphic and sculptural art. His achievements in 1992 are far in advance of those so enthusiastically celebrated in articles, publications, films and exhibitions produced from 1963 through the mid 1980s. However, to understand and appreciate his current work, one must be aware of seminal pieces produced during his developing years. Themes and design elements emerge and reappear; these must be tracked over time in order to truly appreciate his genius. One must also be aware that the pace of intellectual and artistic maturity has varied according to medium. Argillite, precious metal, cast bronze, painting, silkscreening and wood carving all contribute to his metier, yet the plateaus reached in these media rarely coincide chronologically. This examination will focus primarily on two dimensional design and will seek to contextualize selected examples represented in this exhibit. The challenge for the viewer is to discover connections between themes, images and elements in the remaining examples.

We are fortunate that much of Davidson's graphic work has been recorded in Hilary Stewart's *Robert Davidson: Haida Printmaker*, where she effectively describes the chronology of Davidson's first decade working in the silkscreen medium. Equally helpful is Marjorie Halpin's *Cycles, the Graphic Art of Robert Davidson, Haida*, in which author and artist rearrange the chronological record to reveal the artistic and intellectual evolution of Davidson's work.

Both Stewart and Halpin note Davidson's increasing fascination with the circle as format. While rare in Northwest coast art, we find the circle as design field in 19th Century examples such as tambourine drums, spruce root hats and argillite plates. In 1976, Davidson commences his circular argument with three Moon prints, differing only in colour phase. The man within this moon has its origin in the stylized profile faces found primarily on bentwood chest end panels and some narrative and Shamanic paintings. These open ended profile faces are not true formline designs; they are compositionally independent. Conventionally they are composed of an open U within which a hatched eye socket and continuous nose and lip line are found. In his Moon print, Davidson has insinuated a hand into this basic composition as well. The artist's most traditional rendering of this profile face is seen in *Sea Ghost* (1974), although it appears first in *Raven with a Broken Beak and the Blind Halibut Fisherman* in 1971. A nonstructured variation, created in negative space, is presaged in *Raven and Fetus* (1973).

# Robert Davidson

## *The Happy Blowhole*, 1992



Most of Davidson's early fiat designs were created by cutting them directly on masking film. While they evolved through sketches, the original work survives only as a negative image; the actual print is a secondary product. He describes this as "painting with a knife". Such an approach, while successful in establishing his reputation as a printmaker, imposed limitations; a

move towards abstractness was achieved much earlier in precious metalwork because designs created for that medium were applied directly to the final surface, encouraging greater experimentation.

In the 1980s, Davidson returned to the brush and the majority of prints produced since that time are reproduced from completed paintings. His current drum series reflects this emancipation. The drum format satisfies the circular interest introduced in 1976, peaking in that decade with *Eagle* (1979) and reaching new expression with *Seven Ravens* (1982). The cycle is completed in 1989 with *Rock Scallop*. Here the profile faces re-emerge in force along with elaborations on the vestigial *Feather Designs* of 1972.

The final intellectual challenge is manifest in such drum paintings as *T-Sillii-aalis* (1991) and *Raven Bringing Light to the World* (1992). A single-colour, complete, continuous primary formline design is simply not found in the former, but with Davidson's masterful marriage of formline theory, positive/negative interplay, and visual punning, he creates a non-conforming whole. In classic examples of Northwest Coast art, cross-hatching sometimes functions to define eye sockets, temples and cheeks, but seldom if ever does it function as tertiary space to define primary form in the manner Davidson uses it in the central profile face on the *T-Sillii-aalis* drum. The red formline jaw-claw of this face in turn becomes a crested bird's head, mimicking Davidson's "eagle trout's head" eye in the upper figure. The silkscreen cutting process probably led to the accidental discovery of the negative formline Davidson has occasionally explored, as insinuated into the upper right quarter of the drum. This device is also found in *Kuginn Jad* drum (1991).

The continuous nose-lip-hand element so tentatively but authoritatively examined in the *Moon* of 1976 is a constant theme in Davidson's current work, as noted in the above examples and as found in *In the Eye of the Beholder* (1992). Here both title and artwork challenge us. We can easily see eagle rising from the top third of the painting. But is the remaining design obvious? Certainly our eye appreciates the flow of form but does the eye transmit meaning to the mind? Once we understand the role of Davidson's compositionally independent profile face and its tertiary origins, we can integrate it into the overall design.

The face in the central third of the field is almost lost in negative space but if we think positively, we can see that it wears an eagle crest helmet. The massive weight of the black ground on the drum's lower third further complicates the composition. Such ultraprimary forms, upon which a red formline image may be rendered, are the trademark of an iconoclastic master of the past and are found on a great bent-cornered box in the American Museum of National History collection. (Redrawn by Bill Reid and published in Donald Abbott's *The World is as Sharp as a Knife*.) The link between positive and negative fields is tenuous but it is achieved by the tongue-claw connection. Equally subtle is the union between the ultraprimary mass and the primary formline of the bird's feather tips.

A final profile face appears in the lower right quarter, staring at us with an eye type newly introduced to Davidson's repertoire. This is a

perfect circle with an eccentric free floating pupil. A diminishing S shape defines this creature's head as it sweeps to join the common claw. Even with the above explanation there remain other secrets locked within this highly successful and

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

challenging composition and we will always remain in awe of the artist for that which is beholden in this signature work.

The final current work requiring comment is the painting *Eagles* (1992). In one sense it is easier to read than the drum designs from this period; in other ways it is equally challenging. One could argue that the stacked eagles have their origin in the *Eagle and Clam* story sketch by Edenshaw illustrated in Swanton's *The Haida* (p. 144). If this is the case, the connection is only at a minimal conceptual level. The ultramarine blue formline and turquoise tertiary elements work well together, colours Davidson has successfully exploited elsewhere. Eagle evolves and matures from bottom to top; the most atypically rendered one being that in the middle. Here we again find Davidson's fascination with negative space and the fact that this one is only complete because of the formline of the eagle above. One assumes there are five eagles. Yet eaglets abound, conceived as profile faces contained within formline ovoids. These are subtle variations on what Davidson calls an "eagle trout head", as can be seen as the primary eye in the *T-Silli-aalis* drum.

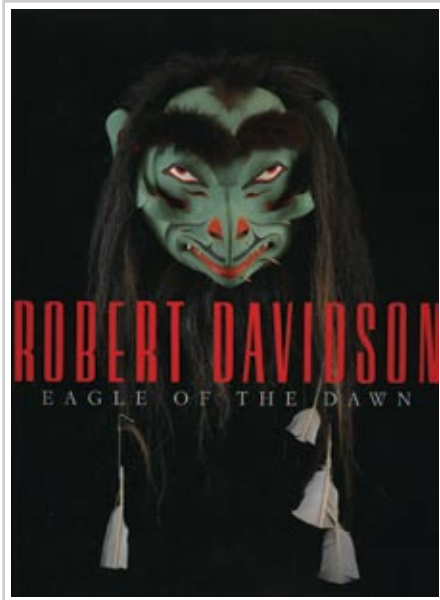
The final significant conundrum is how many wings are there for the five eagles? Of the eight available, do four pairs leave one bird flightless? Or do two eagles have only one wing? But one bird appears to have three. How does the viewer solve the problem? Obviously the mystery is deciphered to the artist's satisfaction, but perhaps the viewer will never know for sure.

With his intellectual capacity comes Davidson's burden. Most of us are able to appreciate the fluidity of his form, the precision of his line, his technical mastery of a wide range of materials. But full understanding and appreciation of his talent comes only through very hard work on the part of the viewer. A battery of references must be at hand and the sum total of his work in all media must be evident before one can begin to comprehend the range and evolution of his personal style. Clearly this is impossible for most of us, but it behooves all to try to step beyond a comfortable awareness of his talent to a higher level of understanding so that we can begin to discover his hidden meanings. This artist should not have to hug his magic world alone.

*Peter L. Macnair is the Curator of the Department of Human History and Anthropology, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, B.C.*

## Robert Davidson

*The Happy Blowhole*, 1992



### **Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn**

*Publication*  
1993

#### **[transcription of excerpt]**

*The Happy Blowhole* 1992  
Yellow cedar  
37.5 cm diameter, 17.8 cm depth  
VANCOUVER ART GALLERY  
(VAG ACQUISITION FUND), VAG 92.50

Davidson's recent work has been characterized by a continuing sense of innovation and energy. Whether in a mask such as the *Eagle Spirit* (page 144), a painting such as *Eagles* (page 148) or *Double Negative* (page 155), a pole like *Breaking the Totem Barrier* (page 99) or a large-scale carving like *Dorsal Fin* (page iii), Davidson continues to confound our expectations and push himself forward. Whether in technical innovations, deeper undercutting on a carving (see for example *The Happy Blowhole*, page 147), or iconographic unorthodoxy (as in the almost completely abstract painting *The World Is As Sharp As the Edge of a Knife*, page 253), he sets himself a rigorous standard.

Building upon the bedrock of the past, Robert Davidson's art, reflecting his own growth, speaks to the present and the future. The language is both simple and complex. The rules of Haida design, and his adaptations/extensions of them, inform all of his work, but, as Peter Macnair has noted, there is "a higher level of understanding" and "hidden meanings." Davidson's creations "vibrate out to the viewer," giving us a glimpse of the spirit world from which all art comes, even as they expand "the circle of knowledge."

### **Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn Pamphlet**

*Publication*  
1993

#### **[transcription of excerpt]**

Haida artist Robert Davidson is one of the most distinguished artists working in Canada. His art has changed the way we view and appreciate northwest coast art.

#### **ROBERT DAVIDSON**

Davidson has created work of exceptional virtuosity and technical accomplishment but, more importantly, he is an artist who continually pushes at the boundaries of Haida style and his own art. The exhibition *Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn* is the first comprehensive survey of the work of this major artist. Masks, jewelery, totem poles, paintings and prints, from 1959 to the present, will be included in this show of almost 200 works which traces his development as an artist and designer.

#### **EXHIBITION ACCOMPANIMENTS**

A major book, *Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn*, co-published by the Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas & McIntyre, and an audio guide narrated by Robert Davidson, will accompany the exhibition.

#### **IN THE ANNEX GALLERY**

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

ULLI STELTZER  
June 26 to September 26, 1993

*Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn* will be complemented by a photographic exhibition by B.C. resident Ulli Steltzer. This noted artist has photographed Davidson for almost thirty years and her images give a unique insight into Davidson's career and life.



**This Place**  
*Publication*  
2002

[transcription]

**This Place**  
**works from the collection**

This exhibition presents more than 90 significant works from the permanent collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, organized into three thematic groupings: the land, indigenous cultures and the self as place. The exhibition focuses on important contemporary and historical artworks by British Columbian artists or by artists who have visited British Columbia and addressed these themes.

The first section, on the subject of the land, presents divergent visions of the land produced from the 1880s to the present. With watercolour, printmaking, painting, photography and sculpture, these artists have created an expansive study of rural and urban landscapes of this province.

The second section addresses historical representations of indigenous cultures from the 1920s to mid-century, as well as the growing body of artworks produced by First Nations artists representing their own cultures within the contemporary world.

The third section presents a survey of artworks that examine notions of the self as formed and defined by place. In this instance, the idea of place is more than the physical geography of a region, it is the place formed by diverse histories of immigration, and within generations of beliefs and ideas, or even by historical art produced from this region.

This exhibition is curated by Bruce Grenville, Senior Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery.



Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

## Further Reading

Davidson, Robert. *Eagle Transforming: the Art of Robert Davidson*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1994.

Davidson, Robert. *Robert Davidson: an Exhibition of Northwest Coast Native Art*. Vancouver: Inuit Gallery of Vancouver, 1989.

Halpin, Marjorie M. *Cycles: the Graphic Art of Robert Davidson, Haida*. Vancouver: UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1979.

Rhyne, Charles S. *Expanding the Circle: The Art of Guud San Glans, Robert Davidson*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999.

*Robert Davidson*. Vancouver: UBC Museum of Anthropology, 2004.

Stewart, Hilary. *Robert Davidson, Haida Printmaker*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1979.

## Exhibition History

### Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

*Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn*. June 26, 1993 - September 26, 1993.

*Art in B.C.* January 1, 1994 - December 31, 1994.

*Art in B.C.* December 25, 1995 - June 1996.

*Long Time*. May 19, 2001 - April 28, 2002.

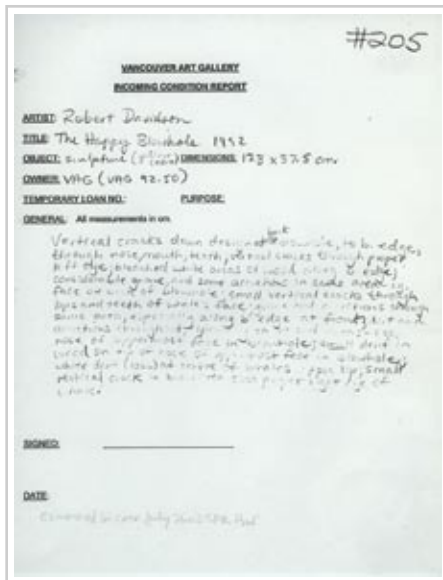
*This Place: Works from the Collection*. June 29, 2002 - January 2003.

*75 Years of Collecting: First Nations: Myths and Realities*. May 6, 2006 - August 27, 2006.

### Selected Exhibitions Outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery

Derek Simpkins Gallery of Tribal Art, Vancouver. *Robert Davidson*. 1992

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole*, 1992



## Archival History

### Incoming Condition Report

*Conservation*  
1992

[transcription]

### VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

### INCOMING CONDITION REPORT

**ARTIST:** Robert Davidson

**TITLE:** *The Happy Blowhole* 1992

**OBJECT:** sculpture (yellow cedar)  
**DIMENSIONS:** 17.8 x 37.5 cm

**OWNER:** VAG (VAG 92.50)

**TEMPORARY LOAN NO.:**  
**PURPOSE:**

**GENERAL:** *All measurements in cm.*

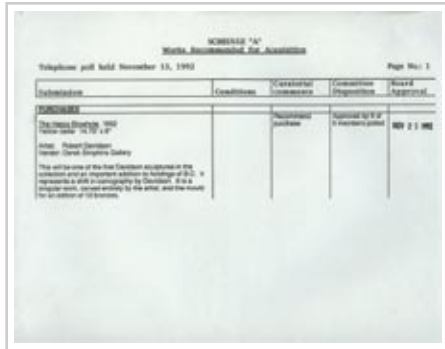
Vertical cracks down design at back of blowhole, to b. edge, through nose, mouth, teeth; vertical cracks through proper left eye; bleached white areas of wood along b edge; considerable grime and some accretions in same area—e.g. lips and teeth of whale's face; grime and accretions through same area, especially along b edge at front; dirt and accretions throughout, especially on raised areas—esp. nose of uppermost face in blowhole; small dent in wood on tip of nose of uppermost face in blowhole; white dent (loss) at centre of whale's upper lip; small vertical crack in brow area over proper right eye of whale.

**SIGNED:**

**DATE:**

[examined in case July 26 92] SPR BW in pencil]

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole*, 1992



**Works Recommended for Acquisition**  
*Acquisition Record*  
 1992-11-13

[transcription of excerpt]

SCHEDULE "A"  
 Works Recommended for Acquisition

Telephone poll held November 13, 1992 Page No.: 1

PURCHASES

The Happy Blowhole, 1992  
 Yellow cedar 14.75" x 8"

Artist: Robert Davidson  
 Vendor: Derek Simpkins Gallery

This will be one of the first Davidson sculptures in the collection and an important addition to holdings of B.C. It represents a shift in iconography by David. It is a singular work, carved entirely by the artist, and the mould for an edition of 12 bronzes.

Curatorial comments: Recommend purchase  
 Committee Disposition: Approved by 9 of 9 members polled  
 Board Approval: [NOV 25 1992 in ink]



**Memo**  
*Conservation*  
 1992-12-04

[transcription]

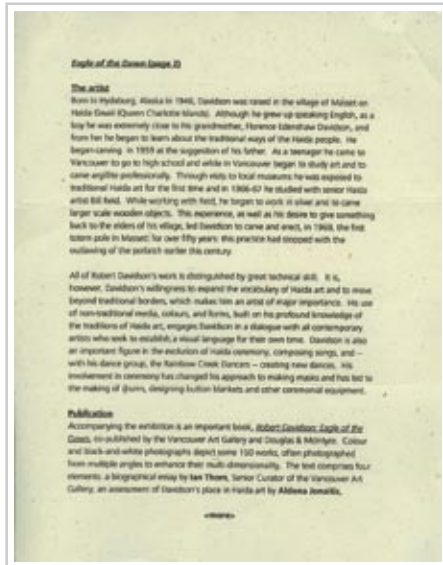
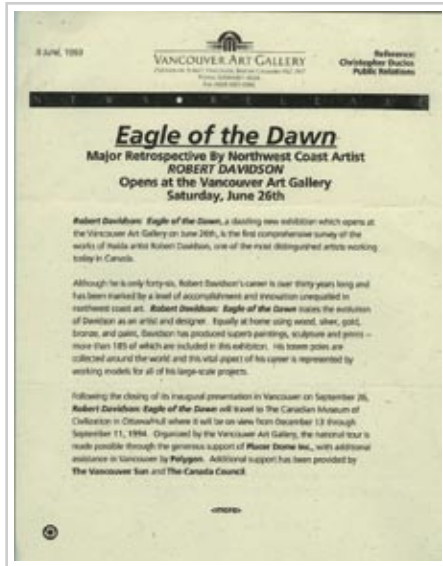
[3] From: Ian 12/4/92 10:12AM (642 bytes: 9 in)  
 To: Monica  
 Subject: Oiling of Davidson works  
 Message Contents

Robert may have told you this but he uses Watco Teak Oil to finish his pieces. This is what has been used on The Happy Blowhole—for future reference when the piece comes in. He suggested to me that it might be re-oiled but I leave that decision up to you. The piece has some discolouration and Robert attributes this to the different rates at which endgrain and regular grain oxidize. (Ignore all this if it is irrelevant—I bring it up because I am somewhat concerned about the piece checking).

Thanks.

# Robert Davidson

## *The Happy Blowhole, 1992*



**News Release**  
*Miscellaneous History*  
1993

[transcription of excerpt]

3 June 1993

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

750 HORNBY STREET, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA V6Z 2H7 PHONE: (604) 682-4668 FAX (604) 682-1086

**Reference:**  
**Christopher Duclos**  
**Public Relations**

**Eagle of the Dawn**  
**Major Retrospective By Northwest Coast Artist**  
**ROBERT DAVIDSON**  
**Opens at the Vancouver Art Gallery**  
**Saturday, June 26th**

*Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn*, a dazzling new exhibition which opens at the Vancouver Art Gallery on June 26th, is the first comprehensive survey of the works of Haida artist Robert Davidson, one of the most distinguished artists working today in Canada.

Although he is only forty-six, Robert Davidson's career is over thirty years long and has been marked by a level of accomplishment and innovation unequalled in northwest coast art. *Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn* traces the evolution of Davidson as an artist and designer. Equally at home using wood, silver, gold, bronze, and paint, Davidson has produced superb paintings, sculpture and prints — more than 185 of which are included in this exhibiton. His totem poles are collected around the world and this vital aspect of his career is represented by working models for all of his large-scale projects.

Following the closing of its inaugural presentation in Vancouver on September 26, *Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn* will travel to The Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa/Hull where it will be on view from December 13 through September 11, 1994. Organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery, the national tour is made possible through the generous support of **Placer Dome Inc.**, with additional assistance in Vancouver by **Polygon**. Additional support has been provided by **The Vancouver Sun and The Canada Council**.

<more>

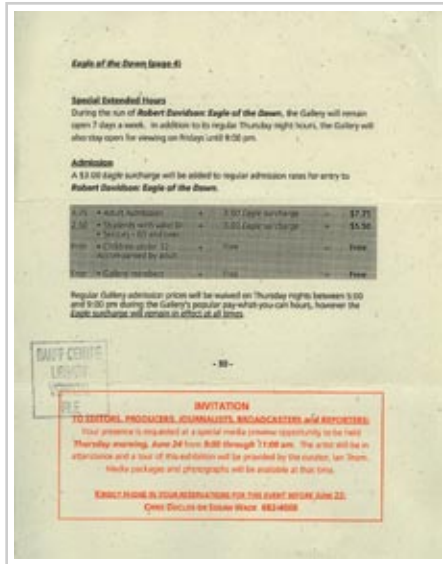
*Eagle of the Dawn (page 2)*

### **The artist**

Born in Hydaburg, Alaska in 1946, Davidson was raised in the village of Masset on Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). Although he grew up speaking English, as a boy he was extremely close to his grandmother, Florence Edenshaw Davidson, and from her he began to learn about the traditional ways of the Haida people. He began carving in 1959 at the suggestion of his father. As a teenager he came to Vancouver to go to high school and while in

# Robert Davidson

## *The Happy Blowhole, 1992*



Vancouver began to study art and to carve argillite professionally. Through visits to local museums he was exposed to traditional Haida art for the first time and in 1966-67 he studied with senior Haida artist Bill Reid. While working with Reid, he began to work in silver and to carve larger scale wooden objects. This experience, as well as his desire to give something back to the elders of his village, led Davidson to carve and erect, in 1969, the first totem pole in Massett for over fifty years: this practice had stopped with the outlawing of the potlatch earlier this century.

All of Robert Davidson's work is distinguished by great technical skill. It is, however, Davidson's willingness to expand the vocabulary of Haida art and to move beyond traditional borders, which makes him an artist of major importance. His use of non-traditional media, colours, and forms, built on his profound knowledge of the traditions of Haida art, engages Davidson in a dialogue with all contemporary artists who seek to establish a visual language for their own time. Davidson is also an important figure in the evolution of Haida ceremony, composing songs, and—with his dance group, the Rainbow Creek Dancers—creating new dances. His involvement in ceremony has changed his approach to making masks and has led to the making of drums, designing button blankets and other ceremonial equipment.

### **Publication**

Accompanying the exhibition is an important book, *Robert Davidson Eagle of the Dawn*, co-published by the Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas & McIntyre. Colour and black and-white photographs depict some 150 works, often photographed from multiple angles to enhance their multi-dimensionality. The text comprises four elements: a biographical essay by **Ian Thom**, Senior Curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery; an assessment of Davidson's place in Haida art by **Aldona Jonaitis**,

<more>

### *Eagle of the Dawn (page 3)*

Assistant Director of Public Programs for the American Museum of Natural History; a Haida perspective, by **Marianne Jones** of Massett; and extensive comments from Davidson and his peers on the importance and symbolic content of the illustrated works of art. A limited number of signed copies of the hardcover book are available in The Gallery Shop. Retail price is \$60.00.

### **Audio-Guide**

In order to enhance the visitor's enjoyment and understanding of the exhibition, the Gallery has produced for the first time an audio guide. This audio tour will feature Davidson talking about his art and his cultural heritage, as well as singing traditional Haida songs. The tour lasts for approximately 40 minutes and is available for a nominal rental charge in the exhibition. Copies on cassette will be available for purchase in The Gallery Shop.

### **Film Programme**

Included in the exhibition are regular screenings of three video productions on Robert Davidson: *The Three Watchmen* (1986); *Robert Davidson : Ya-Yaa-Me I'm In Awe* (1981); and *Revival* (1983). Written, produced, and directed by Bill Roxborough and Michael Brodie.

### **Merchandise**

A T-shirt, specifically designed by Davidson for the Vancouver Art Gallery, has been produced, along with a full colour poster and commemorative lapel pins. All items are available at the Gallery Shop.

### **In the Annex Gallery: Ulli Steltzer Photographs**

# Robert Davidson

*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*

Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn is complemented by a photographic exhibition of photographs in the Annex Gallery by B.C. resident Ulli Steltzer. Steltzer has photographed Davidson, his family, and the Haida community at work, in celebration, and potlatching for almost thirty years. She has selected a group of images which relate particularly to Davidson as an artist and as a participant in traditional Haida ceremony. The Ulli Steltzer photo exhibition has been generously sponsored by the **Hongkong Bank of Canada**.

<more>

*Eagle of the Dawn (page 4)*

### Special Extended Hours

During the run of Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn, the Gallery will remain open 7 days a week. In addition to its regular Thursday night hours, the Gallery will also stay open for viewing on Fridays until 9:00 pm.

### Admission

A \$3.00 Eagle surcharge will be added to regular, admission rates for entry to Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn.



### Newspaper Clipping *Miscellaneous History* 1993

[transcription]

**THE OPENING** this Saturday (June 26) at the Vancouver Art Gallery of the major **Robert Davidson** exhibition—**Eagle of the Dawn**—is noteworthy in more ways than one. Other than being the first chance for Vancouverites and others to view a comprehensive retrospective of the famous Haida artist's work in one place, it also marks only the second one-person exhibition of Northwest Coast art at a major art gallery, the other one being the VAG's 1974 Bill Reid show. Gallery spokesperson Christopher Duclos says 206 works of art were collected worldwide for the historic exhibit, with the majority of them coming from private collectors. Others came from institutions such as UBC's Museum of Anthropology and Victoria's Royal British Columbia Museum, the artist's own collection, and a few private galleries. Some of them travelled quite a ways. "We have a totem pole coming from Ireland", Duclos says. "We've even got something from the Pope (John Paul II. Davidson carved a talking stick for him the last time he visited here[1984]." The yellow cedar stick, representing two major Haida crests, the Thunderbird and the Killer Whale, is the only such work ever produced by the master carver and painter. Davidson, born in Hydaburg, Alaska, in 1946, is the great-grandson of Charles Edenshaw, perhaps the greatest of all Haida artists. He started carving, at his father's and grandfather's urging, at the age of 13, and his first crude, yellow-cedar model pole is also in the exhibition. Examples of Davidson's screenprints, jewellery, totems, carvings, and masks are also on display, representing a 34-year survey of his development as an artist and his extensions of the conventions of traditional Haida design. The exhibit runs until September 26, and is complemented by a photographic exhibition by B.C. photographer **Ulli Steltzer**, who has documented Davidson's work and life for almost his entire career. Many of her photos also turn up in the VAG's extensive, 180-page illustrated catalogue of the exhibition.

Robert Davidson  
*The Happy Blowhole, 1992*



**Robert Davidson Correspondence**  
*Correspondence*  
1993

[transcription]

EAGLE OF THE DAWN ARTIST LTD

ROBERT DAVIDSON

19 October 1993

To the Directors and staff of the Vancouver Art Gallery:

I thank you for the successful showing of my work at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Your great presentation, attention to detail and first class treatment I received made me feel special. It has been a life long dream of mine to help bring the art form of my ancestors to be recognized as great art, placed along side all the other great art of the world, to bring it beyond the curio attitude which it has suffered since contact. Your gallery opening the door to show my work has helped me to start realizing this dream.

This show has helped to start bridging the gap of misunderstanding of the First Nations People with the non-native population. It has also helped to shine a new light on the Art of the Northwest Coast Peoples, one that very few people are exposed to unless they are visiting museums. In showing my work in this building reserved for the great artists of the western world gives it new life as an art form. I have always felt alien to art galleries until my showing here. In showing my work you have opened the door to many other artists who are working to validate their work as true art.

Our art has helped us as a people to reconnect with our cultural past, helped us in regaining our own identity, giving us strength to reclaim our place in the world.

I thank you again for all your kindness and consideration in making this such a successful show. It is an experience that I will enjoy looking back on in the years to come. It certainly is a milestone in my career as an artist.

Sincerely yours,

[Signed Robert Davidson in ink]

Robert Davidson  
Guud san Glans

## Terms and Conditions

The images, texts, documentation, illustrations, designs, icons and all other content are protected by Canadian and international copyright laws. The content may be covered by other restrictions as well, including copyright and other proprietary rights held by third parties. The Vancouver Art Gallery retains all rights, including copyright, in data, images, text and any other information. The Gallery expressly forbids the copying of any protected content, except for purposes of fair dealing, as defined by Canadian copyright law.