

Peter Aspell: The Mad Alchemist

January 23 – April 3, 2016

The Richmond Art Gallery celebrates the art of the late painter, Peter Aspell (1918-2004), who was among a core group of artists to gain early recognition in post-war Vancouver. Aspell departed from the nature-based abstraction practised by many of his contemporaries to focus instead on symbolism, mythology and figuration, thereby making a unique contribution to the art of this region.

He developed a vocabulary that included floating figures, African and West Coast masks, Egyptian motifs, and many other cultural and art historical references. In the 1990s he turned to memory portraits, and paintings depicting X-Ray imagery and humans interacting with machines. Despite developing an intense colour palette, an introspective, mystical, and at times ominous overtone pervaded much of Aspell's work.

The exhibition, curated by Rachel Rosenfield Lafo, Director of the Richmond Art Gallery, features paintings from the late 1980s to 2003, including his monumental and apocalyptic triptych, *March of the Machines*.



Image: Peter Aspell, *The Industrialist*, 1998, oil on canvas, 55.5 x 70 in., Collection of Michael and Inna O'Brien. Photo: Shane O'Brien.

Aspell studied at the Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr University of Art + Design), where he later taught, and at the Academie de Ghent, Belgium. He also taught at the University of British Columbia before opening his own art school. He lived in Richmond, BC for ten years in the 1980s. His work is held in many public collections, including those of the National Gallery of Canada, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Vancouver Art Gallery, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Ontario, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, the Burnaby Art Gallery, and the University of British Columbia. A prolific artist, Aspell had many gallery exhibitions in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and Paris.

A complementary exhibition, *Peter Aspell: Saints, Sinner, Mystics and Madness*, curated by Darin Morrison, Director/Curator of the West Vancouver Museum, will be on view there from January

13 – March 26, 2016. The jointly produced fully illustrated exhibition catalogue, *The Art of Peter Aspell*, includes essays by Gary Michael Dault, Morrison, and Lafo, and has been generously funded by Byron Aceman, the Michael O’Brian Family Foundation, Fulmar Developments Ltd, the Hamber Foundation, Emily Aspell-Science and Adrian Science. The catalogue will be on sale for \$25.00 at the opening reception on Friday, January 22, at 7:00pm.

The Richmond Art Gallery gratefully acknowledges the on-going support of the City of Richmond, the British Columbia Arts Council, and the Province of British Columbia.

Related Events:

Illustrated Talk – Raphael to Sargent Exploring Portraiture Through the Ages

Thursday, February 18, 6:30 – 8:30pm

RAG Curatorial Assistant, Dr. Hilary Letwin, will give a talk on the history of portraiture from the Renaissance up until the 20th century.

Conversation with Kevin Griffin

Saturday, March 5, 2:00 – 3:00pm

Join RAG Director Rachel Rosenfield Lafo and Kevin Griffin, arts writer online and in the newspaper for *The Vancouver Sun*, for a conversation about Peter Aspell’s art.

Bus Tour

Peter Aspell at West Vancouver Museum

Saturday, March 19, 12:00 – 4:00pm

Visit two Aspell exhibitions in one day with curators Rachel Rosenfield Lafo and Darrin Morrison on guided tours of the Richmond Art Gallery and West Vancouver Museum. Tour starts at the Richmond Art Gallery, proceeds to the West Vancouver Museum, and then returns to Richmond. \$20 per person.