

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Koffler Gallery presents Spin Off: Contemporary Art Circling the Mandala, a new group exhibition off-site at 80 Spadina, Toronto

Toronto, ON, August 25, 2011 – Koffler Gallery is proud to present *Spin Off: Contemporary Art Circling the Mandala*, a group exhibition curated by **Evelyn Tauben**, Head of Programs and Exhibitions at the Koffler Centre of the Arts. The exhibition is presented off-site at **80 Spadina Avenue, Suite 501** from **September 22 to December 4, 2011** and opens with a free reception on **Thursday, September 22, 7 – 9 PM**. Several artists presented in the show will be in attendance.

Presented as part of the Koffler Gallery Off-Site program, *Spin Off* is the latest in an ongoing series of projects around the City of Toronto. Watch for Koffler Gallery exhibitions in unexpected places as the Koffler Centre of the Arts prepares for its brand new arts and cultural centre on the Sherman Campus.

A centuries-old motif in Buddhist and Hindu religious practices, the mandala is a representation of the cosmos, which helps direct focus in meditation. Many contemporary artists have been entranced by the formal simplicity and symmetry of the mandala – meaning *circle* in Sanskrit – paired with its function and elaborate symbolism.

Spin Off brings together work by an international group of six artists, elucidating the challenge and potential for accessing spirituality in a modern world. Artists include **Aya Ben Ron** (Israel), **Mircea Cantor** (France/Romania), **Vandana Jain** (USA), **Gary James Joynes/Clinker** (Canada), **Melissa Shiff** (Canada) and **Jennifer Zackin** (USA).

Adapting illustrations from 16th century medical journals, Tel Aviv-based **Aya Ben Ron** creates bold and graphic pieces where depictions of ailments and physical deformities shift from the grotesque to the beautiful in richly coloured collages. Romanian-born **Mircea Cantor** lives and works in France where he also edits the artist-run magazine *Version*. With work ranging from video to installation, Cantor draws upon photographic images of artillery to create the *Holy Flower* series.

Re-contextualizing corporate logos by exploring pattern and motifs familiar from her Jain background, **Vandana Jain** creates new interpretations of these well-known signs, simultaneously demonstrates the mutability of tradition and how it is impacted by the corporate environment that surrounds us. Visual artist, composer and sound artist, Edmonton-based **Gary James Joynes/Clinker** explores meditative spaces and the effects of working with sound and visuals. For *Spin Off* he has created a new sound and visual installation based on his *Frequency Paintings* where sand is sculpted through the pure power of sound.

Toronto-based video, performance, and installation artist **Melissa Shiff** specializes in utilizing Jewish myths, symbols and rituals in the service of social justice and activism as well as engaging with issues of cultural memory. Shiff's *Jewish Animated Mandala* series is exhibited in *Spin Off* alongside a video of Hindu-inspired mandalas. For more than a decade, New York-based **Jennifer Zackin** has been creating mandalas, evolving their unique pattern through the use of various materials, from plastic cowboys to cheap mass-produced posters, from coca leaves to smiley face stickers. For *Spin Off*, Zackin exhibits *Hanaqpacha Intiq Sombran* (2004), the result of a collaboration with Q'ero Amerindians from Cusco, Peru, together with the sculpture, *Wonder Woman Cosmos*.

Spin Off: Contemporary Art Circling the Mandala presents art that melds mysticism and popular culture, offering alternative portals to escape the world of the everyday while simultaneously drawing upon its sights and sounds.

Public programs associated with the exhibition include ***On the Other Side...***, a multimedia performance with artist **Gary James Joynes/Clinker** (September 25, 7:30 PM, Toronto Underground Cinema, 186 Spadina Ave.); ***Theatre as Living Mandala***, a discussion with acclaimed Israeli writer and theatre artist **Michael Govrin** (October 23, 7 PM, 80 Spadina Ave., Suite 501); ***Ancient-Contemporary Convergence***, a roundtable discussion with artists who draw on ancient traditions in their work (November 27, 4 PM, Toronto School of Art, 410 Adelaide St. W, 3rd floor); and ***Re-Making Mandalas***, two day-long art-making workshops (September 25, 10 AM – 4 PM and November 27, 10 AM – 4 PM, Toronto School of Art, 410 Adelaide St. W., 3rd floor).

For artist bios and full exhibition and program details, please visit: www.kofflerarts.org

GENERAL INFORMATION

Exhibition: *Spin Off: Contemporary Art Circling the Mandala*, September 22 to December 4, 2011, FREE

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 22, 7 – 9 PM, FREE

Curator Talk: Thursday, September 22, 7:30 PM, FREE

Location: 80 Spadina Avenue, Suite 501, Toronto

Hours: Wednesday to Sunday, 12 – 6 PM

About the Koffler Centre of the Arts

Koffler Centre of the Arts is Canada's only cutting-edge contemporary, multidisciplinary Jewish cultural institution. It has a broad mandate to serve all, and present a wide range of artistic programs through a global lens in a specifically Canadian context. The Koffler Centre of the Arts is an agency of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto.

Planning is underway on a brand new, architecturally innovative Koffler Centre of the Arts on the Sherman Campus. In July 2009, the Koffler's administrative offices and all classes opened in the Prosserman JCC on the Sherman Campus. More information at <http://tomorrowcampaign.com>

Koffler Centre of the Arts acknowledges the support of its patrons and members, Cultural Season Sponsor **CIBC Wood Gundy**, Print Media Partner **National Post**, and the **UJA Federation of Greater Toronto**. The Koffler Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support the City of Toronto through the **Toronto Arts Council**, the **Ontario Arts Council** and the **Canada Council for the Arts**.

KOFFLER ON THE ROAD!

Watch for Koffler programs off-site around Toronto! As we prepare for our new facility to be completed, the Koffler Centre of the Arts is continuing to program exhibitions, events and performances both at our current facilities and at various downtown sites in Toronto. Check our website for details and watch out for Koffler events in **your** neighbourhood!

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Media Contact

Tony Hewer, Head of Communications and Marketing

Koffler Centre of the Arts

4588 Bathurst Street | Toronto | ON | M2R 1W6

t: 416.638.1881 x 4228 | f: 416.636.5813

e: thewer@kofflerarts.org | w: www.kofflerarts.org