



Douglas Reynolds Gallery

Haida



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Born 1946, Hydaburg, Alaska.

Robert Davidson (Haida name: *guud san glans*) is one of Canada's most important contemporary artists. He has been immensely influential in the direction that modern Northwest Coast art has developed and over the last five decades he has set a standard that many artists in this field have sought to emulate. He is a master in every medium, including wood, gold, silver, argillite, silkscreen and bronze.

Davidson belongs to the Eagle clan and his Haida name is *guud san glans*, Eagle of the Dawn. Born in Hydaburg, Alaska, in 1946, he grew up in Old Massett, Haida Gwaii. At the early age of 13, he received training as an argillite and wood carver from his father, Claude Davidson, and grandfather, Robert Davidson Senior. Davidson's great grandfather, Charles Edenshaw, was a renowned turn-of-the-century Haida artist. Much of Davidson's cultural knowledge of Haida traditions was passed down to him by his paternal grandmother Florence Davidson, who had been raised in the old Haida ways.

In the late 1960s, Davidson apprenticed with Bill Reid and studied at the Vancouver School of Art. In 1969 he carved and raised a 40-foot totem pole in Old Massett which was the first to be raised in the village since 1871. He has since carved many totem poles for public institutions as well as private collectors around the world. In 1993 the Vancouver Art Gallery had a major retrospective exhibition of Davidson's work. *Eagle of the Dawn* chronicled Davidson's and its influence on contemporary Northwest Coast Art. In 2007 this was expanded on in a solo exhibit at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, *The Abstract Edge* focused on Davidson's abstract work and the exploration and expansion of the Haida culture within it. As Davidson states: "The Haida Philosophy is what bred the art, and now the art has become the catalyst for us to explore the philosophy" (from "*The Abstract Edge*")

Davidson has always taken seriously his trusteeship of his Haida knowledge and much of the focus of his life has been about reclaiming and exploring Haida art, song and story. He founded the *Rainbow Creek Dancers* along with his brother, Reg Davidson, and has performed at ceremonies and potlatches around the world. In 1995 he received the National Aboriginal Achievement Award for his contribution to First Nations art and culture. He holds numerous honorary degrees. He has received the Order of British Columbia, and in 1996 was awarded the prestigious Order of Canada. He received both the Governor General's Award for Visual Arts and the Audain Prize for Lifetime Achievement Award in the Visual Arts in 2010.

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