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Cutting-edge Photographers From Canada and Mexico Compete for \$50,000 Grange Prize

TORONTO and MONTREAL, March 23 /CNW Telbec/ - Aeroplan and the Art Gallery of Ontario have selected four remarkable photographers from Canada and Mexico as their candidates for the 2009 Grange Prize. Starting today, the public can visit www.thegrangeprize.com to vote for the artist they think should win the \$50,000 prize: Marco Antonio Cruz from Mexico City, Lynne Cohen from Montreal, Federico Gama from Mexico City or Jin-me Yoon from Vancouver.

Now in its second year, The Grange Prize is a partnership between Aeroplan and the AGO that recognizes the best in Canadian and international contemporary photography. A joint curatorial panel of experts selects the candidates from Canada and one other country. The committee has chosen Mexico to participate in the 2009 competition. The \$50,000 award is the largest of its kind in Canada, and is the only one selected entirely by the public.

This year, for the first time, the AGO will host a special exhibition of works by all the selected candidates from April 1 to June 26, while the Centro de la Imagen in Mexico City will host its own exhibition between April 8 and May 24. A more comprehensive selection of works from each nominated artist can also be viewed at www.thegrangeprize.com. Members of the public can vote onsite at the exhibitions or online from now until May 20. The winner will be announced at a special ceremony at the AGO on May 26, 2009.

"The AGO is a strong advocate for the diverse and innovative photographers working today and The Grange Prize is a perfect example of this commitment," says Matthew Teitelbaum, the AGO's Michael and Sonja Koerner Director, and CEO. "This prize gives up-and-coming photographers a stage to share their art with the world."

"Aeroplan is thrilled to be presenting the Grange Prize with the AGO for a second year. The Mexican and Canadian artists who have been shortlisted are a talented group and we are pleased to be showcasing their inspiring work to help raise awareness of this important art form," says Rupert Duchesne, President and CEO, Groupe Aeroplan Inc.

"The Mexico Tourism Board is excited to be a Supporting Sponsor of the Grange Prize. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to showcase the best of Mexico not just as a tourist destination but as a hub for cultural activity," says Alfonso Sumano, Mexico Tourism Board Regional Director for Canada.

In addition to the prize, each candidate will participate in a residency at a local arts institution. International candidates for the award will be hosted by the AGO, while Canadian nominees will travel to Mexico. During their residencies the artists will explore a wide range of themes including Canada's First Nations, Mexican immigration to Canada, uninhabited spaces and historic natural environments.

Last year, the inaugural Grange Prize was presented to Winnipeg artist Sarah Anne Johnson whose work will be featured in a solo exhibition at the AGO later this year.

The Mexico Tourism Board is a supporting sponsor of the Grange Prize along with media sponsors The Globe and Mail and Bravo Television.

About Aeroplan

Celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2009, Aeroplan, Canada's premier loyalty program, is owned by Groupe Aeroplan Inc., a leading international loyalty management corporation.

Aeroplan is a long-standing patron of the Arts, with a history of supporting artists and arts initiatives across Canada. Of particular significance is the company's work, in partnership with the Art Gallery of Ontario, to develop The Grange Prize for contemporary photography. Aeroplan is committed to fostering a long-term, international dialogue about this important art form. Aeroplan has also joined the AGO in a three-year partnership as the Signature Partner of the Photography Collection Program, supporting planned AGO activities to engage visitors with photography, including special lectures and tours.

For more information about Aeroplan, please visit www.groupeaeroplan.com or www.aeroplan.com

About the AGO

With a permanent collection of more than 73,000 works of art, the Art Gallery of Ontario is among the most distinguished art museums in North America. The Gallery began an extraordinary chapter when it launched Transformation AGO in 2002. Multi-faceted in scope, Transformation AGO involved the unprecedented growth of the permanent collection, an innovative architectural expansion by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry, and the strengthening of the museum's endowment resources. As the imaginative centre of the city, the transformed AGO dramatically enriches our visitors' experiences and provides greater access to the full vibrancy of the art museum.

For more information visit www.ago.net

The Art Gallery of Ontario is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Culture. Additional operating support is received from the Volunteers of the AGO, the City of Toronto, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts.

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