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The AGO and Aeroplan Announce Nominees for The Grange Prize - A contemporary photography prize where the public selects the winner

TORONTO and MONTREAL, Feb. 14 /CNW Telbec/ - The Art Gallery of Ontario and Aeroplan today announced the two Canadian and three international finalists for the inaugural Grange Prize for contemporary photography: Raymonde April, Sarah Anne Johnson, Miao Xiaochun, Huang Yan and Liu Zheng.

The annual \$50,000 prize is the largest of its kind in Canada, and the only one entirely determined by the public. Beginning today, everyone is invited to visit www.thegrangeprize.com to view the artists' work and subscribe to the voting reminder e-mail. Voting will officially begin February 25 and continue until April 3, 2008; the winner will be announced at an awards ceremony on April 24, 2008.

Launched in February 2007, and named in honour of the AGO's historic home, The Grange Prize is a partnership between Aeroplan and the AGO that recognizes the best in Canadian and international contemporary photography. Each year, artists will be selected from across Canada and a different international region; this year China was selected.

"The Grange Prize is a celebration of the powerful imagery and diverse voices in art photography today," says Matthew Teitelbaum, the AGO's Michael and Sonja Koerner Director, and CEO. "The new AGO will continue to be a home to groundbreaking photography from around the world by providing more than double the gallery space for photography than before our transformation."

"These artists are among the most innovative photographers in the world today and we're honoured to have created a prize that salutes their incredible talent," says Rupert Duchesne, President and CEO of Aeroplan. "The Grange Prize demonstrates Aeroplan and the AGO's commitment to providing valuable assistance for developing artists, helping them reach their full potential."

Nominees for The Grange Prize have been selected by a committee of AGO curators and representatives from Aeroplan. Each nominee has also been invited to participate in a residency program: the international candidates for the award will be invited to stay at Canadian art centres, while Canadian nominees will travel to China.

In addition, each artist will work with an advocate to help create a public dialogue about his or her work; these will be featured on The Grange Prize website. The advocates are art historian and critic Eduardo Ralickas, representing Raymonde April; curator Steven Matijcio, representing Sarah Anne Johnson; curator Jiang Jiehong, representing Miao Xiaochun; photographer Holly Lee, representing Huang Yan; and Alissa Schoenfeld, representing Liu Zheng.

The Globe and Mail is the exclusive Media Sponsor of The Grange Prize.

About Aeroplan

Aeroplan Limited Partnership, Canada's premier loyalty marketing company and operator of the Aeroplan loyalty program, is dedicated to developing and executing programs designed to engage the loyalty of its prestigious membership. Aeroplan's millions of members earn Aeroplan Miles with its network of more than 70 world-class partners, representing more than 150 brands in the financial, retail, and travel sectors. Miles earned may be redeemed for Aeroplan's industry-leading ClassicFlight Rewards, innovative ClassicPlus Flight Rewards, and global Star Alliance Flight Rewards, offering travel to more than 850 destinations worldwide. In 2007 alone, more than 1.5 million round-trip flight rewards were issued. Aeroplan's roster of non-flight rewards includes more than 400 exciting specialty, merchandise, and experiential rewards, as well as hotel and car rental rewards. Members are encouraged to stay engaged with Aeroplan and avoid mileage expiration due to inactivity by earning or redeeming Aeroplan Miles at least once in any consecutive twelve-month period.

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

About the Art Gallery of Ontario

With a permanent collection of more than 68,000 works of art, the Art Gallery of Ontario is among the most distinguished art museums in North America. In 2002, the Gallery began an extraordinary chapter in its 108-year history when it launched Transformation AGO. Multi-faceted in scope, Transformation AGO involves 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 will dramatically enrich our visitors' experiences and provide new access to the full vibrancy of the art museum. Boldly declaring that art matters, the new AGO will reopen fully in fall 2008.

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.

For more information about the AGO, please visit www.ago.net.

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