



# ASYLUM:

## a long, last look at woodlands

1878 to 2003

**October 28 to November 22, 2003**

The Art Gallery of the New Westminister Public Library  
**Opening: Tuesday, October 28, 6:30 - 8:30 pm**

715 - 6th Ave., New Westminister, BC V3M 2B3  
Monday to Friday 9:30 am - 9:00 pm  
Saturday 9:30 am - 5:30 pm  
Sunday 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
T 604-527-4660

An exhibition by Michael de Courcy, of photographs, screenprints and text, that chronicles the changes created by the deinstitutionalization of the Woodlands School in New Westminister, British Columbia.

The exhibition coincides with the sale of the 64-acre property to a developer planning to build residential housing which will replace all but a few remnants of the former asylum. At the same time, BC's provincial government has recently acknowledged that many instances of physical, mental and sexual abuse did likely occur at the institution, and as a result has issued an apology to former residents and their families, many of whom are initiating a class-action law suit for compensation.

In two folders within the exhibition there are photographs of people who attended a series of meetings in New Westminister where the fate of these public lands was debated. Interested community members, social activists, and former residents of Woodlands met with government bureaucrats and their architectural and planning consultants. Excerpts from the transcripts of several of these meetings give the viewer an idea of the range of issues covered in the final debates that preceded the demolition of the majority of the structures which comprised the Woodlands facility for the treatment of the mentally handicapped.

The main body of "Asylum" is comprised of 17 large-scale, colour photographs of the interior rooms and hallways of the oldest building in the Woodlands complex along with 13 life-size portraits of former residents. In addition there are also five 30"x40" screenprints of library-archived clippings documenting internal and media accounts of Woodlands from 1971 to 2001.



Brian Hirschfield, Woodlands  
resident from age 6 to 23  
(1954-1971)

Michael de Courcy is a Canadian artist born in Montreal, Quebec in 1944. He has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally. His work has been collected by the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

This project has been funded solely by the artist and not through the financial contribution of any political, cultural, or special interest group.

For further information about this project and the availability of the exhibition content please contact Michael de Courcy directly.

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Resume:  
**<http://currentprojects.decourcy.ca/resume.pdf>**

Website:  
**<http://currentprojects.decourcy.ca/asylum/>**