

Marc Mayer's Speaking Notes **FINAL**  
**Annual Public Meeting**  
AGA, Edmonton, Monday 19 September 2016, 18:00

- Good evening.
- It's a great pleasure to be in Edmonton this evening to talk to you about the past year at the National Gallery of Canada.
- We're coming off a very successful summer, during which 91,000 people saw our *Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun* exhibition, well exceeding our target and creating a real buzz around town.
- The most recent Annual Report has not yet been tabled in Parliament, but we have copies of last year's report available, should you want one.

## Introductions

- Firstly, I would like to introduce the members of our senior management team who are with us tonight:
  - Jean-François Bilodeau, Deputy Director of Advancement and Public Engagement;
  - Anne Eschapasse, Deputy Director of Exhibitions and Outreach;
  - Paul Lang, Deputy Director of Collections and Research, and Chief Curator;
  - Julie Peckham, Deputy Director of Administration and Chief Financial Officer;
  - Sylvie Sarault, Director of Human Resources;
  - and Matthew Symonds, Director, Corporate Secretariat and Ministerial Liaison.

## Strategic Priorities

- The National Gallery has had a very successful year, with a number of achievements we're particularly proud of.
- We continued to advance our three strategic priorities:
  - Increasing Attendance;
  - Investing in Infrastructure;
  - and Diversifying Revenue.

## Acquisitions

- An essential element of our mandate is to collect works of art, both Canadian and international, historical and contemporary.
- To this end, each year the Gallery acquires new works for the national collection, with the generous support of the Federal Government as well as private donors.
- Most of these works are put at the disposal of our sister institutions across the country, notably this one.
- Our acquisitions this year have had a transformative effect on the collection.
- Some of the highlights are...
  - For our collection of Canadian art...
    - the extraordinary gift of fifty paintings by James Wilson Morrice, as mentioned by Mr. Tims;
    - a large donation of early photo-based works by John Massey;
    - and William Raphael's 19<sup>th</sup>-century painting, *Bonsecours Market, Montreal* .
  - In Contemporary art:
    - Neo Rauch's monumental painting *The Blue Fish*;
    - Wael Shawky's complete video series, *Cabaret Crusades*.

- In Indigenous art:
  - a gift of four works by Lucy Tasseor Tutsweetok;
  - and a set of 148 prints by Robert Davidson;
- In Photographs:
  - the gift of over 10,000 objects from the Origins of Photography collection;
  - and 20 photographs from Geoffrey James's series *The Kingston Penitentiary*, ten of which were a gift from the artist;
- Four our European collection ...
  - The gift of Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun's *Countess Tolstaya*, featured in this summer's exhibition;
  - and Charles Meynier's 19<sup>th</sup>-century painting, *Wisdom Defending Youth from the Arrows of Love*.

## Exhibitions

- The Gallery presented 27 exhibitions in 2015-16, of which the major ones were...
- *Alex Colville*, our summer exhibition, organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario with our collaboration. It drew over 113,000 visitors, and the catalogue sold out.
- *Chagall: Daphnis & Chloé* featured the entire series of forty-two lithographs donated to the Gallery in 1986.
- *Luminous and True: The Photographs of Frederick H. Evans* highlighted an extraordinary gift of 140 works.
- *Beauty's Awakening: Drawings by the Pre-Raphaelites and Their Contemporaries from the Lanigan Collection* was the result of yet another magnificent gift, from Saskatoon collector Denis Lanigan. The exhibition traveled to London's Leighton House Museum last winter, where it was one of the most successful shows ever, and is currently on view here at the AGA.
- The *Monet: A Bridge to Modernity* exhibition, centered around the long-term loan of *Le pont de bois* and attracted more than 91,000 visitors
- *Canadassimo*, by the Quebec artist collective BGL, was shown at the Venice Biennale, where it attracted a record number of 220 000 visitors to the Canada Pavilion.

## NGC @

- As our Chair mentioned, in 2015 we partnered with the Art Gallery of Alberta to present three exhibitions as part of the NGC@AGA programme.
- We were particularly delighted to collaborate on the *Chris Cran* retrospective to celebrate this wonderful Alberta artist, and it received excellent media attention both here and in Ottawa, where it appeared this past summer.
- We also presented NGC @ exhibitions with our other partners, the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, in Toronto.

## CPI

- The Gallery's most newsworthy initiative of 2015–16 was, without a doubt, the founding of the Canadian Photography Institute, or CPI.
- Built on the foundation of the Gallery's superb Photographs Collection, as well as two extraordinary donations -- David Thomson's gift of thousands of vintage photographs and Scotiabank's \$10 million contribution, as Founding Partner -- the CPI will position the Gallery as one of the world's key centres for photography research, public programs, publications and exhibitions.

## Sobey

- The National Gallery had the pleasure of announcing a significant new partnership with the Sobey Art Foundation.
- Building on the success of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's ten-year stewardship of the Sobey Art Award, from its inception, the NGC has now assumed responsibility for the administration of the prize, its exhibition, and notably, the job of raising awareness of our brilliant young artists on the national and international stage.

## Partnerships

- We had a year of very successful partnership projects with organizations in our community.
- In July 2015, in partnership with Ottawa's Music & Beyond festival, we hosted an evening of musical performances in our galleries that garnered an Ottawa Tourism Award for Partnership of the Year.
- In our Contemporary Conversations series, presented in partnership with the U.S. Embassy and Art in Embassies program, we presented on-stage conversations with contemporary American artists, which consistently drew a full house.
- With the Toronto International Film Festival, or TIFF, we presented equally popular evenings with film screenings and guest speakers.

## Web

- We are expanding the Gallery's digital presence all the time.
- Readership of the online *NGC Magazine* increased by 83% over the previous year, and our social media followers grew in number by 47% .
- The Gallery's Distance Learning programs were used in 131 classrooms across Canada.
- The *Globe and Mail* mentioned our Canadian Art Collection mobile app in its list of six apps that must be tried at least once.

## Boutique

- The renovation of the Boutique was a key infrastructure project of 2015-2016, finished in time for the launch of this summer's programming.



## Attendance

- Combined attendance – in all venues presenting exhibitions produced by the NGC – totaled around 880,000 people for the last fiscal year.
- Attendance at our Ottawa venue alone greatly exceeded expectations with a total of over 416,000 visitors.

## NGCF

- The National Gallery Foundation had its busiest and most successful year in its 19-year history.
- In recognition of a number of major multi-million dollar gifts, four new Gallery spaces were named:
  - The Michael and Sonja Koerner Family Atrium;
  - The Audain Gallery;
  - The Scotiabank Great Hall;
  - And the Ash K. Prakash Gallery.
- As well, Thomas d'Aquino and Susan Peterson d'Aquino helped to establish the Foundation's Benefactors Initiative.

## Sponsorship

- Sponsorship efforts were also successful.
- Among our most important sponsors were...
  - RBC
  - AIMIA
  - Enbridge, Inc.
  - TD Bank Group
  - Bell
  - Irving Oil,
  - Heffel Fine Art Auction House,
  - Black & McDonald,
  - and Teknion

## Outlook

- The outlook for the current fiscal year is good.
- Overall attendance since April 1st is 15% above target.
- Through the Federal Budget 2016, the Gallery welcomed the announcement of an additional 18.4 million dollars over the next five years for infrastructure, and further funding of a new museum storage facility.
- During 2016–17, the Gallery will also invest in capital initiatives targeted at improving the visitor experience.

- We are currently working towards the launch of our sesquicentennial programming next May, including the opening of our new Canadian and Indigenous Galleries. This will be a real transformation, offering visitors a whole new way to look at Canadian art.

### To Come

- Many wonderful programmes are coming up at the Gallery:
- In October 2016
  - the *Sobey Art Award* exhibition;
  - and the inauguration of the Canadian Photography Institute with 2 exhibitions of photography:
    - *The Intimate World of Josef Sudek*, which was very well received at the Jeu de Paume in Paris,
    - and *Cutline: The Photography Archives of The Globe and Mail*, which also met with acclaim in Toronto this past spring.
- and in November, *Alex Janvier*, an extraordinary Alberta artist.
- Among our NGC@ programs, here at the AGA, David Altmejd's *The Vessel* opens in October, and *Clocks for Seeing*, in February.

## Thanks

- Many groups and individuals contributed to our success during the last fiscal year.
- I'd like to thank...
  - the Government of Canada for the financial support that makes so much of our work possible;
  - in particular, the Honourable Mélanie Joly and the Ministry of Canadian Heritage;
  - our Board of Trustees;
  - our sponsors, donors, members, volunteers and visitors;
  - and our extraordinary staff.