

**Marc Mayer's Speaking Notes**  
**NGC Annual Public Meeting**  
**Monday, December 9, 2013**

Good evening. Tonight, I will speak mostly about the last fiscal year, 2012–13. This year's report has now been available in print for over a month.

The National Gallery of Canada has a mandate to collect and maintain the highest quality art, both Canadian and international, historic and contemporary. Our mission is also to make the collection accessible to Canadians and to further appreciation of the visual arts.

For the last fiscal year, the Gallery identified five strategic priorities.

We sought to strengthen the collection by increasing the number of donated works, and by focusing more of our purchases on truly exceptional examples of art in our five collecting areas: Canadian Art; Contemporary Art; European, American and Asian Art; Indigenous Art; and Photographs.

The Gallery has endeavored to inspire more Canadians to be engaged with art and enjoy it.

We gave all Canadians from all regions access to the collection through meaningful programs and installations, and through innovative technology-based tools.

Diversity has also been another top priority. We sought to reach diverse audiences, and to make the Gallery, as a workplace, representative of Canada's diverse population.

Efforts have been made to maintain the Gallery's infrastructure to optimize the use of existing space, to enhance the visitor experience, and to ensure that the facilities were building code-compliant.

In making funding a strategic priority, we set ambitious goals to increase donations and sponsorships and to maximize self-generated revenues.

We strengthened each of our collections over the past year, with 377 excellent acquisitions. You can see many of these works in a slide show, at the reception following this presentation, outside in the Water Court. Here are some highlights.

In Contemporary Canadian Art, we acquired *Spine Walk*, by Ottawa artist Melanie Authier. In her large abstract paintings, Authier explores natural and architectural forms in a style that combines Expressionism and Romanticism.

Also in Contemporary Canadian Art, we purchased Geoffrey Farmer's monumental sculpture, *Leaves of Grass*, which consists of five decades worth of *Life* magazine cut-outs, mounted on a table 38 metres in length. It is a fascinating work that illustrates world social history from 1935 to 1985. It will be on view at the Gallery starting next October.

Our European Art department made the major acquisition of *Love Seduces innocence, Pleasure Entraps, and Remorse Follows*, by Pierre-Paul Prud'hon. A major neoclassical painting and part of Prud'hon's series of allegorical works, it was commissioned by Empress Josephine, wife of Napoleon.

Our Indigenous Art department made some extraordinary acquisitions. Among them is *Red Man Watching White Man Trying to Fix Hole in the Sky*, by Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, who is of Coastal Salish and Okanagan ancestry.

In Photographs, we purchased a work by James Van Der Zee, made in 1932, *Couple Wearing Raccoon Coats with a Cadillac*. Van der Zee was the most important photographic chronicler of the Harlem Renaissance in the period between the two world wars.

Of our 377 acquisitions, close to half (145), were donations. One of the most remarkable gifts is *Tapocalips*, a large abstract painting composed of 80 canvases by Quebec painter Jacques Hurtubise. This work was a donation from René Després.

*Majestic*, a monumental sculpture by Canadian artist Michel de Broin, and donated by Donald and Beth Sobey, was built from lamp posts uprooted by Hurricane Katrina.

The American-born artist Benjamin West is well known for *The Death of General Wolfe*, which was a gift of the 2nd Duke of Westminster to the people of Canada, and which has been in our collection since 1921. Last year we acquired his self-portrait, made just a few years after *The Death of General Wolfe*. This work was purchased with funds donated by the Audain Foundation.

The Gallery works closely with art collectors to obtain not only donations of important work, but also long-term loans, for a period of several years. In 2012–13, the Gallery obtained a long-term loan of this beautiful pair of famous sculptures by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, French artist of the Second Empire, and Rodin's mentor. Here are *Girl with a Shell* and *Neapolitan Fisherboy*.

We presented some superb exhibitions over the last fiscal year. *Van Gogh: Up Close*, the major exhibition of summer 2012, attracted more than 230,000 visitors. As Mr. Tims said, it was the Gallery's most popular exhibition in 14 years. *Van Gogh* was sponsored by Sun Life Financial and Shell Canada.

Christian Marclay's *The Clock* attracted long line-ups. It is currently on view at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

*Arnaud Maggs: Identification* was a survey of Canadian artist Arnaud Maggs's production over four decades. Maggs was able to celebrate his 86th birthday on the day the exhibition opened. Sadly, he died shortly after it closed.

With *Builders: Canadian Biennial 2012*, we showcased recent acquisitions by emerging and established artists, and even by octogenarian artists. *Builders* was supported by the RBC Foundation.

The Gallery was the first Canadian institution to devote exhibitions to these two important photographers – British photojournalist Don McCullin and Canadian-born Margaret Watkins.

We responded to our strategic priority to serve Canadians by showcasing 24 exhibitions in 30 locations across the country. Among these off-site exhibitions was *Misled by Nature: Contemporary Art and the Baroque*, shown in partnership with the Art Gallery of Alberta. It showcased work by artists such as David Altmejd, Sarah Sze and Bharti Kher – all recent acquisitions for our permanent collection, which we are sharing with our sister institutions. We also presented *Icons of Modernism*, *Street View*, *Forty-Part Motet* and many other exhibitions and installations across the country.

2013–14 is equally exciting in terms of programming. Last summer we showcased *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*, and at the Venice Biennale, *Shary Boyle: Music for Silence*. Our participation in Venice is entirely possible thanks to donations and sponsors. We also presented *Rubens*, *Van Dyck*, *Jordaens*, in our new Masterpiece in Focus series.

Coming up in the new year: *John Ruskin: Artist and Observer* and *Gustave Doré (1832–1883): Master of Imagination*, in collaboration with the Musée d'Orsay. Doré was an artist of genius, a painter, sculptor, engraver and illustrator who has influenced many filmmakers, photographers and artists of all kinds. *The Great War: The Pervasive Power of Photography*, to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. In the fall, the *Canadian Biennial 2014* and my own retrospective on Jack Bush.

As part of our mandate to share the national collection with Canadians in all regions, we have, since 2010, been working in partnership with other museums to help them mount original exhibitions in their galleries with works from the national collection. Last year, for the second year in a row, we won an award for these “NGC@” partnerships. The 2012 Canadian Museums Association Award of Outstanding Achievement in Management was presented jointly to the National Gallery of Canada and our partners, Toronto’s Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art and the Art Gallery of Alberta. Following these successes, in 2012 we launched NGC@WAG, our new partnership with the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Winnipeg is showcasing the very best of our contemporary art collection.

I’d like to add that last year we lent almost 900 works to other museums.

To attract new readers, the Gallery launched, in December 2012, its new online magazine *NGCMagazine*. This is an expanded version of the former *Vernissage* magazine, with behind-the-scenes videos, photo galleries, and reviews of books, films, and exhibitions across Canada.

In a continued effort to draw new audiences, grow revenue and live within our means, the Gallery engaged in some internal re-structuring. Among other changes, we created the Advancement and Public Engagement department, which is responsible for corporate

sponsorships, marketing and new media, membership, and annual giving. Public engagement is the single most important issue facing public museums today.

As you can see, combined attendance in all venues that presented exhibitions produced by the NGC totalled over 800,000, a 13% increase over the previous year. The number of visits to the Gallery's website more than doubled in 2012–13, reaching 6 million user sessions. Our YouTube videos are also very popular. We registered 153,000 video views, a threefold increase over the previous year. Since its launch, *NGCMagazine* has received more than 12,000 hits per month, which is three times the number of readers we were able to reach with *Vernissage*. We have been able to expand our readership exponentially with the online magazine, partly because we can now use social media to point people directly to magazine articles.

In 2012–13, due to the success of *Van Gogh: Up Close*, the Gallery generated operating revenue of more than \$12 million – in admissions, bookstore sales, parking fees and audioguide rentals. This represents an increase of 66% compared with the previous year. The three largest pie pieces you can see are – in top position – Admissions. Next largest is the Bookstore and Publishing. Third largest is Sponsorships and Contributions. It is the National Gallery of Canada Foundation that is the institution's largest single source of donations. It contributed over \$800,000 last year.

Despite these successes, we did face economic challenges last year: generally slower economic growth, fewer international visitors, competition from other cultural attractions in the National Capital Region, and, nationally a highly competitive philanthropic environment.

As for expenses, operating expenses totaled \$60.5 million in 2012–13, representing an increase of 5% over the previous year.

During the last quarter of 2012–13, the Gallery also launched the huge project to replace the windows in the Great Hall, but capital funding for this project was earmarked in the budget.

Our biggest financial challenge of last year was the long-term outlook. Special five-year capital funding that we received from Parliament was about to run out. Also, we could see that costs for art transportation, insurance, security and building maintenance were on the rise. We knew we would have to take extraordinary measures in order to avoid a deficit in the future. So we established a plan that included the reduction of operating and maintenance budgets at the Gallery, and the difficult decision to eliminate 29 positions. This plan also included investments in new technologies and an increased emphasis on philanthropy, sponsorships and commercial activities.

We have had great success in 2012–13. Watch out for the amazing projects that we've got in store in 2014.

I'm very proud of our staff. I'd like to thank them all, as well as the Government of Canada, specifically the Department of Canadian Heritage, our Board of Trustees, our volunteers, our sponsors, donors and especially our visitors.

We will now take your questions. I invite you to join us afterwards for a small reception in the Foyer.