



National Gallery of Canada

## K. Colby-Stothart - Director, Exhibitions and Installations

Annual Public Meeting, December 1, 2008

Good evening.

This year the exhibition program of the National Gallery of Canada and its affiliate, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography has been varied and ambitious. Since the time of our last public meeting in December of 2007, ten large special exhibitions and a dozen smaller exhibitions or thematic installations have been newly featured in Ottawa covering historical Canadian, Contemporary Canadian, historical international, contemporary international, paintings, sculpture, new media, photography, and the Indigenous cultures of Canada. We have aspired to engage our many publics with an intelligent and inspirational program that both shows the superb national collections and borrows actively from other sources - to bring the finest art in the world to Canadian audiences.

Beyond Ottawa, the Gallery takes its exhibitions on the road and meets new visitors in small, medium and large cities across our vast Canadian geography. We crate the exhibitions for travel, and send them with Gallery staff, by specialized fine art truck to art museums from Victoria to Newfoundland to the Yukon. Here you see a late night delivery of our Impressionist Prints exhibition to the Winnipeg Art Gallery where it will be on view until February. The next few slides show other exhibitions from the On Tour program at venues across the country. This is one of the largest traveling exhibition programs in the world and has presented 24 exhibitions outside of the Ottawa region since our last public meeting one year ago. As many as 500,000 visitors will visit exhibitions in Ottawa at the National Gallery of Canada and an additional 250-450,000 visitors will enjoy the traveling exhibitions program.

The Gallery's collections and expertise covers all periods of art history. Each year, we throw the spotlight not only upon our superb historic collections, and art of the recent past, but also that of the thriving contemporary visual arts in Canada and around the world.

The 2008 contemporary program has had, on an ongoing basis, continually rotating presentations of top Canadian and International artists, installations of newly acquired works, and



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thematic installations of the collection. The Gallery hosted the 2008 Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts, as it does every year, and this year also hosted the RBC Canadian Painting Competition Award.

This year we held three major, large scale contemporary exhibitions. The most recent is *Caught in the Act: The Viewer as Performer*, curated by Josée Drouin-Brisebois, and currently on view in our Special Exhibition galleries. This dynamic exhibition focuses on Canadian artists who, through their installation works, seek to actively engage the Gallery visitor. Featured artists include BGL, Kent Monkman and Rodney LaTourelle, all shown in these images.

The second major contemporary exhibition, *Real Life: Ron Mueck and Guy Ben-Ner*, was presented in l'Espace Shawinigan this past summer, the last year of the Gallery's formal annual commitment to that facility. The Real Life exhibition has generated particular interest across the country and will now tour to the Art Gallery of Alberta, The Glenbow Museum, the Oakville Galleries, the Mackenzie Art Gallery and the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

The third major exhibition by a contemporary artist this year was *Utopia Dystopia: The Photographs of Geoffrey James*. This retrospective celebration of one of Canada's most eloquent interpreters of the landscape, presents over 80 works drawn from all of his major series. The exhibition will next travel next to the Kelowna Art Gallery in 2009.

The contemporary program will continue to include major exhibitions every year including both solo and thematic projects. It goes without saying, that these exhibitions will tour within Canada and internationally through the traveling exhibitions program. Upcoming, we have major mid-career retrospectives of *Carl Beam* (Winter 2010) and *Wanda Koop* (Winter 2011), the latter project co-organized with the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Also upcoming is a major contemporary exhibition we are calling The New Baroque planned for Summer 2010. This will be a spectacular selection of 12-15 of some of the best Canadian and international contemporary artists, whose work exudes elements of theatricality and excess, combining naturalism and abstraction as well as a multidisciplinary approach that begs comparison to the seventeenth century Baroque - in today's terms. Stunning large scale works by Canadian artists David Altmejd and Shary Boyle, as well as international artists Isa Genzken and Lee Bul will be included.

The Gallery has in recent years, committed to presenting career retrospectives of central figures in Aboriginal art and this year is touring an exhibition of the work of Daphne Odjig, co-organized



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with the Art Gallery of Sudbury. The exhibition will be presented here at the NGC in the Fall of 2009.

Equally vital to the Gallery's program is the historical component. Through these classic, research driven projects emerge important contributions to art history, collaborations with prestigious museum partners and nurturing of the National Gallery of Canada's scholarly networks in the world art museum community. The Gallery's own collection is featured and contextualized with borrowed artworks, and whenever possible, these exhibitions are also presented at other major art museum venues.

In the summer of 2008 the Gallery presented *The 1930's: The Making of "The New Man"* organized by Pierre Theberge, Director of the National Gallery of Canada. The exhibition brought together over 200 artworks from the collections of the Metropolitan Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, The Tate Museum, the Centre Pompidou, The Guggenheim and over 70 other distinguished lending partners. The 1930's saw the concept of the "New Man" spread across Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union and elsewhere. The exhibition explored the links between art, medical science and the emergence of this « new man » during this turbulent decade. Magnificent works by European artists of the period including Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, and Vassily Kandinsky were included.

*Bernini and the Birth of Baroque Portrait Sculpture* co-organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the National Gallery of Canada, has just opened in our special exhibition galleries. This features about 50 sculptures, paintings and drawings of the utmost rarity, and shows loans from most of the world's major museums, all uniquely assembled for the occasion. Our very rarely lent bust of Barberini Pope Urban VIII – the most important sculpture by Bernini in North America – will be the centerpiece of the exhibition which concentrates on only one facet of the artist's revolutionary contributions to the history of art – that of portrait sculpture. Visitors will experience the individual genius, technical expertise, virtuosity and naturalism of Bernini, working in this most difficult of media. The exhibition will feature virtually every portrait drawing by the artist in existence.

Next summer, 2009, the National Gallery of Canada presents, *From Raphael to Annibale Carracci: the Art of Papal Rome*. Under the curatorial direction of Dr. David Franklin, the exhibition surveys and illuminates one of the most significant and glorious periods in the history of art – Sixteenth Century Rome. The exhibition is designed as a sequel to the highly successful show held in Ottawa in 2005 on the theme of the Renaissance in Florence. With its major paintings by Francesco Salviati and Annibale Carracci, in addition to a significant number of



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stunning drawings and prints, the collection of the National Gallery of Canada can happily provide the foundation for the exhibition that will feature a unique and unprecedented grouping of works by some of the most celebrated names in Italian art including, Michelangelo and Raphael, - and make significant new contributions to scholarship in the field.

Exhibitions are frequently platforms for new acquisitions, original publications, and technical discoveries and the exhibitions just described will certainly make contributions in all of those areas.

A smaller exhibition project that is creating some excitement is our Lendinara Altarpiece project. This will display the results of a two year research and restoration project carried out by our Chief of Conservation, Stephen Gritt and his team in collaboration with scholars from the Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Blanton Museum of Art in Texas.

The Gallery's owns one fragment of a much larger altarpiece painted c. 1563 by celebrated Italian master Paolo Veronese for a Monastery in Lendinara, Italy. The Canadian fragment, purchased in 1922, was in very poor condition, and has rarely been on display despite its enormous value. This exhibition will see the National Gallery of Canada's large and beautiful fragment fully restored and reunited with the other known pieces of the original, much larger, painting which stood over 5 meters in height.

The other known fragments are: St Anthony Abbot with another of the donors, belonging to the National Gallery of Scotland; St Jerome, with one of the donors, belonging to the Dulwich Picture Gallery; and a fourth fragment, the Head of the Archangel St. Michael, belonging to the Blanton Art Museum, in Austin, Texas, discovered only in this past year.

Upcoming projects on our long range calendar from 2009 through 2012 include a highly anticipated project on Caravaggio and His Followers (Summer 2011), organized in collaboration with the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. Also upcoming is a rare monographic exhibition on Vincent Van Gogh, (Summer 2012) organized with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, that will assemble over 50 paintings by the artist in a study of his fascination with the close-up. I would now like to introduce Martha Hanna, Director of the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, who will highlight the year's activities at the CMCP.