



National Gallery of Canada

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Michael Audain - Speaking Notes for Annual Public Meeting 2009

Thank you, Joanne.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Gallery's third Annual Public meeting, and my first public meeting in the position of Chair.

I would like to introduce my colleagues on the Board, beginning with our Vice-Chair, Michael Tims, from Calgary.

Our trustees are:

Paul Baay and Howard Kroon, from the Calgary area of Alberta ;

Allan Benoit and Liza Maheu, from Winnipeg in Manitoba ;

Guy Bourgeois, from St-Bruno in Québec ;

Roshi Chadha, from Westmount, Quebec ;

Fred Fountain and Linda Hutchison, who are from Halifax and Kentville respectively in Nova Scotia;

and Harriet Walker, from Toronto, Ontario.

We are delighted to be here with you tonight to share some of the Gallery's achievements over the past year and to look ahead at upcoming exhibitions and educational programming.

The past year has been one of challenge and change for the National Gallery of Canada.

After 11 years as the Director of this great institution, Pierre Théberge embarked on a well-deserved retirement and the Board of Trustees launched an international search to identify a talented visionary to take over the helm. And we believe that we were successful!

It is with great pleasure that I welcome Marc Mayer, our new Director, to his first Annual Public Meeting.

Marc joined the Gallery last January bringing with him an impressive track record including tenures as the Director of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal and the Power Plant



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Contemporary Art Gallery of Toronto. Marc's vast knowledge of the field of contemporary art, coupled with his boundless energy and vision bode well for the future of this great institution.

The year in review challenged the Board of Trustees and Gallery management as well as staff on various fronts. In the face of a downward economy, the Gallery addressed reduced revenues and visitor attendance, which required the Board to make some very difficult decisions. These included the decision to conclude the partnership arrangement with la Cité de l'énergie in Shawinigan.

After the Board received assurances that the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography's program of collecting and exhibiting contemporary Canadian photographic works could be carried on by the same curators, the Board approved permanently moving the CMCP into the main Gallery building. Despite these challenges, the Gallery continued to offer exceptional educational programs and exhibitions - including CMCP exhibitions - all under one roof and via our travelling exhibitions program.

Before we proceed, I would like to thank the director Marc Mayer, his senior team, chiefs and all of the Gallery staff. The staff have worked long and hard at organizing thought-provoking exhibitions, educational programs, and fabulous publications. One of our greatest accomplishments is the care and dissemination of Canada's art collection.

One of our greatest accomplishments is the care and dissemination of Canada's art collection. The curatorial team work very closely with colleagues nationally and around the world to further knowledge of visual arts, and celebrate Canada's rich visual-arts heritage.

The National Gallery of Canada is an important showcase for Canadian artists, as well as those from elsewhere. The Board of Trustees looks forward to continued collaboration with the Department of Canadian Heritage and our Minister, the Honourable James Moore, and with other government departments and agencies to ensure that the National Gallery maintains its national and international status of excellence.

That is the end of my prepared remarks. I would like to add something. I want to say a few words from the bottom of my heart to the members of the museum and the friends who work very hard in this building. For our members, this is your opportunity to ask any question on your mind tonight. Please do pipe up and tell us what we are doing and how we can do it better.



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Just a word of my own, from our Board to the staff. Many years ago when I came into the National Gallery I was told one of the great resources of the Gallery wasn't only the wonderful art we have here, and a magnificent building. It was the quality and the dedication of our staff. And that is certainly something that I have found since I have been associated with the Gallery.

From the Board of Trustees, we want to thank you for all the wonderful work that you do. We believe that the times are very difficult for cultural institutions right across this country and, indeed, in other parts of the world, but these times have generated layoffs and cutbacks in programs and that sort of thing.

But we do appreciate the tremendous support that you provide week in and week out, for this great institution. So thank you from the Board of Trustees. We look forward to hearing from you all later on. Thank you very much.