



**National
Gallery
of Canada**

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**Musée
des beaux-arts
du Canada**

Speaking Notes

Françoise Lyon, Chair – NGC Board of Trustees

National Gallery of Canada
2020 Annual Public Meeting

Tuesday, December 8 at 18:00
Zoom / Virtual meeting

Thank you, Rosemary. Good evening. I'm Françoise Lyon, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Canada. It is my pleasure to welcome you to our 14th Annual Public Meeting!

I would like to begin by introducing my colleagues on the Board of Trustees:

- Paul R. Baay from Calgary;
- Lisa Browne from St. John's, Newfoundland;
- Terrence Burgoyne from Toronto;
- Roshi Chadha and Dominique Hamel from Montreal;
- Adad Hannah and Brian McBay of Vancouver;
- Sara Stasiuk of Winnipeg; and
- Clayton Windatt of Sturgeon Falls, Ontario.

Welcome!

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our Board Member, Anne-Marie Applin, who sadly passed away in Toronto on November 3. Anne-Marie was appointed Vice-Chair of our Board of Trustees in 2017 by the Honourable Mélanie Joly – and in addition to sitting on numerous boards across Canada, she was the recipient of both the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond and Golden Jubilee Medals. Anne-Marie was a strong supporter of the visual arts and an even stronger supporter of the National Gallery of Canada – and on behalf of the entire Board of Trustees, I would like to express just how much she will be missed.

As many of you know, the purpose of our Annual Public Meeting is to connect with our public and stakeholders and to report on our many activities from the year-in-review. It has been an absolute pleasure witnessing the achievements of the Gallery under the leadership of our new Director and CEO, Dr. Sasha Suda, and I am excited to share some of those highlights with you now.

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, the Gallery welcomed 2.6 million visitors! This number represents a 30% increase over the previous fiscal year, and includes physical attendance in Ottawa, attendance at all

venues where the Gallery was present, and virtual attendance on the Gallery's website. This success can be largely attributed to the popularity of our exhibitions, our numerous programs and activities, and strong marketing and promotion.

In November 2019, we mounted *Àbadakone | Continuous Fire | Feu continuel*, the second in the Gallery's ongoing series of exhibitions on contemporary international Indigenous art. Over the course of its eleven-month run, *Àbadakone* welcomed nearly 70,000 visitors on-site and online. Our audiences responded beautifully to this exhibition, and we are proud of the stories we told through the artworks on view.

The Gallery was honoured to collaborate with Algonquin Anishinaabe Elders and community members on this exhibition. Their openness was inspiring, and their collaboration deepened our connection to the land upon which the Gallery was built.

Other notable exhibitions from the year included the world's first dedicated to Paul Gauguin's portraiture, and the first on Japanese photography at the Gallery in nearly thirty years! In addition to its exhibitions in Ottawa, the Gallery mounted twenty-four exhibitions in partnership with other museums across Canada and around the world. *Canada and Impressionism: New Horizons*, for example, travelled to the Kunsthalle München in Munich, the Fondation de l'Hermitage in Lausanne, and the Musée Fabre in Montpellier. Featuring approximately 120 paintings by some 35 Canadian artists, the exhibition will finish its run with a presentation at the National Gallery of Canada in February 2021.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many individuals and organizations who made this extraordinary exhibition possible, including our partner institutions, The A.K. Prakash Foundation and the National Gallery of Canada Foundation. We can't wait to share these works with our audiences here in Ottawa!

Across the pond, at the 2019 Venice Biennale, the Gallery was proud to present an exhibition by Isuma, Canada's first Inuit-owned independent production company. Led by Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn, Isuma's exhibition – which was visited by more than 330,000 people – coincided with the United Nations' International Year of Indigenous Languages, offering a unique opportunity for us to share Inuit-language creative production on the global stage. Isuma's exhibition was also the first presentation of artwork by Inuit in the Canada Pavilion, and the first Biennale Arte exhibition since the building underwent its major restoration in 2018.

I would like to congratulate everyone who was involved in this remarkable project, including the Gallery's partners – the Canada Council for the Arts and the National Gallery of Canada Foundation. We look forward to presenting the next exhibition at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022, featuring the work of Vancouver-based artist Stan Douglas.

On this note, I invite all of you to discover two recent projects on the Canada Pavilion. Last December, the Gallery published the world's first book dedicated to the Pavilion, in collaboration with 5 Continents Edition, Milan. Edited by Réjean Legault, the book traces its history and architectural relevance through a collection of essays, photographs, and first-hand interviews. The book is available through our Boutique at ShopNGC.ca. Similarly, the Gallery recently co-produced a documentary with the National Film Board of Canada on the history and restoration of the Pavilion. The film premiered at the 2020 International Festival of Films on Art and is available to view on our Facebook channels.

Another valued partner this year was the Sobey Art Foundation, who once again teamed up with the Gallery to distribute \$240,000 in prize money to 25 artists across Canada as part of the 2019 Sobey Art Award. When COVID hit, the program pivoted and for the first time in its history, awarded \$25,000 to each of the longlisted artists. This change allowed us to better support contemporary artists during this

difficult and unpredictable year. We are deeply grateful to the Sobey Art Foundation for its generosity and continued dedication to this important annual event.

The Gallery also marked the creation of a new award last year. The Lacey Prize recognizes Canadian artist-run centres and small arts organizations through a generous monetary prize. Established in association with Dr. John Lacey and supported by the National Gallery of Canada Foundation, this prize will undoubtedly have a long-lasting impact on the visual arts community here in Canada.

Finally, building a world-class collection remained a priority in 2019. The Gallery added 330 works of art to its national collection, some of which were highlighted at the beginning of the meeting. I invite you to discover the full list of acquisitions, alongside the other highlights from our fiscal year in review, in our Annual Report, which is available on our website.

I have only scratched the surface of the Gallery's incredible achievements in 2019–20, and I would like to congratulate Dr. Suda and the entire team on a truly exceptional year.

Of course, it was not without challenges. On March 13, we made the difficult decision to close our doors to the public due to COVID-19. The past nine months have been a whirlwind, and Dr. Suda will speak more on this shortly. In the meantime, though, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sasha and my Board colleagues for their diligence and direction this year, as well as the Gallery's many corporate sponsors, volunteers, members, and visitors for their ongoing support.

Special thanks are due to the National Gallery of Canada Foundation and its valued network of partners and donors. The Foundation recently announced the appointment of its new CEO, Ms. Barbara Stead-Coyle. Barbara, we look forward to working with you in the months to come!

And lastly, my sincere appreciation goes to the Government of Canada, the Department of Canadian Heritage and its Minister – the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, and all of our government partners, for their ongoing support.

Thank you. Back to you Rosemary.