



NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA FOUNDATION
FONDATION DU MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DU CANADA

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

\$2 MILLION GIFT FROM THE KOERNER FAMILY TO THE CANADIAN ARTISTS IN VENICE ENDOWMENT FUND

VENICE, Italy, May 5, 2015 – The National Gallery of Canada Foundation announced today an exceptional gift of \$2 million from the Koerner Foundation of Toronto to the *Canadian Artists in Venice Endowment Fund*. In appreciation, the National Gallery of Canada will rename its Water Court the *Michael and Sonja Koerner Family Atrium*.

The announcement was made at the Canada Pavilion in Venice, during the first day of the preview of week of the 56th International Art Exhibition *La Biennale di Venezia*. Participating in this announcement were Michelle Koerner, Director of the National Gallery of Canada Foundation Board and daughter of Michael and Sonja Koerner, Rob Sobey from the Sobey Art Foundation who were the initial donors to the endowment fund, Karen Colby-Stothart, CEO of the Foundation, and Marc Mayer, Director and CEO of the Gallery.

Thomas d'Aquino, Chair of the National Gallery of Canada Foundation Board of Directors, applauded the Koerner family donation, saying "the Foundation salutes the Koerner family's exceptional support and commitment. Their passion for the visual arts and this generous gift help advance vital scholarship, research and programmes, and the building of the art collection the Gallery proudly holds in trust for all Canadians".

Michelle Koerner said: "Our donation today is to establish ongoing funding for Canadian artists to be exhibited at the Venice Biennale. The creation of this endowment is a pivotal step to secure the future of Canada in Venice. We are proud to lend our support to the Foundation, to help showcase the best Canadian visual artists on the international stage."

Rob Sobey called on other philanthropists to join in supporting the *Canadian Artists in Venice Endowment Fund*: "We love the idea of partnering with other philanthropists from across the country to establish a sustainable source of support for Canada in Venice. The fund will have a transformative and lasting impact on Canada's presence in the international art community."

NGC Director and CEO Marc Mayer concluded "Over the years, Canadian artists have been well received at *La Biennale di Venezia*. This year will be no exception, with BGL's

astounding installation, *Canadassimo*. We are already drawing significant attention from the media and the art community worldwide.”

The *Canadian Artists in Venice Endowment Fund* will provide vital financial support to Canadian artists representing Canada at the Venice Biennale, the iconic art exhibition in Venice, Italy. This fund is being endowed with the aim of attracting other philanthropic partners.

The Venice Biennale is one of the most important recurring international gatherings of the contemporary art community. Every two years, over 80 countries send official entries to the Biennale, and its coveted art prizes have attracted top talent and defined artists’ careers for over a century. Canadian artists have been presented for over 60 years and Canada’s participation has been instrumental in promoting the reputation of Canadian artists and their work within the global artistic community.

The Gallery’s fifty-year relationship with the Koerner family spans three generations of and began in 1963 when Iby Koerner joined the National Gallery Board of Trustees. Over the years, Mrs. Koerner donated several works of art, one of which is currently on view in the permanent collection European galleries. In the 1990s, Michael and Sonja Koerner made a number of significant gifts of art. Since 2013, Michelle Koerner has been a Director of the National Gallery of Canada Foundation Board, and since 2010, a member of the Venice Fundraising Committee.

About the National Gallery of Canada Foundation

The National Gallery of Canada Foundation is dedicated to supporting the National Gallery of Canada in fulfilling its mandate. By fostering strong philanthropic partnerships, the Foundation provides the Gallery with the additional financial support required to lead Canada’s visual arts community locally, nationally and internationally. The blend of public support and private philanthropy empowers the Gallery to preserve and interpret Canada’s visual arts heritage. The Foundation welcomes present and deferred gifts for special projects and endowments. To learn more about the National Gallery of Canada Foundation, visit <http://www.gallery.ca/en/give/foundation.php>.

About the National Gallery of Canada

The National Gallery of Canada is home to the most important collection of historical and contemporary Canadian art. The Gallery also maintains Canada’s premier collection of European Art from the 14th to the 21st century, as well as important works of American, Asian and Indigenous Art and renowned international collections of prints, drawings and photographs. Created in 1880, the National Gallery of Canada has played a key role in Canadian culture for well over a century. Among its principal missions is to increase access to excellent works of art for all Canadians. For more information, visit [gallery.ca](http://www.gallery.ca)

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From left to right, Kevin Doyle and Michelle Koerner, Rob and Monique Sobey, Marc Mayer and Karen Colby-Stothart

