

## SALUTE TO DONALD R. SOBEY AND THE SOBEY FAMILY

Friends and colleagues/chers amis et colleagues, Good afternoon and welcome to the National Gallery of Canada on this historic occasion.

We are gathered today to salute Donald and Beth Sobey and their family for their very generous gift of \$2 million to the Foundation of the National Gallery of Canada.

As Chair of the Foundation, it is a great privilege for me to welcome my long-time friend and colleague, Donald Sobey, to the Gallery and to welcome Donald's son, Rob Sobey as well. Donald and Rob, we regret that your wives, Beth and Monique, and other members of the family could not be with us on this very special and memorable occasion.

The lead gift we are announcing today by the Donald R. Sobey Foundation will establish the Canadian Artists in Venice Endowment at the National Gallery of Canada Foundation. The endowment will provide vital support to Canadian artists representing Canada at La Biennale di Venezia, at the iconic international biennial art exhibition in Venice better known as the Venice Biennale. The Sobey gift is being endowed with the aim of attracting other philanthropic partners and I am very pleased to say that this wish already is well on its way to being realized. An announcement in this regard will be made in the not too distant future.

The Venice Biennale is the most important recurring international gathering of the contemporary art community. Every two years, over 80 countries send official entries to the biennale and its coveted prizes have attracted top talent and defined 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.

Donald and Rob, in expressing my heartfelt thanks for the generosity of the Sobey family, I know that I speak for *Marc Mayer*, the Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Gallery, for *Michael Tims*, the Chair of the Gallery's Board of Trustees, for *Harriet Walker*, the Vice Chairs, and for *Karen Colby-Stothart*, the Gallery Foundation's Chief Executive. Also present with us today are two individuals whose assistance and wise counsel have been indispensable to the realization of this gift: Bernard Doucet, Secretary of the Sobey Art Foundation and Josée Drouin-Brisebois, Gallery Curator of Contemporary Art.

This exciting gift we are announcing today, of course, is not the first time that the Gallery has been touched by Sobey generosity. The Donald R. Sobey Family has made a number of donations to the Gallery and to our outstanding national collection. This has included the establishment of the Sobey Chief Curator's Research Endowment; the purchase of Michel deBrouin's exterior sculpture, "Majestic", and numerous contributions to exhibition and acquisition projects since 1997. Above and beyond this, the Sobey Art Foundation funds the Sobey Art Award, supporting the Canadian contemporary art community with over \$100,000 in prizes since the inception of the awards in 2002.

Ladies and gentlemen, in recognition of the extraordinary leadership and philanthropy of Donald Sobey and his family, the National Gallery of Canada Board of Trustees and the Gallery Foundation's Board of Directors are very pleased to announce the naming of the Donald R. Sobey Family Contemporary Gallery. This announcement of important historic significance for it is the very first of such namings associated with the Gallery and will pave the way for additional namings in the months to come. This is yet another example of Sobey leadership in advancing Canada's rich artistic heritage and in contributing to the building of a stronger and better Canada.

Donald, it is now my pleasure to invite you to join me in cutting the ribbon and formally inaugurating the Donald R. Sobey Family Contemporary Gallery.