

Statement

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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT
OF CANADA'S PARTICIPATION AT
THE VENICE BIENNIAL OF VISUAL ARTS
AND ARCHITECTURE, 1995

HULL, Quebec
October 19, 1994



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

Ladies and gentlemen:

As you know, the Venice Biennial will celebrate its centenary in 1995; the Biennial of Visual Arts and the Biennial of Architecture, to be held simultaneously from June 11 to October 15, will mark this event. Over the years, the Venice Biennial has established a reputation as a mecca of the arts. Its prestige attracts experts and other members of the artistic community, journalists and visitors from around the world. Participation in the Biennial by many Canadian artists, such as Jean-Paul Riopelle, Jack Shadbolt, Alex Colville, Guido Molinari, Michael Snow and, more recently, Geneviève Cadieux, has greatly contributed to their recognition on the international scene and, as a result, has placed Canada among the ranks of artistically avant-garde countries.

I take great pleasure in joining you here today to announce that Canada will be represented at the Visual Arts Biennial by Edward Poitras, a Native artist from Regina, and at the Architectural Biennial by Vancouver architects, John and Patricia Patkau, and a group of emerging architects yet to be chosen by competition.

Canada has participated in this prestigious event since 1952, and has had its own national pavilion since 1957.

My department, which is responsible for Canada's participation in both events, will provide a grant of \$57 500 to the Canadian Museum of Civilization towards the realization of the visual arts project, and an amount of \$75 000 to the Canadian Centre for Architecture for the architecture project. The National Gallery of Canada and the Canada Council are also helping to finance Canada's participation in the Visual Arts Biennial, contributing \$42 500 and \$20 000 respectively.

I am pleased to acknowledge that for the first time Canada will be represented by a Native artist at the Visual Arts Biennial of Venice. The Edward Poitras project was proposed by Gerald McMaster, curator at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and selected after a competition organized by the Canada Council on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Mr. Poitras was part of two major exhibitions, the Canadian Biennial of Contemporary Art, organized by the National Gallery of Canada in 1989, and Indigena, organized by the Canadian Museum of Civilization in 1992. Mr. Poitras, like his predecessors, will be a worthy representative of Canada.

I am convinced that the exhibition by John and Patricia Patkau at the Architectural Biennial, along with the work of a group of emerging architects, will draw the attention of the international community to impressive Canadian achievements. John and Patricia Patkau are distinguished architects with a growing international

reputation and we have been pleased to support their exhibition now touring in Europe and the United States.

The Canadian project for the Architectural Biennial was proposed by an ad hoc advisory committee under the chairmanship of Ms. Phyllis Lambert, Founder and Director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. The other members are Ms. Kim Storey, Regional Representative of the Royal Institute of Architecture of Canada, and Mr. Sandy Hirshen, Director of the School of Architecture at the University of British Columbia.

The Architectural Biennial has taken place only five times before, and Canada has officially participated only once, with an exhibition in 1991 about the Canadian Centre for Architecture. The Centre has become one of the most respected centres for architecture in the world, and I think it is fitting that it will be organizing and co-ordinating Canada's entry next year.

The Government has emphasized the importance of a dynamic cultural sector to help us achieve the objectives we have set for ourselves: the creation of jobs based on our talents for creativity and innovation; the reinforcement of our national identity; and the projection of the image of a country determined to meet the challenges of the emerging global economy.

The dynamism of this sector is reflected in the fact that it now represents almost three per cent of our gross domestic product and employs more than 425 000 Canadians. Its labour force has increased by 122 per cent over the past 10 years, twice the rate of increase of the Canadian labour force as a whole. The vitality of our cultural sector has enriched the lives of Canadians immeasurably. Canadian creators have firmly placed Canada in the international spotlight.

As the Liberal plan for Canada stated: "Culture is the very essence of national identity, the bedrock of national sovereignty and pride. It gives meaning to the lives of all Canadians and enriches the country socially, politically and economically."

Canada is appreciated abroad through the articulation of its cultural expression. For that reason, I consider international cultural relations as one of the three main pillars of Canada's foreign policy, and I am taking steps to revitalize that element of our operations abroad. I am looking forward to the report of the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy, which devoted a number of hearings to international cultural relations and higher education and received more than 50 submissions on these topics.

In conclusion, Canada benefits greatly through its participation in major cultural events abroad. These events require a joint effort such as that exhibited in the co-operation among my

department, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Canadian Centre for Architecture, the National Gallery of Canada and the Canada Council as well as the participants in the various committees and competitions. Such partnerships, including those involving the private sector, have proved to be highly effective and should be reinforced so as to ensure greater international exposure of Canadian accomplishments.

Thank you.