The Empire Club Presents

THE FUTURE OF CANADA'S CULTURE INSTITUTIONS: HOW ARE OUR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS EVOLVING TO MEET THE 21 CENTURY NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR CITIES?

WITH

JOSH BASSECHES, DIRECTOR & CEO, ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

AND

STEPHAN JOST, DIRECTOR & CEO, ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

IN CONVERSATION WITH

VALERIE PRINGLE, BROADCASTER AND JOURNALIST

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Welcome Address, by Paul Fogolin, Vice President of the Ontario Retirement Communities Association and President of the Empire Club of Canada

Good afternoon, once again, ladies and gentlemen. From the Arcadian Court in downtown Toronto, welcome, once again to the Empire Club of Canada. A hush falls over the crowd. For those of you just joining us through either our podcast or our webcast, welcome. Before our distinguished speakers are introduced today, it gives me great pleasure to introduce our Head Table Guests. We have some fabulous ones today. I would ask that each guest rise for a brief moment when I call their name. Typically, this is where the master of ceremonies says hold your applause until the end, but we do not do that here. Clap as much as you want as soon as I call the names.

HEAD TABLE

Distinguished Guest Speakers:

Mr. Josh Basseches, Director and CEO, Royal Ontario Museum
Mr. Stephan Jost, Director and CEO, Art Gallery of Ontario
Ms. Valerie Pringle, Broadcaster and Journalist

Guests:

Ms. Anne-Marie Applin, President, Applin Marketing; Director, Empire Club of Canada
Ms. Andrea Cohen Barrack, VP Community Relations & Corporate Citizenship, TD Bank Group
Mr. Jim Fleck, Chairman, Business for the Arts; Ex-Chair, Art Gallery of Ontario
Ms. Jody Larose, Principal, Larose & Co. Marketing Services and Director, Empire Club of Canada
Ms. Robyn McCallum, Art Curator, TD Bank Group

Once again, my name is Paul Fogolin. In my day job, I am the Vice President of the Ontario Retirement Communities Association—it is a mouthful—and your President of the Empire Club of Canada.

Ladies and gentlemen, your Head Table.

This afternoon, the CEOs of both the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) are here with us, in conversation with renowned Canadian journalist, Valerie Pringle, to share their visions for their respective iconic cultural institutions.

Both leaders have arrived in Canada's largest city at a time where the world is seemingly entering uncharted territory—a challenge from both an economic and political perspective. What is the cultural perspective? Does the increased elevation of brand Canada in a global context impact our cultural identity as a nation? What does that mean for our cultural institutions? I would argue that the role of cultural institutions are more vital now than ever before. Cultural institutions bridge and reflect the rich diversity of our communities in what is one of the most diverse cities in the world. They foster the notion of an open society, of shared values, and global perspectives. They are centres of learning outside of the classroom, and they contribute to the exchange of ideas and points of view. How are these institutions evolving to meet the 21st century needs of our communities? We are so privileged to be hearing, firsthand, from the two leaders who are leading the charge from the heart of these institutions.

Josh Basseches joined the Royal Ontario Museum in 2016. He oversees all aspects of the ROM, Canada's largest museum of art, culture, and nature. Prior to joining the ROM, Mr. Basseches was Deputy Director of the Peabody Essex Museum. He partnered closely with the director and chief curator on all major curatorial matters and was a member of the small team leading the museum's successful $650 million capital campaign. Mr. Basseches is completing a doctorate in art history at Boston University. He holds an MA in art history from Boston University, an MBA from the Harvard School of Business and a BA in art history from Amherst College. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Basseches.

Stephan Jost is the Director and CEO of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Appointed in 2016, Stephan joined the AGO after holding a five-year post as Director of the Honolulu Museum of Art. That sounds like fun. Under his leadership, Honolulu's finances were dramatically improved; the education program expanded in reach and capacity; its membership increased by a whopping 64%; and the visitor experience was significantly energized.

Prior to that appointment, Stephan was Director of the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, the Director at Mills College Art Museum in Oakland, and he held several curatorial positions at the Allen Memorial Art Museum of Oberlin College in Ohio. Born in Michigan, Stephan holds a BA in art history from Hampshire College in Massachusetts and

an MA in art history from the University of Texas at Austin.

Ladies and gentlemen, please, welcome our speakers to the stage.

Josh Basseches and Stephan Jost in Conversation with Valerie Pringle

VP: This is fun. Happy Cinco de Mayo. We are talking culture today, so it is a little different than the dose of politics, I guess, and economics that you get. How exciting to have these two fabulous men, who came the same month, April 2016, to Toronto, and have really brightened up the landscape here, and to get their perspectives on what they are doing and what they think about the great motherships that they have been given charge of, the AGO and the ROM, wonderful Toronto institutions.

I would like to start off by talking about getting people in the door, which is obviously a preoccupation. What brings people now? Is it a big show? Do you target them? Do you know exactly what you want and how to go about it?

SJ: It is a lot of yes, yes and yes. Of course, you need the big show, but you also need to make sure that it is not just cotton candy, that people actually have a great time there. It is *really* about, also, making sure that there is room for either a quiet time or a social time. It is working on many levels simultaneously. Marketing is really key. Social media is unbelievably important.

JB: I might add, just stepping back from those good comments, that part of it is what are you presenting? No matter, setting aside the medium, is it an exhibition? Is it a program? How you are marketing is a very important issue. The question is whether you are delivering activities and programming that are relevant to people's lives, that are about the issues that people want to engage with, want to hear about and make them feel like it is worth getting up, and going out to a museum for.

M: How do you figure that out?

JB: A lot of it, frankly, is, as we talked about, marketing and market research. It is understanding your many different audiences, of which, at institutions like ours, they are very broad. And it is about assessing what the issues are that make a difference. We actually do quite a bit of study in advance of deciding, for instance, whether to take a major exhibition, in terms of whether it is a topic that engages. Obviously, we have ones that we would choose to engage, and sometimes we find that there are ones that various audiences are not as interested in or that we have to change the nature of how we are going to present it to create that sense of activism and buzz.

VP: Both of you have shows on now. There is Georgia

O'Keefe; there is "The Blue Whale Story," in addition to all the other stuff, but, I am just thinking that, in the olden days, if King Tut came to town or Turner and his paintings, that was a big thing. Traffic stopped in Toronto, wahoo! Have you seen that show? I do not know if that happens a whole lot anymore.

SJ: The audience attendance figures, both at the ROM and the AGO, are really high. I think we have had our best year last year since 1993.

JB: We have shared notes on that. It has been terrific.

SJ: When you are clocking, for the last show, we clocked 250 tickets every 30 minutes. That is a lot of people.

VP: And young people?

SJ: Yes, roughly 40% of our audience is under 40. Some cultural institutions are struggling to engage the millennials. Our struggle is a little different. Our struggle is a matter of can we move fast enough to keep up with their interest? We are free Wednesday night. We get 3,000–6,000 people Wednesday night. That is a lot of people.

JB: Back to that issue of are we engaging or hitting the topics. As Stephan said, both our institutions, I think, are, in many cases, hitting homeruns. In our last year, we had 1,350,000 people coming through the door, which is the most in the ROM's history and the most in the country, and—not that we keep track—is in the top 40 in the world. I think that is a demonstration that what we are doing…

VP: That was yesterday, I assume.

JB: Right. It will be a little higher tomorrow, if you take something like—you mentioned the Blue Whale exhibition—a project that is steeped in the research and the science of the museum. It is an original show that also engaged with a topic that the public was very interested in and, frankly, the media was very interested in. We were able to deliver something that was important, scientific, that addressed issues that are very much current-day issues, and also, I would say are Canadian issues—given the issue of their stranding, those whales stranding.

VP: How do you measure success? You are a year in. Obviously, those numbers are making you happy, and you have had some noteworthy donations, so those kinds of things—money counts.

JB: Absolutely.

SJ: People invest in success. They will invest once if you are in a financial crisis, but they tend not to save you more than once, if you are—first, success is on time and budget. The board is very, very clear about that. That, in the long run, is wise.

Attendance, how many people come in. And then another metric we are looking at is growth in the under35 crowd because that really is about our future. That is about a long-term investment. Then, we view

things more soft, like quality of art. You can get popular art, but, if it sucks, well, you are not really on mission.

JB: I was going to pick up on that in that we are all going concerns. We have to meet business ventures, so the attendance, the financial metrics, the issues of having strong support all matter.

Last year, we had the strongest philanthropic support since 2009. Those are all good signs. Frankly, we are mission-driven organizations. At the end of the day—and we think a lot about metrics and how you measure—those are the necessary activities, but it is really how you are delivering experiences. It is about looking at issues like what is repeat visitation? Do people like what you are doing enough to come back? How long do they stay at the museum? Are they enjoying it enough to spend time? What is the visitor satisfaction numbers? What are the net promoter scores that tell you what other people are saying—do they want to come? There are a lot of qualitative issues, some of which are easier to measure, some of which are harder to measure.

SJ: There are also the big issues. Last summer, we had an incredible show, by an artist named Theaster Gates, an African American artist, who works on the South Side of Chicago. It is really about art and social practice, engaging the community. Last summer, it was a major

show with an incredibly important topic. We do have to have conversations about race and class in Canada. You see what happens if you do not have those conversations. We had Black Lives Matter in the AGO, facilitating a conversation about race. I would rather have these conversations happening inside the AGO than on the streets of Ferguson. It is not financially viable a show like that without incredible private philanthropy, but we need to promote these issues. We need to centre it, and we need to, in AGO's case, engage with these issues through great art. That is the key. Theaster is a fantastic artist. That is what we do. Whether we do a Rubens or a contemporary African American artist, great, but the issues we are talking about *have* to be central to what we need to solve for.

JB: The fact of the matter is we are going to try to encapsulate so many different concerns and issues into a relatively short period of time. In terms of the points that Stephan just mentioned, I think two are particularly important—this is key at the Empire Club, and we are talking about Canadian institutions, and when you are in Toronto—and one of the exceptional issues is diversity.

You mentioned Black Lives Matter and addressing issues that relate to the Black Canadian community. We have the good fortune—certainly, at the ROM, and I believe also at the AGO—to have global

collections that represent many, many of the communities that are here diasporically. We have that opportunity to ask both: What can we do in China? And what can we do with Chinese Canadians that are here in this country? How do we address issues that matter to those groups? I think, again, both of our institutions—and I can certainly speak for the ROM—are tremendously well situated to address issues of importance, globally, but also issues of importance, locally, to the more than 50% of Toronto's community that was not born in this city.

The way we do it, though, is through the authentic object. That is another key part about what distinguishes a museum—and a museum in the 21st century—from other forms of engagement or entertainment, namely, that we, our institutions, museums, are the holders, the stewards of exceptional collections. Everything that we need to do needs to use those collections and the research associated with it as a foundation and leverage point.

SJ: How many people here realize that the ROM—and I am singing your praises here—has the, I think, largest collection of Chinese art and artifacts outside of China? That is amazing! I cannot think of a better thing with which to position yourself for the 21st century. I used a quip in Honolulu. Our strategic plan was China, China, China, India. The ROM is very well set up.

Toronto is well set up. That is a good thing.

VP: How well *is* Toronto set up? Both of you are newcomers. How have you found that in all other institutions that you have been acquainting yourselves with as well? You talked about the diversity here. What have you found in other institutions, and what surprised you and what has not?

JB: Aside from the fact that we are here and delighted to be in Toronto, one of the reasons that I knew why I was coming to this country was because of the ROM, an exceptional museum that I knew a great deal about before I got here. As I was telling my lovely wife—who is joining me here and is in the audience; I will embarrass her a little bit—there are some wonderful museums that are in cities that you would not want to be in. To be at an exceptional museum—

VP: For example?

JB: I am not going to call those out. Someone else can call those out.

SJ: I think the highest-functioning, most successful museum in North America is Toledo, Ohio. The Toledo Museum of Art just it is great.

JB: When that job came up, Stephan…

SJ: I would not apply for it, but it is a great, great place.

VP: You could almost commute.

JB: If anybody here is from Toledo, apologies—

SJ: Congratulations for a great museum.

JB: Toronto is an exceptional city. I have, at least, felt like the opportunities for running an institution—both, I would say, Toronto and the province and our connection with the province, which has been terrific—means that there is a commitment to art, culture, museums, to the research we do in natural history, that I actually have not found in the States. Most of my career has been involved in institutions that are in cities where there is no city support, where there is no government support. Having that level of engagement in arts and culture is, particularly, at the provincial levels, exceptional. It allows the ROM to be the institution that it is.

VP: I was going to ask you about that, about the role of government, because that would be different.

SJ: It is very different.

VP: For you guys.

SJ: Yes, suddenly we are the Americans. In Honolulu, we got $10,000 of public money a year.

VP: Now, it would be nothing.

JB: That was a good year, by the way.

SJ: I think it is *incredibly* important, the public money we receive. It is actually something we are constantly conscious about, about how we serve our public, how we serve our entire public, how we make sure that the AGO is part of the experience of being Canadian and becoming Canadian. It is important that you understand the traditional history of Canada, but also to give a platform to ask the questions about what is art and culture in Canada moving forward. We are a balance of public and private. That is really important because it keeps us honest.

VP: That is an interesting point, too, about people who are Canadian and about becoming Canadian. How do you attract new Canadians and make sure that, I guess, they feel welcome enough? I know there are programs that are wonderful, and they are involved with the citizenship program. People get free membership for a year, et cetera, and they are encouraged to come, so people who are in the country get some sense of history and culture.

JB: To Stephan's earlier point, I think our institutions—and I will speak specifically about the ROM—are about China, China, China, South Asia, whether global or whether different parts of the world. We have 70 researchers, and we work in 27 different countries and five provinces in Canada. I am not sure all of you are aware that actually so much of what goes on is not what you see in the public galleries, but there is the exceptional quality of scholarship and research that is going on elsewhere in the building and around the world. And that gives us a leg up because it means that we can engage with those communities directly from a community-based, collections-based perspective.

I would just mention—because I am really de-

lighted about it—that, last week, we were able to make an announcement that we were launching the new Dan Mishra South Asian Initiative. That came as a result of an extraordinary $5-million gift to the museum from philanthropist Dan Mishra, who was born in India and came here in 1969. He felt that he made his money here; he had his success here; and he wanted to give back and make his legacy here. But he wanted to do it in a way that exposed not only members of the South Asian community, but other Canadians of all backgrounds, to South Asian arts and culture. It is a remarkable gift. It will allow us to do a tremendous amount of programming and outreach with that community. That is just *one* example of how when you are both a global institution, but are in such a global and diverse city, you have these opportunities for connections.

SJ: Sometimes I think the public does not realize how the AGO and the ROM are playing globally. Our current exhibition, Georgia O'Keefe, is a partnership with the Tate; the last exhibition, Mystical Landscapes, a partnership with d'Orsay. Right now, the main show in Paris is the Mystical Landscape show. I love the fact that contemporary France is learning about 19th century French art, developed by a team of Canadians. Really, both institutions are playing globally, and culture is global now. That question of how you maintain that

sense of, yes, the Group of Seven is important to us, and simultaneously how you have framed global conversations. It is that kind of balance.

We have to have historic stuff, but you come to the AGO, and you will see stuff that is not yet trendy. It will be trendy next year. Last summer's show by Hurvin Anderson—he was just nominated for the Turner Prize. In the contemporary art world, that is rock star kind of stuff. They sited the show here in Ontario, in Toronto. London is looking to Toronto to find the best new British artist. Interesting!

VP: Is that new, that when you say global cultural—?

SJ: It is moving. It is not new. There has always been—the Romans were global, but it is also increasing a lot quicker.

VP: Good line.

JB: Globalization in the museum world, in the art world, is definitely an increasing phenomenon. As Stephan was saying, we have, of all things, a wonderful collection of Egyptian art that is going to two museums in China. We have an exhibition of Japanese art—our "Third Gender" show—that was presented last year that some of you may have seen. It is now in Manhattan. These interplays of culture, art, science going in different directions are critical, and, I guess I would say, to a point that we have discussed in the past, that, being in Canada—and this is an insight that I have grown to

understand as someone who is not from Canada, but has the distinct honour of running a wonderful, iconic Canadian institution—there are opportunities for us, and I would imagine for you, that exist in the world as a Canadian institution that, say, we would not have as an American institution.

VP: Why, just because of the obvious, because of the politics?

JB: The larger political issues. For instance, you mentioned the way we connect with different audiences. Another audience that we connect with is we were able to give 10,000 complimentary tickets and had 10,000 new Canadian Syrian refugees at the ROM, as well as the roughly 7,000 year-long memberships, complimentary memberships, that we give to new Canadians each year. That Syrian issue and the role that Canada has played in the world in regards to Syrian refugees led to, for instance, an inquiry that came to us via the Canadian Ambassador to Turkey about an opportunity to do a wonderful exhibition. We are still in the early stages of looking at it because we are a Canadian institution. It was very clear that, had I been at the BFA Boston or the Met or the Peabody Essex Museum, that conversation would not be occurring.

VP: Why?

JB: Because of the larger sociopolitical issues.

VP: Would culture not rise above that? Would they care that much if you had good stuff and good ideas? Who cares if it is from America and Donald Trump is the president?

SJ: I am going to cut to the chase a bit.

VP: I thought I was.

SJ: Culture is often an intention. If Canada does not define the global conversation and start, through science and art, the conversation about freedom, democracy, respect for the individual, et cetera, somebody else will. Quite honestly, I am not that interested in oil-rich, monarchy-defining global conversations. I think we need to get out there, because if we do not lead, somebody else will.

JB: See, we are converts. We are now even more Canadian than Canadians. I do not mean to suggest, by the way, that those wonderful institutions that I mentioned are not doing tremendous international shows, because they are.

VP: I understand. I am just trying to put—because you wonder. We talked about the world and how it is seeming scary, and, politically, economically, where is it going? Are things falling apart? How is that reflected, culturally? Does it feel that way culturally, or is cultural thriving in the chaos and the uncertainty?

SJ: Most, at least art museums in the United States, have done phenomenally in the last 20 years. Right now, the conversation at the Met, what is their big challenge

for the next 20 years, is just dealing with capacity, just too many people coming. If you would have said, in 1975 that the big issue facing art museums would be too many people, you would be like no. You go to the ROM—I go there on a Saturday, and it is—

VP: I am actually still surprised when you are telling me this. I had no idea.

SJ: You go to the ROM on a Saturday; it is packed.

JB: This is not the problem, by the way, we are worried about, just to be clear, Stephan. "Bring them on" is all I can say.

SJ: How long do you have to wait to get a ticket? It is ten minutes because there are a lot of people there.

JB: Yes.

SJ: We are doing well.

VP: How do you interpret that? Does that mean that people like to see those objects? As you say, you are essentially about authentic items and objects and art in your collections that people can wander and see, and they can have quiet spaces and contemplate, maybe programs? So what are people hungering for that they are heading in there? It is not the restaurant, right?

JB: I will engage in that in a particular way, which is we all know there is a tremendous amount of discussion about the digital world and how museums and other institutions are engaging with things digital. And, frankly, any museum that is not worrying about that would be one of those ones that would be at the side of the road in five years. There are many interesting aspects that probably all of you deal with in your own areas of work or life, but the point that I would like to make is some people are concerned about the notion of, well, if we introduce different kinds of digital experiences in the museum, will that take away from the authentic object? I do not feel that is the case at all. To answer your question, people hunger for that object, but with the way the digital, I think, makes sense is to augment and enhance the experience. The museum can allow for people's native curiosity—for whether it is the blue whale skeleton or an extraordinary Ming Dynasty ceramic or whatever—and then the question is where can the digital tool take you to enhance your understanding and have it be something where you, as the individual, with your little handheld device can decide where you want to go with it? All that is based on the hunger for the authentic object and that you are not going to find that elsewhere. I am not really worried about the competition that comes from media or digital intervention. I do not know what your thoughts are on that.

SJ: Again, we have great works of art. We love original works of art. We are thrilled—

VP: You can see them on your computer, right?

SJ: Sure, sure. You can also listen to somebody on the

radio, but I would rather see them in person. There is something about the original that is important. In addition to the social media, I actually think there is huge interest in authenticity; I think people want authenticity. We live in such a consumer society that maybe there are things that are not totally market driven. I think that is important.

I also think the decline of retail shopping is impacting us. I have no evidence of this, but, when I was in high school, we would go to the mall in Michigan. It is interesting; I went back to Michigan: They built a great little museum, and then there are all these teenagers hanging out at the museum because the mall is not so cool anymore. I think we are…

VP: That is so interesting. It would never have occurred to me.

SJ: I do not have any proof of this, but there may be these patterns changing because of Amazon.

VP: Wow. We were talking a little bit before about opera—not my favourite—and about opera companies surviving. Maybe if they just did *Guys and Dolls* or *My Fair Lady*, it might be a little more money coming in the coffers; although, the COC seems to be doing extremely well. Then, I wondered is there a line for you guys? Is there a bar you will not go beneath? Is something too low for you in order to bring people in or that is below your mission, even though it would be hugely popular?

SJ: My instinct is to say no, but really there is.

JB: I am sure that there is, but I actually do not think about the question that way. Historically, museums had had a lot of sacred cows, the lines you would not cross, the things that you were not supposed to do. Actually, I found—and I am sure you have found—that it is often by transgressing those lines, but transgressing in intelligent ways, that those things actually serve your mission, and that actually leads to success. Many of you may have seen, for instance, the tattoo show that we offered last year. That saw about 120,000 people, about half again more than we anticipated. If you are talking about things that are relevant in people's lives, there we have something that is about global culture. Basically, every culture on earth has some tattoo tradition over the last 5,000 years, and it is something that more than half of the people under 30 have tattoos. I can tell you that ten years ago, 15 years ago, most museums would not have done a tattoo show. My point there is, yes, it is transgressing. It is not low; it is just engaging in a way that says what is relevant to our audiences, and, particularly, new audiences.

VP: That was not too low?

JB: Oh, no, that was a wonderful show. We were delighted to do it. It had grounding. It was not that anybody who went to that show could say, "I could understand

why this is at the ROM."

SJ: I think our no-fly zones are more and more when something is so corporately linked—an exhibition of fashion, for example, from the GAP, sponsored by the GAP: No.

VP: Okay. Where does sponsorship fit in because, obviously, you thrive on sponsorship? You need sponsorship—everybody does?

SJ: Oh, yes, everybody does. Things like luxury retail love sponsoring art museums because it is one of the few things that actually is higher than their brand. Van Gogh is higher than Chanel, so it is one of the few things that—

VP: In the hierarchy of brands.

SJ: —in the hierarchy of culture and brands, it is a…

M: That must be a little hard for them to admit, though.

SJ: We do not talk about it, but they do donate, yes.

JB: The sponsorship piece, obviously, is important, because part of the question is how can we make it affordable to present this material? We are delighted to have some really wonderful corporate sponsors, but I do think that the point that Stephan is making is you have to separate the production side and the support side a little bit and those shows where it gets a little bit blurred in terms of who is supporting what and how commercial does this seem. I think that is a line that most of us would still avoid.

SJ: This is the time we say, "Thank you, TD."

JB: That is right.

SJ: When TD sponsors us, they do not tell us what our content should be. There is kind of a division there.

JB: We probably would not go to TD for our banking exhibition. There you are, so, yes.

SJ: History of the ATM.

VP: As you guys look forward—okay, I am thinking things are just jake; people are screaming in your doors; money is good; audiences are good; everything is happy, happy, so why do you not just leave while you are still ahead?

JB: Are we being shown the door, Valerie? I do not know; we have only been here a year.

VP: No, I am trying to get some vision—like, how do you get better than this?

SJ: The reality is that Toronto is changing really quickly. Can we change with it? Can we continue to do these engagements? Financially, we balance our budgets. We are always on the right side, but we are not flush. We are not flush. There are many, many more things. The reality is our staff is incredibly underpaid. They work really hard to make things happen.

JB: These institutions are wonderful institutions. By the way, there are a number of people in the audience who are key supporters and key staff and others that help making this possible, and we are just part of a

very large teams that are helping these institutions to succeed. But one of the major issues—and it sort of gets to the topic of this, the topic that you provided for this talk, for this presentation—is the evolution of change in museums. I think if we look at that question, museums are still chasing what it means to be a 21st century museum. We are now, what 17 years into the new century, and with respect to the model, definitely, I think there is a clear understanding that culture consumption is changing, and I mentioned a little bit the digital, the way that digital has an impact on what audiences are choosing to do. The fact is that so many audiences want to increasingly have a great deal of options and opportunity to be able to do what we sometimes call curating their own experience. They do not want to have the authoritative museum voice saying, "This is what is important, and this is what is important, and come in, and we will tell you" but an interactive experience. I think what we need to be looking at is changing demographics, changing audiences and understanding that we want to move away from the 20th century model. The 20th century museum model was a transactional model: "I am going to go to a museum; I am going to buy a ticket; and I am going to see something specific or go to a program." What we are very hard at work doing is recognizing that is not going to work 5, 10, 15 years from now because that

is not how, for instance, millennials engage with their cultural consumption. What we need to do is make our museums far more open, far more porous than they are now. Make it easier for people to come and go, and make an experience where someone says, "I am going to drop in on my museum," as opposed to "I am going to buy a ticket to see what you have to show us." I will say—and I am going to take the opportunity here, at the Empire Club, which is a fine place to make a little bit of an announcement—on Monday, for instance, we are going to be releasing a statement that after ten years, we are going to be reopening the wonderful Heritage Entrance of the museum.

VP: Yippee yi yo kayah! Thank you! I missed it.

JB: It is a wonderful thing. It speaks volumes in terms of architecture, heritage and history. We will have our exceptional contemporary Michael Lee-Chin Entrance. We will have the wonderful Weston Entrance, and I should do just a shout out about how that has been made possible—back to your question about provincial support: I see our colleagues from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport; they have supported this project; the Weston Foundation has supported it. In any event, the point is that we said, "How can we make it easier to come and go? How can we make a symbolic statement in Canada's 150 about being open to Queen's Park, open to the subway?" Our goal is

increasingly to make as much as possible of our first floor—possibly as much as 60,000 square feet—a zone where people can come and go, a salon zone, where people can come, have a coffee, participate in a program, have some gallery experiences, whether or not they choose to buy a ticket and see the rest. That is part of creating that more porous experience that is a 21st century experience that allows people to say, "I am going to just drop in this afternoon to see my museum and talk with a friend."

VP: What have you got?

SJ: I have a couple of things, but he put something right on. Josh is bringing something up. Yes, we want to be more porous; we want to be less transactional, totally. That is like fixing an engine while it is moving. It is really hard to do, because we are very dependent on the transactional. We know where we need to go, but getting there is actually really—it is not easy.

VP: Is anyone doing it brilliantly, besides Toledo?

JB: You see, a lot of…

SJ: They are free.

JB: Examples where it is not done so well include Indianapolis, which had a charge; they removed their charge; reasserted its charge—these are not easy issues.

VP: That would be a loser thing to do. It is like closing your front door.

SJ: Yes. Ironic, yes. I was just chuckling when I heard about the Weston Entrance, which I love on the ROM. They got it right the first time. It is just really a super, super entrance. The AGO is opening a new entrance to Grange Park. The Grange Park is actually owned by the AGO. We are dropping $12.5 million into it.

VP: Wow.

SJ: There is this other side as both institutions are adding more doors. It is quite literal: Opening it up.

JB: By the way, we do confer.

VP: I like this collaboration you do.

SJ: We want people to go to the ROM. It is about increasing the cultural sector.

JB: I think Stephan has really been leading that notion of collaboration and engagement and cross-marketing.

VP: Yes, which is—I was going to say, do we have room for some Q&A here? We will do the Q&A now.

Questions & Answers

Q: (From VP:) My little question was do you have an object that you love in the institution that you lead now? I know when I got to the Met, I always just go to that Japanese gallery and look at the waterfall. It makes me happy.

SJ: Yes, it is in my office.

VP: You took it into your office?

SJ: When I was a freshman at—

JB: The public can come up there and see it?

SJ: Anytime. When I was a first-year student at Hampshire College, I wrote a paper on a pretty obscure German expressionist artist, Ernst Barlach, and a particular sculpture. I go down in the storage. Almost everything is in storage. Less than 5% is on view. There is this sculpture I wrote a paper on when I was 18. I was like, okay, I have to bring that up to my office.

VP: You have an art rental program, do not you?

SJ: Yes, we have that, too. You are welcome to see it. It is sentimental.

JB: It is a hard question that either of us—I do not have one that I wrote on, specifically.

VP: No?

JB: No. I am going to tell you one, but not one that I wrote for my undergrad paper. I can say that.

SJ: The paper was awful, by the way.

JB: It is hard when you have, literally, hundreds of thousands of objects of art and culture, and millions of natural history specimens, but I am actually going to mention two wonderful— very quickly—recent acquisitions. One on the art and culture side: We commissioned this exceptional Christian Dior, House of Dior dress called Passage #5. It is a really remarkable outfit. In keeping with the ROM's tradition, not only is this an exceptional piece of fashion, but we documented each stage along the way, so that we were telling the story of how, in an haute couture context, fashion actually comes to be. I think that is part of what we try to do at our institution—and I know you do as well—which is undergird what we are doing about acquisitions with the research side and the scholarly side as well.

Also, on Monday, we are going to be putting out a press release about this wonderful ankylosaurus. Who here knows what ankylosaurus is? Some hands went up. It is one of those exceptional dinosaurs that has this wonderful armored helm and a club tail. We were able to acquire a spectacular example of this. We have researchers finding out all sorts of interesting information, including, that the soft tissue that was preserved allows you to see the armored eyelids that close on this exceptional ankylosaurus. Needless to say, my day job is pretty good. I can be looking at the Dior dress or the Ming Dynasty vase or the ankylosau-

rus all in one day.

VP: You are such a fun dinner guest. I had someone contact me on Facebook Messenger. His name is Aaron Shugar, who is a scientist, and he is working and teaching in Buffalo right now. His question is that he would love for you to briefly talk about the role of science and technology in conservation and art—radiography, CT scans, X-rays.

SJ: It is really cool. We have a whole team of conservators. These are people who fix things, research things. There is a kind of a material science side of art history. This past fall, we did an exhibition on prayer beads, which are these medieval micro-carved prayer beads. Nobody knew how they were made, so we took them to the hospital, and we did CT scans. Literally, we can take them apart, and then make a virtual reality experience of it. If you would have said to me that the first time the museum was going to use a VR experience would be for late medieval prayer beads, I would have said you are crazy, but that was really an amazing use of it. Most of our science and technology is really in the team of conservators who are highly, highly trained, with very specialist knowledge as in how things are made, how to fix things.

VP: If it is real.

SJ: Yes, they…

JB: There is a lot of that.

SJ: Yes. We are doing some fascinating stuff with—we have the big Rubens show coming up, and what they are looking at exactly are the layers of how he painted it. You can go through. It is almost like reverse painting when you are looking at how he created it. It is pretty cool.

JB: Great institutions, like ours, have these phenomenal conservation departments. The science is very sophisticated in terms of the types of machinery they are using, what they are able to determine, and, yes, the issue of fraudulence is one of the areas that they are very good at—whether it is a Mayan ceramic, for example, we were able to determine within this expertise. Actually, part of it was original, and part of it was a 19th century add-on to make it sell. In our case, we have both the conservation labs that deal with art and culture, but then we also have this wonderful mineralogy department that is able to look at materials and that has very sophisticated equipment that allows us actually to see, for example, a Roman-period sword and what the metals are in a way that many conservation labs would not have because of the expertise on the science side.

SJ: You do not always get what you want. Sometimes you find out something you love is not good. It cuts both ways.

VP: No, I know, but really interesting to find that out

Q: My name is Ian Morris. I am at the Deanna Horton

table. My question is about your role. Of course, you collect, you preserve, and you protect a lot of very valuable works of art, but the ratio of what you have to what you are able to display is an issue. I just wonder if you could talk to that and possibly compare statistics between your two organizations and where that fits on a world scale, and what can be done to increase the proportion of your collection that is actually available to the interested public.

SJ: I think we are a little different on this front. I think the AGO's goal is to have the world's best art we can possibly have, not to be the biggest collection. We want really the extraordinary examples by artists or time periods. The ROM's collection is much more vast and goes in many, many more issues. I am actually a fan of selective acquisition. I am a fan of deaccessioning things that are not very good, to buy things that are better. Yes, we could triple the size of the museum, but that would move it from 5% to 15% unviewed. Really, I want to make sure we are focused on quality.

JB: Just to respond a little bit and think about that, quality is certainly a central aspect of what we are doing also at the ROM. We collect a broader array of cultural objects and, of course, scientific objects, in addition to what might be truly examples or masterpieces. Qualitatively, what enters a collection has to meet a variety of very rigorous standards. To the particular question, I guess I have two thoughts about that. Yes, we have a vast collection. In our case, it is, again, I may have mentioned 500,000 works of art and culture, 12 million specimens of natural history—one of the largest collections in North America. The point about that is, first of all, much of that, in fact, is not necessarily exhibition material. It is not material that people would be particularly interested, in some cases, in seeing, but has tremendous scientific and research value. I mentioned before that we have 70 people—30 or so curators and 30-plus members of the curatorial team—that are doing exceptional research and scholarship at all times. A lot of those collections have this meaning in the research side, but perhaps not on the display side to the same degree.

The second point I would make is, of course, that is one of the areas where the digital world can help us. We, like I am sure you, are seeking to get the most important works available and accessible online, even if they are not available and accessible in a gallery.

VP: Would you ever send them out in a bus if you could insure it properly, to get it out to people?

JB: We do, actually.

VP: Yes?

JB: We have collections that are in exhibitions, both the large-scale exhibitions like the one I mentioned at the

Japan Society in New York or in China as well as more community-based exhibitions that are collections that can go out to community centres and other places.

VP: Yes, because that would have a huge impact.

Q: I was just curious. Now that we are in the digital world and so much of a collection may not be available, digitally, have you ever thought of having a show curated by the public where people vote on which items they would like to see shown and then you put together a show that is what they want rather than what you want?

JB: Certainly, the notion of crowd-oriented exhibitions is something you are seeing more and more in museums. That is not uncommon. You do see it. I think there are other ways of getting at the same kind of idea; for example, we just opened—actually, it is officially opening to the public on Saturday, tomorrow, and we had our opening event earlier this week—a show called the *Family Camera*. Actually, that is a remarkable exhibition of family photography, and it looks at the role of family photography both as an art form and also the way that it shaped families. It looks at also, particularly, families that have experienced diaspora migration and whose family photographs are a crucial link to the past. The reason I mention it is because in that show, which has about 200 objects, we actually threw the doors open wide and had a public archive process where we invited everybody to send in their family photographs to participate. We had about 60 different partners associated with the show. It was another way of getting at that question of how do we have a multi-way exchange rather than one way, the authoritative download of the museum to others coming to the museum? It is a matter, rather, of how do we learn, in this case, from the very families that have this photography? How do we share that and engage? That is the way of the future.

SJ: I think there is this both/and side because, yes, you want to have that back and forth with your public, but we do have content specialty. There are people who know about 15th century manuscripts or the best contemporary art made in the last 30 seconds. There is this balance. We want to make sure that we are getting the best professional curators we possibly can, but we also want to make sure there is a back and forth dialogue. Professionalism does matter; knowledge does count.

JB: Entirely concur. The movement is toward this multi-faceted engagement, but with institutions, like the ROM, with its exceptional curatorial capacity, and like the AGO, with its exceptional curatorial capacity, you need the expert voice, but then you need to engage in a multi-pronged dialogue.

VP: One more.

Q: Here is the last question: If we go back in time, say a couple of years ago—and this is for both of you, by the way, so Josh, in your case, you have a perspective of the ROM—was there one thing that was clear to you that the ROM should be doing that it was not doing such that you thought, "When I get there, I am going to do that"? The same case for you, Stephan.

JB: The fact that I announced that we are opening the doors on Monday would be an example of something that I am committed to, this notion of porosity and the coming and going and getting away from the transactional experience. There are, of course, both of us, and I am sure, we would say we are enamored and impressed by our institutions; we love our institutions. That is not to say that there are not many, many things that we need to be looking at and doing in terms of the different types of engagement.

VP: Are you going to turn the Crystal crystal? Wahoo!

JB: That is not today's problem. I will start with the one I already…

SJ: Mine was kind of—we did it pretty quickly. When you used to walk into the AGO, there were these booths and a lot of back and forth, and you got to the booths, and I was like, "God, this reminds me of something, this entrance experience; I just had this experience. What does it remind me of? It is not a good one." It reminded me of passport control at Pearson. That was the kind of—we got rid of those booths, and we put up a great sculpture by Michael Snow. That was just a quick one.

The thing I wish we would have done—and the transformation or the building is beautiful and on time, in budget, and the spaces are spectacular—is put Wi-Fi everywhere in the building. That is the other thing.

VP: They did not?

SJ: No, because in 2008, it was not obvious. We are doing it now. In September, you will have it, but that was the other little thing. I cannot get any cell phone signal here.

JB: That was an interesting observation that I will piggyback on. We are very excited about the work that we want to do with those, I mentioned those handheld devices and the digital sorts of things. And I, too, when I got there said, we had this ambitious vision and strategy for digital that will make a tremendous difference. Then, I realized that in large portions of the building, you could not even get an email come down on your phone. We, too, are hard at work at that. We both have buildings that are rangy and complicated and hard to deal with.

VP: You guys are brilliant. Thank you very much.

SJ: Thanks for having us.

VP: The one thing they promised they would do is come

and speak to the Empire Club, actually.

SJ: There you go.

VP: That is what they vowed as soon as they came to Toronto.

JB: There you go. There you go.

SJ: Thank you for having us.

PF: Chanel versus Van Gogh, augmented reality, museums are the new malls—we covered some fascinating territory today. A tremendous, tremendous discussion. It is my sincere pleasure to invite from our sponsor for today, TD Bank's Andrea Cohen Barrack to provide the official thank you.

JB: We will underscore that we love our sponsors.

Note of Appreciation, by Andrea Cohen Barrack, VP Community Relations & Corporate Citizenship, TD Bank Group

Thank you very much. We have a great archives collection at TD, so if you do want to do that show on the history of banking, we can chat about that. One of the things that really, really attracted me to TD Bank is they have a great history of supporting discussions on civic issues that matter and of supporting arts and culture, as ways to build inclusive communities in our shared prosperity. This discussion has intersected both. It has been quite brilliant in that. I think both Stephan and Josh really talked to us about how their institutions are the best where we are today, as a city, but also where we want to be and that aspiration of where we want to be. It was quite inspiring. Of course, Valerie, your ability to moderate an honest and energetic conversation—wow! I just wanted to thank all of you for your candor and your passion. This has been one of the loveliest Friday lunches I have ever had. I am thrilled to be here. Thank you so much.

Concluding Remarks, by Paul Fogolin

Almost there. We are going to wrap up very quickly. Thanks, once again, to our sponsor, to our speakers and to our audience. I would like to thank mediaevents.ca. They are our online event partner that broadcasts all our lunches, live. Thank you to the *National Post*, who is our print sponsor.

I want to put a quick plug in for our upcoming lunches. On May 24th, we have both the EU and the German Ambassadors at the Empire Club. That will be at One King West. Then, on May 29th, we have Dr. Eric Hoskins, the Minister of Health. Please, join us if you can. Have a phenomenal weekend.