



THE HON PETER GARRETT AM MP

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

TRANSCRIPT

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA
ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE *MASTERPIECES FROM PARIS*
EXHIBITION**

10 AUGUST 2009

SUBJECTS: *Masterpieces from Paris* exhibition to visit Australia from the Musee d'Orsay

GARRETT: This is a tremendous, tremendous day for Canberra, for the National Gallery and for the people of Australia and I am delighted to be standing here with Chief Minister Stanhope and Minister Barr from the ACT because this is an extraordinary day for the people of Australia, for the National Gallery, for our national capital Canberra, as we will have the exhibition of some of the most important works of post-impressionist art ever gathered in one place under one roof outside of France. And I want to again, as I did in my formal remarks, commend the Board of the National Gallery, Chair Rupert Myer and his Board, Director Ron Radford, those sponsors that have continued their support for the National Gallery.

And having been to the Musee d'Orsay earlier this year and had an opportunity to walk through the building and see some of these works, I know that Aussies are going to get the biggest dose of culture ever imaginable from this fantastic collection of masterpiece painters works. Absolutely brilliant. It is difficult to find the words to describe how important this is to the National Gallery but I want to encourage Australians to think about planning their summer holidays so they can come to Canberra and see one of the greatest collections of post-impressionist art ever collected under one roof here in our National Gallery.

JOURNALIST: Mr Garrett can you explain some of the back room negotiations that went into getting this exhibition here?

GARRETT: Well look, I will let Ron Radford speak to the negotiations between the National Gallery and the Musee d'Orsay. What I would say is that, as the ambassador pointed out in his remarks, when I went to Paris

earlier this year and we were still in that stage of seeing whether or not there was the capacity for this exhibition to come here, we were able to have very constructive and fruitful discussions with the French Government, with the new Culture Minister, Monsieur Mitterrand, and I was delighted that through the Art Indemnity program we could provide the necessary support. But this is the work of many different parties – it is the work of the Gallery, it is the work of the supporters of the Gallery, it is a recognition of the strong relationship between France and Australia and I think when you think about it Australians quite often end up travelling overseas – they'll take the European trip – they'll go into the galleries and the museums and the like, now we can do it here in our own country, at home, and it is a testimony to all of those negotiations that we're actually able to make this announcement today.

JOURNALIST: Describe to us if you can the feeling of standing in front of some of the world's great paintings.

GARRETT: Well you know you stand in front of a Van Gogh or a Cezanne and the brilliance of their creative achievement hits you with physical force. These are some of the great painters of their era – some of the greatest painters of all time – and to be in close physical proximity to those paintings – paintings that we know quite well but never really know intimately or with any kind of details or intensity until you are actually able to experience them with your own eye. And I predict that there will be good numbers of people coming through to have that experience as well. It is powerful, it tells us how rich the creative experience is and it shows us how important it is to understand these great painters as we watch the way painting has gone since they did their work.

JOURNALIST: Can you tell us how significant the indemnity requirements were for this show?

GARRETT: Look the indemnity requirements are significant for this show. The overall value of the works here is worth more than some \$2 billion I understand. And so clearly there are very, very significant issues around indemnity but we were able to provide that necessary indemnity support. I am absolutely delighted that the Commonwealth was able to do that because this is a real blockbuster, there is no question about it. And in terms of the care that will have to be taken, the insurance values, the proper custodianship of this work as it transits from France to Australia and the extraordinary responsibilities for the curators here at the National Gallery, what a great vote of confidence it is in Australian institutions like the National Gallery. What a great vote of confidence it is in the high level of expertise in this institution, in the Director and their staff, and I am absolutely confident that with this indemnification we are going to see a successful transit for these priceless works and then the opportunity for Australian's to have a priceless viewing experience.

JOURNALIST: Minister, do you know if there was any other museums around the world that bid for a collection like this?

GARRETT: I am only aware at this point in time of what Ron Radford said about where it will subsequently go. What I can say is that we were in a position to be able to see the negotiations that were being undertaken by the National Gallery, with the Musee d'Orsay, brought to conclusion very quickly and I think that is a testament to the professionalism both of the staff here and also the support that has come from sponsors and the Board.

JOURNALIST: Do you have a personal favourite?

GARRETT: Well, you know I knew I would be asked this question. I reckon there is something about the Van Gogh and we're seeing a couple of them behind us. I have seen his work in the gallery in Amsterdam, the Van Gogh gallery in Amsterdam, and we are going to see some really powerful Van Gogh's here. And the Cezanne that we're seeing, very beautiful, the Gauguin, the two women, but it is hard to pick a favourite here and the reason for that is that these works represent one of the greatest creative expositions of post impressionist art that can be and will be seen in our country. So, up to people to come and pick their favourites and I think they will have a good time doing it.

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