



BERMUDA NATIONAL GALLERY

For immediate release

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**BNG receives generous gift from Sir Christopher Ondaatje**

*Hamilton, Bermuda, September 17, 2007* — The Bermuda National Gallery is delighted to announce that it has received a second substantial gift from author and financier Sir Christopher Ondaatje.

Sir Christopher, who lived part-time on the island for many years and whose family donated \$250,000 to construct the Ondaatje Wing at the BNG in 1992, has donated a further \$200,000 for the development and expansion of the collection of the Ondaatje Wing. The Ondaatje Wing houses selections from the BNG's Bermuda Collection, displayed as part of a revolving exhibition, *350 Years of Art In Bermuda* that follows the artistic, historical and cultural development of Bermuda through its fine and decorative arts.

In addition to the financial gift, the Ondaatje family has donated a bronze bust of Sir Christopher by Sri Lankan sculptor Sarath Chandrajeewa. The bust will be on permanent display at the entrance to the Ondaatje Wing.

Laura Gorham, Director of the BNG, said: "We are deeply grateful to Sir Christopher for this extremely generous donation towards the development and expansion of the collection of the Ondaatje Wing. A commitment such as this gives our curatorial team the comfort and confidence to make decisions that will enhance the Bermuda Collection for many years to come. Part of our mandate as the BNG is to bring Bermuda's art to the world and the Ondaatje Wing has provided us with a first-class facility in which to showcase Bermudian art in an historical context. This latest donation will enable us to continue enhancing this valuable collection for future generations. At the same time, we acknowledge the generosity of Mr. Robert Steinhoff and the late Mrs. Pat Steinhoff who have contributed considerably to the ongoing care of the Bermuda Collection."

In addition to the BNG, Sir Christopher is also a benefactor of the National Portrait Gallery, London; the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, all of which have wings named in his honour.

At the time of his original donation, Sir Christopher said: “[My wife and I] will always be fully committed and supportive of all the arts on the island. There is no doubt that every mature country needs a permanent home for its art otherwise it will be impossible to maintain or collect valuable treasures that belong to and are part of the heritage of Bermuda. The Bermuda National Gallery is the home for these treasures and everybody on the Island can enjoy them.”

Financier, writer and philanthropist Sir (Philip) Christopher Ondaatje was born in Sri Lanka in 1933. Educated in England, he enjoyed a successful career in finance and media in Canada where he was also a member of Canada’s gold medal-winning bobsled team in the 1964 Winter Olympic Games.

He is an Honorary Governor of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia; Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, on the Advisory Board of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, and a Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery. He was named an Officer, Order of Canada in 1993 and has received three LL.Ds., *honoris causa*, one from Dalhousie University in 1994, the second from the University of Buckingham in 2003, and the third from Exeter University in 2003. He has fostered the development of learning and international understanding through The Ondaatje Foundation.

He was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the Queen's birthday honours list, June 2000, and awarded a Knighthood in the Queen's honours list, June 2003.

Sir Christopher’s latest book is *The Power Of Paper*. For more information about Sir Christopher Ondaatje, visit [www.ondaatje.com](http://www.ondaatje.com)

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***About the Bermuda National Gallery:*** *Opened in 1992 and located in the City Hall & Arts Centre in Hamilton, the Bermuda National Gallery is both the home of Bermuda’s national art collection and the centre of the Island’s thriving arts scene. It is the Island’s leading art museum with a richly diverse exhibition programme of past and present works by local and international artists that reflects Bermuda’s varied artistic heritage and multicultural community. The Bermuda National Gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Monday to Saturday. Admission free. For more details contact Director Laura Gorham on 441-295-9428, [director@bng.bm](mailto:director@bng.bm) or visit [www.bng.bm](http://www.bng.bm).*