

Under Embargo until July 4, 11:30 AM MST
July 4, 2023

Contemporary Calgary names Observatory Gallery in recognition of \$500,000 gift from Morris and Ann Dancyger. Gallery announces \$1 million of additional funding from Calgary Foundation in support of Observatory Gallery and Auditorium transformations.

Calgary, Alta (July 4, 2023) - Contemporary Calgary (701, 11 Street SW) is delighted to invite the media and Calgary community to a special press conference for an exciting funding announcement for the Contemporary Calgary Auditorium and Observatory Gallery transformations made possible by the generosity of the Calgary Community.

Long-time supporters of contemporary art in Calgary, Morris and Ann Dancyger, announced \$500,000 in support of programming and activations in the Observatory Gallery—a space that will build community through timely and relevant art exhibitions that respond to pressing global and societal issues. The funds will come from the Dancyger (Morris and Ann) Philanthropy Fund at Calgary Foundation. In recognition of this contribution, the Observatory Gallery will be renamed **Morris and Ann Dancyger Observatory Gallery**.

Housed on the third floor, the Observatory Gallery once functioned as a place to be inspired by the stars and planets above. In its new form, the Observatory Gallery aims to provide a space in the community where people can discuss and explore issues of contemporary concern through incredible art made by some of Calgary and Canada's most impactful contemporary artists.

“Our support of Contemporary Calgary goes back many decades before it was even called Contemporary Calgary,” says Morris Dancyger, a retired pharmacist, entrepreneur and philanthropist. “Art enriches communities and inspires everyone around it. Whether it’s in our home or in amazing galleries like Contemporary Calgary, art has been a central passion in our lives and we are thrilled to share this gift with Contemporary Calgary. We hope it inspires others to be involved in their incredible vision and mission.”

Morris and Ann Dancyger aren't the only ones who were inspired by Contemporary Calgary's vision. The gallery is pleased to announce a grant of \$1 million from Calgary Foundation's Major Grants Program. This grant supports the renovation of Contemporary Calgary's Auditorium and the Observatory Gallery.

“With a shared goal of creating inclusive and inspirational community spaces, Calgary Foundation is proud to provide \$1 million to Contemporary Calgary through our Major Grants Program. The revitalization of the observatory and auditorium in one of Calgary's beloved buildings will have a transformational impact by enabling innovative programming that is responsive to current events and inviting conversation to deepen understanding. It is our pleasure to support a project that aligns so well with our purpose to create a community where everyone is welcome and where everyone belongs,” says Eva Friesen, President & CEO, Calgary Foundation.

When the Planetarium was designed, the Auditorium was expected to operate as a science lecture hall. But because the Celestial Dome Theatre served this function so well, it was decided to open the lecture hall to a broader community, and musicians and live theatre acts were soon booked into the space. The Auditorium later became the long-term home of Pleiades Theatre, (now known as Vertigo Theatre), and WOW-Town when the Planetarium was the home of the Telus World of Science.

These renovations to the auditorium were completed at the end of June and have fully restored the functionality of the Auditorium. Because of these renovations, Contemporary Calgary can be a supportive partner in exciting contemporary programming that will support all forms of the arts in Calgary. “There are many cultural organizations, curators, artists and community groups that have amazing projects happening in the community,” says David Leinster, CEO of Contemporary Calgary. “We are excited to present incredible content in the auditorium and are even more excited to play a significant supporting role by helping other artistic endeavours be seen, especially in a venue as prominent as this historic space in our community.”

The \$1.5 million of funding from Calgary Foundation and the Dancyger gift is in addition to previously announced funding of \$1 million from the City of Calgary as part of its \$24.5 million renovation of the former Planetarium and Science Centre and a \$750,000 contribution from PrariesCan through the Community Revitalization Fund announced in October. In all, Contemporary Calgary has secured over \$3 million to fully fund these exciting new capital projects and spaces that will contribute to a vibrant, exciting and art-filled Calgary.

Press conference and media availability on July 4, 2023, at Contemporary Calgary from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. MST. Refreshments will be available. Please RSVP to ellen@parkerpr.ca.

Interview availability with:

Morris and Ann Dancyger

Ken Lima-Coelho, Calgary Foundation Major Grants Representative

David Down, Chief Urban Designer, City of Calgary

David Leinster, CEO, Contemporary Calgary

Peter Tertzakian, Chair, Board of Directors

To book interviews with key spokespeople, please email ellen@parkerpr.ca and nikita@parkerpr.ca.

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Media contacts:

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About Contemporary Calgary

Contemporary Calgary aims to provide Calgary and its visitors with a significant visual arts destination dedicated to modern and contemporary art and to be a place of connection in the community. The former Centennial Planetarium, a significant work of architectural art, has been transformed into a world-class gallery where Contemporary Calgary delivers outstanding local, national and international contemporary art programming. Contemporary Calgary aspires to become a leading voice among arts institutions by embracing their values of being welcoming, engaging and relevant.