

MEDIA RELEASE
29 June 2018

GERARD VAUGHAN HONOURED WITH GIFT OF MAJOR BARNETT NEWMAN SCULPTURE

Retiring Director of the National Gallery of Australia, Gerard Vaughan, is being honoured by the Barnett Newman Foundation with the gift of *Broken Obelisk*.

The monumental sculpture created with weathering steel was installed at the front of the NGA's main entrance earlier this year, on loan from the Barnett Newman Foundation.

The Foundation has decided to gift this work in honour of Dr Vaughan who retires this Sunday.

'We are delighted to donate this significant sculpture to the National Gallery of Australia in honour of Gerard's commitment to the study of art and to museum leadership,' said Heidi Colzman-Freyberger, Executive Director of the Barnett Newman Foundation.

Barnett Newman is a prominent figure in Abstract Expressionism and the *Broken Obelisk* is the signature piece among his sculptures. In 1971, Australian-born critic Robert Hughes pronounced it 'perhaps the best American sculpture of its time'.

Broken Obelisk exists in four exemplars. They are on display at the Rothko Chapel in Houston, at the University of Washington in Seattle, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and at the National Gallery of Australia, respectively.

The sculpture has changed the face of the NGA and welcomes visitors at the front entrance. It features an inverted obelisk with a broken shaft balancing—almost impossibly—on a pyramid. Technically and aesthetically impressive, this towering work of art is a daring feat of ingenuity and engineering.

'I am deeply touched that the Barnett Newman Foundation has decided to make this astonishing gift to Australia in my honour,' said Gerard Vaughan. 'It is above all a recognition of the quality and global importance of the NGA's spectacular collection of 20th century American Masters.'

The Barnett Newman Foundation was established in 1979 by Annalee Newman, the artist's widow. Its principal mission is to encourage the study and understanding of Barnett Newman's life and work.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Megan Reeder Hope Communications Manager National Gallery of Australia
E: megan.reederhope@nga.gov.au T: 02 6240 6700 M: 0435 103 735