



## **Art Gallery of South Australia mourns William Bowmore AO OBE (1909-2008)**

The Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Christopher Menz, today expressed sadness and regret at the passing of William Bowmore AO OBE, one of the Gallery's greatest benefactors, who died yesterday aged 98.

William Bowmore was the most generous donor to the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation, adding extensively to the Gallery's international collections since 1990. His substantial gifts to the Gallery are now valued in excess of \$17 million and have transformed the collections of European and Islamic art.

"Bill Bowmore was a passionate collector and a generous philanthropist, who was remarkable for the very wide scope and quality of the art he collected, and for the enthusiasm with which he gave to the Art Gallery of South Australia" said Menz. "Although he never lived in South Australia, Bill has left this state an extraordinary legacy... he will be remembered with great fondness by everyone at the Art Gallery of South Australia." Dr Bowmore's munificence is permanently acknowledged through the William Bowmore Gallery which was named in his honour in 1997.

Most notably, in 1995 Bowmore facilitated the Gallery's acquisition of his renowned Rodin sculpture collection. In 2004 his donation of forty-five rare early Middle-Eastern ceramics was key in establishing the first and still only dedicated Islamic gallery in an Australian art museum. Among his other gifts are important works in the British, French, Italian and Dutch collections, two fine Roman sculptures dating from the first and second centuries AD, and the rare seventeenth century Yakob 'Polonaise' Islamic carpet.

The Gallery has previously staged three special exhibitions of his collections: *The Fine Art of Giving: 90 Masterpieces from the William Bowmore Collection* in 1999, *Persian Treasures: Islamic Ceramics from the Bowmore Collection* in 2004 and *Rodin: Genius of Form* in 2005.

William Bowmore's parents were from the Lebanon and migrated to Queensland where they ran a general store in Dalby. William, the fourth of their six sons, was born in Dalby in 1909, and was schooled at the Roman Catholic school at Helidon, followed by Nudgee College in Brisbane. He showed precocious talent as a pianist and, upon winning an all-Queensland Eisteddfod at the age of fourteen, he pursued studies in piano and cello, eventually entering the Conservatorium in Sydney. Around 1935, Mr Bowmore settled in Newcastle, where he commenced a long involvement in the businesses of hospitals and hotels. At the same time he began teaching the cello at the Newcastle Conservatorium. The 1960s saw him take an active interest in collecting Australian art; however, it was around the age of 60 that his collecting of international works, for which he will be remembered, reached new heights.

In recent years William Bowmore was honoured with an award in the Order of Australia, an Honorary Doctorate of Music from the Newcastle University Conservatorium and the award of Officiere from the House of Savoy (Italy). His Order of the British Empire was awarded in 1977.