

## IN A NEW LIGHT CAMPAIGN

## OUR DONORS

# A Donor's View: Louis Thalheimer

Speaking to the 21st Century

July 2008

The Thalheimer family has a long and distinguished legacy of support for the BMA, but Louis Thalheimer is most concerned with the present. The family's generous gifts to *In A New Light: The Campaign for The Baltimore Museum of Art* will significantly increase the endowment for exhibitions in the Museum's spacious Thalheimer galleries and also provide critical support for the endowment for free admission.

As an Honorary Vice-Chair of the campaign and former Board Chair, Mr. Thalheimer says, "The campaign is a way to keep the Museum living, so that it speaks to visitors in the 21st century as well as it did in the 20th century." During the past 26 years, the BMA's Alvin and Fanny B. Thalheimer galleries have been the site of more than 90 exhibitions, such as the magnificent *Pissarro: Creating the Impressionist Landscape* and *SlideShow*, which critics hailed as "ingenious."

"*SlideShow* was a stunning exhibition," says Mr. Thalheimer. "It used the medium of an era, Kodachrome slides, to capture the imagery of an era. It was a visual record of a world as it was lived. That's what art can do for people." While helping to bring changing exhibitions to the BMA, the Thalheimer exhibition endowment also helps fund a thoughtful environment around the art, creating installations that are both provocative and accessible to visitors.



Louis Thalheimer—Past Chairman of BMA Board of Trustees and Honorary Vice-Chair of the Campaign for The Baltimore Museum of Art

The Thalheimer family is equally pleased to help underwrite free admission. "The restoration of free admission is very exciting," Mr. Thalheimer says. "It's a wonderful thing that the Museum is able to bring art into the lives of all citizens without charge."

In the 1940s, Mr. Thalheimer's grandmother, Fanny B. Thalheimer, was

a civic leader and active member of the BMA Board of Trustees. An artist herself, she collected and donated art that was contemporary to her. In 1957, a memorial fund was established in her name for the acquisition of works of art. More than 30 objects, including works by contemporary artists Olafur

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—Louis Thalheimer



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Eliasson and Franz West, have been added to the BMA's collection with support from this fund. Then in 1982, the family established the endowment for major exhibitions in the Thalheimer galleries.

Mr. Thalheimer remembers seeing his grandmother's paintings in her attic as a child. When he returned to the Baltimore area as an adult, he was naturally drawn to the Museum.

"Working with the BMA opened up a whole world of inquiry for me," he says. "I was practicing law at the time, and the Museum gave me a chance to work with the other side of my brain." He confesses that his prior art knowledge was limited to one art history class in college, where he

remembers a good deal of snoring in a large, darkened auditorium. But the BMA showed him that art could also be a means of political expression and a way to mediate the social issues of the day. "The post-60s generations profoundly changed our country and they expressed their visions in new and different ways. The BMA has incorporated these works into their exhibitions and collections. But the art of the 1980s and 1990s should not be the end of the Museum's collection any more than the 1940s, when my grandparents were collecting and donating art."

"What will be considered the media of today?" he muses. "Cell phone photography? You Tube? Whatever it is, it needs to be captured, documented, and preserved. That's our calling. That's what a museum is all about."