



# Ralph Heimans

b.1970, Sydney

Born in Sydney in 1970, Ralph Heimans studied Fine Arts and Pure Mathematics at the University of Sydney and later at the Julian Ashton Art School. He received his first commission in 1988, beginning a series of portraits, still lifes and figurative works for private collectors in Sydney.

By 1996, his commissions included paintings of leading Australian public figures for institutions such as the Compensation Court of New South Wales and the Australian Army. Three portraits of this period hang in the National Portrait Gallery of Australia; former minister Tom Uren, Anthropologist Derek Freeman, and High Court Judge Justice Kirby, a work which has received much popular support.

Heimans' large-scale portraits are renowned for their innovative compositions that offer engaging narratives about his subjects and their life stories. His sitters include extraordinary individuals who have made a significant contribution in the fields of arts, academia, law, business, politics and philanthropy. Their portrayals are informed by a creative integration of subject and context. Figures are placed in complex spatial arrangements, underpinned by an innovative use of geometry, reflection and perspective. His technical approach pays homage to the 17th Century masters of chiaroscuro, exploiting exquisite effects of light, which appear to illuminate the inner world of his subjects.

Heimans moved to Paris in 1997, following a commission from the European Court in Luxembourg and began a string of portraits for London-based collectors. Demand for his large-scale group portraits led to new commissions in New York, Boston, Santa Fe and Paris, whilst maintaining links with Australia ensured further commissions in Sydney and Melbourne. Amongst these works, Ralph Heimans' self portrait was exhibited in the National Portrait Gallery in London, and his portrait of the French National Rugby team was hung in the Hotel de Ville in Paris.

Heimans was the only artist chosen to paint an Official portrait of The Queen in Her Diamond Jubilee Year. The work received widespread international acclaim when it was unveiled at the National Portrait Gallery of Australia in 2012, drawing record numbers of visitors to the Gallery. In a rare act of acquisition, it now forms part of the permanent collection of Westminster Abbey.

In 2017, he was asked to produce a major portrait of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh in the year of his retirement from public duties, which was acquired by the Royal Collection. In 2018 he unveiled his portrait of the Prince of Wales for his 70th birthday celebrations, this is held in the collection of the Prince of Wales.

2018 also saw the Museum of National History at Frederiksborg castle, Denmark's National Portrait Gallery, hold a mid-career retrospective of Heimans' work. The exhibition was opened by HM Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, and HRH Crown Prince Frederik unveiled a new portrait to commemorate his 50th birthday, commissioned for the exhibition. This portrait accompanied an earlier portrait of HRH Crown Princess Mary, painted by Heimans in 2006. The exhibition in Denmark showcases many other portraits of celebrities and public figures including actor Dame Judi Dench, Sir Ben Kingsley, conductor and pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy, and a series of celebrated authors including Margaret Atwood, Gillian Flynn, Jo Nesbo, Anne Tyler and Tracy Chevalier.

Some of his other notable works include: *Portrait of The Hon John Howard*, Royal Collection, London, *Portrait of Dame Quentin Bryce*, Parliament House, Canberra, and *Portrait of Dame Elisabeth Murdoch*, Private collection of Matthew Freud, London.

Heimans' works are held in major international collections including The National Portrait Gallery in Washington; The Royal Collection, Westminster Abbey; The National Portrait Gallery of Australia, Canberra; The National History Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen; Australian Parliament House, Canberra; and The European Court in Luxembourg.

In 2014 he was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for services to portraiture.

Heimans currently resides in London with his wife and two daughters.