



James & Diana Ramsay's visionary legacy of art gifted to South Australia

Today the Premier of South Australia, the Hon Steven Marshall MP, announced that South Australia will be the beneficiary of one of this country's most generous cultural gifts: a \$38 million bequest towards the development of the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia bestowed by James Stewart Ramsay AO (1923–1996) and Diana Ramsay AO (1926–2017).

James Ramsay AO's love for the arts and medicine started early. He was the son of distinguished surgeon Sir John Ramsay and the nephew of the celebrated artist Hugh Ramsay. The Ramsay name is also closely associated with the famous boot polish company KIWI, which was founded by James's uncle William Ramsay.

It was at the tender age of ten, when escorted through the Gallery by her father, that Diana Ramsay's love of art was ignited, and it was a Nora Heysen painting titled *Scabious*, 1930, that she admired the most. In James, she found a fellow art lover and passionate advocate for culture. Together they have supported South Australia with great dedication and purpose – specifically through medical research, youth programs and the performing and visual arts.

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This gift clearly stipulates that the use of the bequest to the James and Diana Ramsay Fund be for the acquisition of major works of art by AGSA. This decision will provide a powerful momentum for collection excellence and will ensure that the AGSA collection not only remains of national and international importance but also will expand in prominence and attract even greater visitation to AGSA. The collection is already one of the state's most valuable assets. This generous bequest now provides a potent avenue to significantly grow the collection and directly enhance the reputation of the Gallery for the benefit of all South Australians and our visitors.

The Government of South Australia is committed to improving the safeguarding, storage and digitisation of the state's collections as they continue to grow. Work is progressing on a business case to identify and evaluate options for long-term collection storage, which will include consideration of the needs of AGSA.

Premier Marshall, a personal friend of Diana Ramsay AO, has said, 'James and Diana were dedicated to the future of South Australia and its culture. Such extraordinary and visionary acts of generosity rarely occur. They provide a catalyst for reputational, cultural and economic growth for generations to come, and inspire others to live generous lives.'

The scale of the bequest is comparable to the country's most generous cultural gifts, including the Felton Bequest at the National Gallery of Victoria, which has transformed that collection since 1904 until today. The Director of the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation, Kerry de Lorme, says, 'Diana was well aware of the transformative impact of the Felton Bequest and now she and James have gifted a tremendous legacy that will ensure the excellence of AGSA's collection for generations to come.'

AGSA Director Rhana Devenport ONZM says, 'The extent of the James and Diana Ramsay's support of AGSA is breathtaking. Such legacies make an exceptional impact on collections and communities. The Gallery's collection has been developed through the great generosity of individual South Australians over its 138 years. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and represents the most generous donation in the Gallery's history. Previous major bequests have been the catalysts for major Gallery expansions such as the Melrose and Elder Wings. We look forward to future growth of the Gallery so that we can fully honour this outstanding gift for the enjoyment and benefit of all South Australians, our visitors, and future generations.'

This bequest builds on the Ramsay's long and fruitful relationship with the Gallery. Since 1969 James and Diana Ramsay have assisted the Gallery in multiple ways, particularly in acquiring or donating more than 80 works of art for the collection by artists including Angelica Kauffmann, Napier Waller, Hugh Ramsay and Thea Proctor, and assisting with the acquisition

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of major works including *Prairie à Éragny*, 1886, by Camille Pissarro. One of the most visible works of art is Lindy Lee's sculpture *The Life of Stars*, 2015, outside the Gallery on North Terrace. The bequest recently made possible the acquisition of a remarkable work by celebrated British painter Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *The Black Watchful*, 2018, the first work by this artist to enter any Australian collection.

Established by Diana Ramsay 12 years after James Ramsay passed, the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation has further supported AGSA's innovative and highly successful public programs, including Start, for young people and their families, and The Studio. The James and Diana Ramsay Foundation has also funded the \$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize in perpetuity, one of Australia's most generous and dynamic art prizes, open to Australian artists under the age of 40.

Furthermore, the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation continues to contribute to the South Australian community beyond AGSA by supporting excellence in the arts and medical research and supporting youth at risk.

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Attributable quote

'This is an exciting and significant announcement – as it is one of, if not the, largest cultural gift in Australia's history. During their lives, James and Diana Ramsay were both active and generous givers and contributors to their communities and, in addition to that, Diana established the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation in 2008 to structure and set up her giving in perpetuity. And now, in addition, the entirety of James's estate and part of Diana's has been bequeathed to the Art Gallery of South Australia. The vision and foresight is absolutely inspiring. Over the next 20 years, it is estimated that Australia will see an intergenerational wealth transfer of \$2.4 trillion as wealth is passed from one generation to another. Let's hope this outstanding example of generosity and vision inspires others to do something similar and leave their legacies for future benefit.'

Sarah Davies, CEO, Philanthropy Australia

About James and Diana Ramsay

James Ramsay AO and Diana Ramsay AO have been two of the Art Gallery of South Australia's most passionate and generous supporters. Their names are synonymous with arts patronage in South Australia and indeed Australia and their gifts of art have enriched the Gallery's collections.

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Born in 1923, James grew up in Launceston and was the son of surgeon Sir John Ramsay CBE and Lady Ramsay (Sir John Ramsay was the first Australian surgeon to be knighted due to his pioneering surgical brilliance). The Ramsay name is also closely associated with the famous boot polish company KIWI, which was founded by James's uncle William Ramsay. James was also the nephew of the celebrated Australian artist Hugh Ramsay.

Born in Adelaide in 1926 into the wine industry's Hamilton family, Diana Ramsay AO grew up in the Glenelg area, travelled overseas, studied at Adelaide University and worked in Sydney. In 1960, she married James Ramsay and they returned from Sydney to live in Adelaide in the mid-1960s.

James and Diana had always admired the Felton Bequest to the National Gallery of Victoria (as part of the will of Alfred Felton in 1904) and what it had contributed to the arts. It encouraged James and Diana to support those organisations that had given them much joy during their life together. Diana often mentioned that they would have loved nothing more than to establish something similar to the Felton Bequest but believed such an entity was well beyond their reach. They joined the Friends of the Art Gallery of South Australia in 1969, and in 1981 they became founding members of the Art Gallery Foundation benefaction group. Their first donation of a work of art to the Art Gallery was in 1972 and their involvement with developing the collection and their love of the Gallery has continued ever since.

James and Diana's donations have made a dramatic impact on the Gallery's collections of Asian, European and Australian art. As the collection expands, their indispensable contribution to the Gallery's development not only endures but grows in importance.

The James and Diana Ramsay Foundation was established in 2008 by Diana, who said that 'James would have been so proud that such a significant Foundation has been established bearing both of their names.' They were inspired to do so by great benefactors before them and hoped to inspire others to give in the future.

The establishment of the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation led to diversified giving. This has included supporting all the Gallery's family programs through The Studio, a dedicated and free learning activity space in the Gallery, and the Start program, held on the first Sunday of each month for children under 12 and their families.

The 'James and Diana Ramsay Gallery' in the Art Gallery's Elder Wing of Australian Art is testament to the extraordinary contribution the Ramsays have made to the state's collection

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since 1972. The Ramsays's financial gifts and works of art, since 1972, have led to the acquisition of 83 works within the collection now valued at approximately \$20 million.

A further investment of approximately \$3.5 million has supported the Gallery's Start, The Studio and Ramsay Art Prize programs. Over 217,000 art lovers have participated in activities in The Studio since the program's inception in 2013. And AGSA's pillar program Start, now in its tenth year, has attracted approximately 86,500 children and families.

James and Diana Ramsay were both appointed as Officers of the Order of Australia (AO) in 1992 for their extraordinary philanthropy and service to the arts and the community. After a very happy and accomplished life, James lost his battle with cancer in 1996. Diana was left with a life interest in the income of his estate and, following her passing in 2017, his entire estate has been bequeathed to AGSA to add to the James and Diana Ramsay Fund.

The will of James Ramsay clearly outlines that the use of the funds is specifically for the acquisition of major works of art by AGSA, providing remarkable collection support for the Gallery and South Australia for generations to come.

James and Diana Ramsay were a visionary couple who were dedicated to the future of South Australia and its cultural heart. Their sustaining philanthropy continues to support medical research, young people and the performing and visual arts.

James and Diana Ramsay's Highlight Acquisitions

James and Diana Ramsay's first gift to the Gallery in 1972 was for its Asian collection, a fine Japanese negoro red lacquer tray made around 1700. Other donations of Asian works include eighteenth and nineteenth-century Japanese prints and early seventeenth-century Chinese nephrite carvings.

Their donation of many works by Hugh Ramsay form the core of the Gallery's holdings of work by this celebrated painter. These include *At last*, 1896, *Amy Lambert*, 1901, *The artist's studio*, c.1901, the full-size portrait *A Lady of Cleveland, USA*, 1902, and *The four seasons*, c.1902. Their other gifts of Australian art are works by artists following Hugh Ramsay and have focused on the twentieth century, bringing major works by leading artists into the collection. They include the *Still-life with self-portrait*, 1963, by John Brack, *Berry's Bay, Sydney Harbour*, 1920, by Roy de Maistre, the dramatic five-canvas work *The Pastoral Pursuits of Australia*, 1927, by the great mural artist Napier Waller, the tile painting *Lovers under a tree with weeping head*, c.1963, by Arthur Boyd, prints by Thea Proctor and a drawing by Russell Drysdale. There is also Christian Waller's beautiful and striking triptych of stained-glass windows, *Prophet Isaiah, Apostle St Peter and Sundar Singh*, 1936. The richly coloured and

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textured art deco windows, which are among Waller's finest work, justly commemorated the Gallery's extensions in 1996. Their gifts of decorative arts also include metalwork by Frank Bauer, Eric Car, Ian Ferguson and John Hale. Australian sculptures include works by the leading figures Bertram Mackennal, Jean Broome-Norton, John Perceval and Inge King.

Their gifts of European works range in date from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-twentieth century and include artists as diverse as Jacob van Ruisdael and Bridget Riley. The first gift to the Gallery's European collection was the remarkable brooding scene by the Dutch master Jacob van Ruisdael, *Landscape with a mill-run and ruins*, c.1653. Other European paintings include a beautiful church interior c.1630s by Peter Neeffs the Elder, a fine *trompe-l'oeil* work, *Letter rack*, c.1698, by Edward Collier, and a suave portrait by Pompeo Batoni, *Edward Weld*, c.1761. Twentieth-century British artists are represented with a sculpture by Maurice Lambert, *The golden pheasant*, 1932, and a gouache by Bridget Riley, *Seris 33, orange and magenta added to green and violet in two colour twist*, 1979.

James and Diana also assisted with the acquisition of another three major works, including *Prairie à Éragny*, 1886, by Camille Pissarro. One of the most visible works of art is Lindy Lee's sculpture *The Life of Stars*, 2015. The bequest has also made possible the recent acquisition of a remarkable work by celebrated British painter Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *The Black Watchful*, 2018.

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