



The power of portraiture revealed in *Robert Wilson: Moving portraits* and *Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize*

Adelaide, Australia: The enduring power of portraiture through time will be on show when two major exhibitions open at the Art Gallery of South Australia in July. Large-scale video portraits by ground-breaking artist Robert Wilson will be presented in the Australian premiere and exclusive exhibition, *Robert Wilson: Moving portraits*, alongside *Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize* – a national touring exhibition that celebrates 100 years of Australia’s most prestigious portrait award. One ticket will give audiences access to experience both exhibitions.

AGSA Director, Rhana Devenport ONZM said, ‘We are thrilled to present *Archie 100* at AGSA, offering local audiences their first opportunity ever to experience an exhibition of Archibald Prize portraits here in South Australia. Simultaneously, an exhibition of Robert Wilson’s intricately produced video portraits, never-before-seen in Australia, presents an arresting stage on which to reflect upon our notions of celebrity and the power of the gaze in unexpected ways.’

‘Visitors will witness the beauty and allure of portraiture in its many forms in this double header offering, from the richly painted works of the Archibald Prize to Robert Wilson’s video portraiture,’ Devenport says.

Robert Wilson: Moving portraits

*Since the beginning of my career in the theatre I have been fascinated with stillness
and the movement that is in stillness ...* – Robert Wilson

In an Australian exclusive, the Art Gallery of South Australia presents *Robert Wilson: Moving portraits*, an anthology of video portraits that unveil the theatrical language of influential New York theatre director and artist Robert Wilson, curated by AGSA Director Rhana Devenport. Depicting celebrated contemporary performers, including Lady Gaga, Brad Pitt, Isabella Rossellini, Robert Downey Jr and Winona Ryder, alongside artists, writers and animals, Wilson's arresting yet imperceptibly slow-moving video portraits blur time-based cinematography with the frozen moment of still photography.

Opening on 9 July, *Moving portraits* features more than twenty high-definition, large-scale video portraits. Each portrait incorporates a multitude of creative elements – lighting, costume, make-up, choreography, scenography and sound – to reflect Wilson's interest in the body and the power of the gaze, and his acute understanding of stillness.

Several of the video portraits refer to pivotal moments in art history and have been created through collaborations with renowned performers such as Lady Gaga, who maintained the same position for seven hours in her re-enactment of Mademoiselle Caroline Rivière from Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's famed 1806 painting, in which a solitary tear rolls down her cheek. Another video portrait sees actor Brad Pitt standing in the rain, holding a gun which he slowly raises and aims at the viewer, the tension shattered when the weapon reveals itself to be a water pistol.

Robert Wilson says, 'Some of the subjects we have made portraits of – Brad Pitt, Sean Penn – are more themselves; perhaps with the addition of associations I have with them. With others there are biographical elements. Jeanne Moreau was interested in a theatre project on Mary Queen of Scots for instance. The face of Isabelle Huppert, on the other hand, always reminded me of Greta Garbo. And sometimes, as in the portrait of Princess Caroline it was interesting to shoot her in a pose her mother Grace Kelly strikes in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*. All images have several layers of allusions. They are personal, poetic statements of different personalities.'

Other portraits feature untrained animals, captured by the video camera in long, unbroken shots, such as an elk, a panther, an owl and a porcupine. Driven by his uncomfortable experiences as a child when forced to hunt deer with his father, Wilson reconfigures the gaze of these animals to create moments of connection between the human and animal world.

Acclaimed internationally for his radically inventive theatre and opera direction, Wilson (b. 1941) has directed landmark works such as Philip Glass's contemporary opera *Einstein on the Beach*, and collaborated with Marianne Faithfull, Laurie Anderson, David Byrne, William S. Burroughs, Willem Dafoe, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Tom Waits, Lou Reed, and many more, in a career that has influenced generations of artists across all artforms. Wilson has numerous productions on view in theatres and operas worldwide. While best known for his theatrical pieces, Wilson's work is firmly rooted in the fine arts having shown major exhibitions at museums and galleries, including the Louvre, Paris; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Acting as thematic touchstones, rarely seen works and new acquisitions from AGSA's renowned collection will complement each video portrait – from a second century Roman *Aphrodite* marble sculpture to an embroidered garment by Australian fashion house Romance Was Born. Additionally, each screen casts its own soundscape – drawn from classical, experimental, and popular music, to spoken word recordings. In these ways, each portrait becomes a rich tableau of artistic media – an other-worldly encounter in a language that is entirely Wilson's own.



Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize

The Art Gallery of South Australia is the exclusive South Australian venue for *Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize*, an Art Gallery of New South Wales touring exhibition that celebrates 100 years of Australia's most prestigious portrait award.

Opening on 9 July, *Archie 100* presents a diverse collection of Archibald portraits from every decade of the last century, in celebration of the artists who have made the prize 'the face that stops the nation'. Arranged thematically, *Archie 100* reflects not just how artistic styles and approaches to portraiture have changed over time but, importantly, the changing face of our nation.

Archie 100 includes works by some of Australia's most famous and sometimes controversial artists, including William Dobell, Wendy Sharpe, Ben Quilty, Brett Whiteley and Del Kathryn Barton. Local audiences will recognise works by South Australian artists including Nora Heysen, Tjungkara Ken, Robert Hannaford, Jacqueline Hick, Barbara Robertson, Ivor Hele and Vincent Namatjira – the first Indigenous artist to win the Archibald Prize and the winner of AGSA's Ramsay Art Prize in 2019.

Resulting from many years of research and a national appeal to help locate lost portraits, *Archie 100* features works from private and public collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Library of Australia, the State Library of New South Wales, the National Gallery of Victoria and the Art Gallery of South Australia.

Art Gallery of NSW Director, Dr Michael Brand, said *Archie 100* offered remarkable insights into Australia's society and culture.

'Since its inception, the Archibald Prize has attracted entries from both prominent and emerging artists in Australia and New Zealand, and celebrated figures from all walks of life, from famous faces to local heroes. We look forward to sharing *Archie 100* with visitors as it tours across Australia, and for the first time, with South Australian audiences.'

Exhibition curator and Curator of Australian Art at the Art Gallery of NSW, Natalie Wilson, commented, 'Each portrait selected for Archie 100 offers an exciting glimpse into a specific moment in time. Visitors can expect to see and discover stories of renowned portraits of identities from the past century, magnificent portraits of intriguing characters whose names have today been forgotten, and works that have not been seen in public since first being exhibited in the Archibald Prize.'

ABOUT THE ARCHIBALD PRIZE

First awarded in 1921, the Archibald Prize was established following a bequest from former Art Gallery of NSW trustee and founder of *The Bulletin* magazine, JF Archibald (1856-1919), whose aim was to foster portraiture, support artists and perpetuate the memory of great Australians. The open competition, which is judged by the trustees of the Gallery, has been awarded annually (with two exceptions: 1964 and 1980) to the best portrait, 'preferentially of some man or woman distinguished in arts, letters, science or politics, painted by any artist resident in Australasia'.

ONE TICKET, TWO EXHIBITIONS

Robert Wilson: Moving portraits and *Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize* are on display at the Art Gallery of South Australia from 9 July to 3 October 2022. Buy one exhibition ticket and gain access to both exhibitions. Purchase tickets online at agsa.sa.gov.au.

-ends-

MEDIA CONTACTS

Lindsay Ferris | M 0405 046 116 | E ferris.lindsay@artgallery.sa.gov.au

Elisabeth Alexander | P (08) 8207 7402 | E alexander.elisabeth@artgallery.sa.gov.au

KEY DATES

Media Preview | Friday 8 July, 11am (RSVP media@artgallery.sa.gov.au)
Exhibition Season | 9 July – 3 October 2022

MEDIA PORTAL

agsa.sa.gov.au/about/media/robert-wilson-archie-100-media-portal

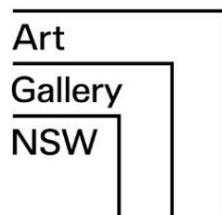
SOCIAL MEDIA

@agsa.adelaide #archie100 #robertwilson #agsaadelaide

Image captions:

(1) Robert Wilson, born Waco, Texas, 1941, *Lady Gaga: Mademoiselle Caroline Riviere*, 2013, HD video, music by Michael Galasso; Courtesy of RW Work Ltd. (2) Robert Wilson, born Waco, Texas, 1941, *Isabella Rossellini, Actor*, 2005, HD video, music by Henri Rene and His Orchestra, voice by Robert Wilson; Courtesy of RW Work Ltd. (3) John Brack, *Barry Humphries in the character of Mrs Everage*, 1969, oil on canvas, 94.5 x 128.2 cm; Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased with funds provided by the Contemporary Art Purchase Grant from the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, 1975, © Helen Brack.

Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize



An Art Gallery of
New South Wales
touring exhibition

Support partner

OROTON

This project has been
assisted by the Australian
Government's Visions of
Australia program.



Robert Wilson: Moving portraits

Major Partner



Presenting Partner



Presenting Partners



Government Partners

