

NGA

National Gallery of Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

28 NOVEMBER 2019



HUGH RAMSAY'S REMARKABLE ARTISTIC LEGACY GOES ON SHOW

For the first time in 25 years, a major retrospective of the work of Australian artist Hugh Ramsay will go on display at the National Gallery of Australia, giving audiences a rare chance to see the depth of his artistic achievement through more than 85 works including painting, drawings and sketchbooks.

Hugh Ramsay, who died at age 28, left behind a remarkable artistic legacy. A child prodigy, he attended art school at 16 and his talent immediately gained the attention of his peers and teachers.

Hugh Ramsay curator Deborah Hart, the Head of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia, says Ramsay should be remembered for his prodigious talent rather than for what might have been.

“One of the main aims of this exhibition is to bring Ramsay’s remarkable artistic achievements to broad public attention,” she said. “From his early days at art school, Ramsay was admired and respected by his peers for his incredible skill, but his thoughtful, contemplative portraits and figure studies deserve a much greater audience.”

At the dawn of the 20th Century, Ramsay travelled to Paris – then a global centre of art and culture – and absorbed lessons from the works of great painters such as Diego Velázquez, John Singer Sargent and James McNeill Whistler to inform his development as an artist.

Director of the National Gallery of Australia Nick Mitzevich said Ramsay was a brilliant portrait painter who learned from significant artists but also remained true to his distinctive vision.

“It was this combination of authenticity and setting the bar high for himself that led Ramsay to paint and draw compelling and poignant works of art that received acclaim in their day and still captivate our attention today,” he said.

Such was Ramsay’s talent, four of his works were selected for a new Salon exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris – an unprecedented achievement for a young Australian artist. Three of the paintings are on show in the retrospective, while the fourth work has never been found.

Hugh Ramsay draws major loans from public and private collections across Australia. These include his highly acclaimed *Two girls in white* (also known as *The sisters*), from the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and *The four seasons*, from the Art Gallery of South Australia. Also included are key works from the National Gallery’s collection such as *Miss Nellie Patterson*, commissioned by Dame Nellie Melba, and *Madge*, which is being shown in a retrospective context for the first time.

“We also acknowledge the generosity of the Ramsay family in lending works,” Mr Mitzevich said.

“Their gift of the Ramsay Archive has enriched our understanding of the artist’s life and work and informed the enlightening and richly-illustrated publication, *Hugh Ramsay*, accompanying the exhibition.”

Audiences can learn more about Hugh Ramsay during a series of talks in the exhibition space on November 30. Join Ramsay’s great-niece and biographer Patricia Fullerton, artist Patrick Pound, conservator Michael Varcoe-Cocks, art historian Ian McLean and curator Deborah Hart.

Hugh Ramsay is on display at the National Gallery of Australia from 30 November 2019 until 29 March 2020. Entry is free.

Images available for download from: <https://nga.gov.au/aboutus/mediacentre/ramsay/>

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Sandra O’Malley

Communications Manager

sandra.omalley@nga.gov.au

+61 418 897 794

The Hugh Ramsay Exhibition is generously supported by Exhibition Patrons Colin Hindmarsh and Barbara Hindmarsh, Legal Partner Maddocks and Accommodation Partner Doma Hotels.

Image: Hugh Ramsay, *Two girls in white* 1904 also known as *The sisters*, oil on canvas on hardboard, 125.7 x 144.8 cm, Purchased 1921, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Photo: Ray Woodbury, AGNSW