

PRESS RELEASE

12 October 2018

The Australiana Fund is delighted to announce its latest acquisition – a portrait of The Fund’s founder, Mrs Tamara Fraser AO by distinguished Sydney artist Evert Ploeg. Commissioned through the generosity of the members and supporters of The Fund, the portrait celebrates the 40th Anniversary of The Australiana Fund. Jennifer Sanders, Chair of The Fund said that ‘most significantly, the portrait is public recognition of the outstanding contribution Mrs Fraser has made to the nation through her advocacy and support for The Australiana Fund and, for the Open Gardens scheme.’ This impressive oil portrait will be unveiled at the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, on Tuesday 16 October 2018 where it will then go on display.

During an official visit to Washington in 1976 with her husband, the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, Mrs Fraser was greatly impressed by the initiative taken by Jacqueline Kennedy in 1961 to establish the White House Historical Association, to acquire fine American decorative arts and works of art in keeping with the historical interiors of the White House. With this in mind Mrs Fraser established The Australiana Fund in 1978. She brought together people from all political parties and all States to form an organisation that would collect works of art which are Australian by origin or association.

The Fund’s purpose is to enrich Australia’s four official residences – Government House and The Lodge in Canberra, Admiralty House and Kirribilli House in Sydney – with artworks which illustrate aspects of the nation’s history and creativity through its cultural and artistic legacy. The collection has a unique role as a ‘working collection’ bringing aspects of Australia’s story to life while meeting the very practical requirements of the houses. The Fund works in close consultation with the management of the official residences.

Since 1978, The Fund’s members and supporters have contributed more than \$10 million to support collection acquisitions and preservation as well as initiatives to promote the collection to a wider audience. The Fund’s recent publication *Collecting for the Nation – The Australiana Fund* was made possible by donations from members and supporters.

To mark 40 years of The Australiana Fund, The Fund has launched the 40th Anniversary Acquisition Fund so that we can continue to develop the collection as a visual expression of our nation’s distinctive cultural heritage and contemporary creativity. Fittingly, Evert Ploeg’s portrait of Tamie Fraser is the first acquisition celebrating The Fund’s four decades of collecting and, the generosity of its members and supporters.

The artist, Evert Ploeg, traveled to *Thurulgoona*, the Fraser’s family property in Victoria, to paint a large portion of the artwork from life - choosing to depict Mrs. Fraser in her cherished garden. It is well known that Mrs. Fraser’s passion is her garden. Indeed in 1992, she was appointed President of the Australian Open Garden scheme, an organization which saw private gardens opened for public viewing for one or two weekends each year. About 650 private gardens have been opened annually across Australia until it ended in 2015.

Evert Ploeg is an international award winning portrait artist. His work is represented in the University of Melbourne, Australian War Memorial and the National Portrait Gallery (with five major works in their permanent collection). He has been hung in the Archibald Prize multiple times, winning the coveted People's Choice twice and the highly publicized Packing Room Prize. A finalist in the Doug Moran Portrait Prize four times, Ploeg won the Shirley Hannan National Portrait Award in 2005 and has been a six times Black Swan Portrait Prize finalist. In 2018 after having received numerous awards at the Portrait Society of America, including Best of Show, the PSoA honoured Ploeg with their prestigious lifetime 'Signature Status'. He has been long-listed for the BP Portrait Prize in London on two occasions.

Evert Ploeg's portrait of Tamie Fraser is a wonderful and timely addition to The Australiana Fund's collection. In this portrait, a visual narrative has been created that conveys both Tamie Fraser's influence in her role as the wife of former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, and Mrs Fraser's country girl grass roots with her love of Australia and Australiana. With rendering reminiscent of the great outdoor master painter Joaquín Sorolla, Ploeg has evoked the feeling of having a relaxed conversation with Mrs Fraser, who sits bathed in the warm dappled light of the morning sun. The oil on linen artwork measures 168 cm x 122 cm.

The Australiana Fund has also commissioned a short video from Hipshot Films to document Evert Ploeg's artistic process.

Image of artwork available on request

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