

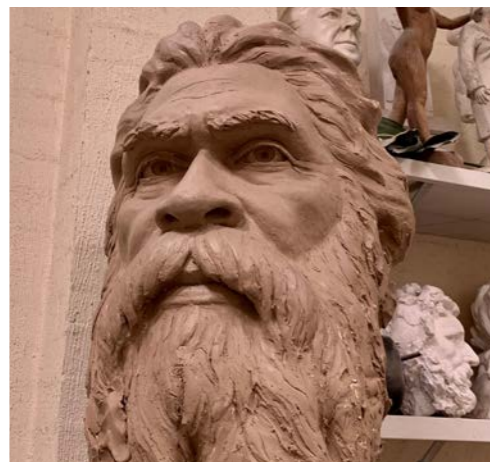
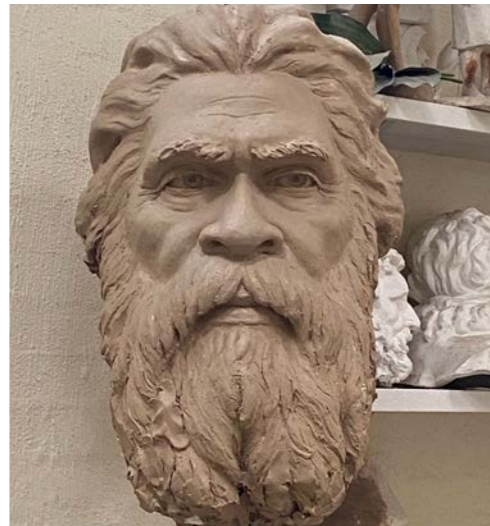
● THE
● WILLIAM BARAK
● SCULPTURE PROJECT



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THE WILLIAM BARAK SCULPTURE

(COMPLETED MODELLING IN OIL BASED CLAY)



THE WILLIAM BARAK SCULPTURE PROJECT

Plan, Project, Positioning and History

The inspiration for creating a sculpture honouring William Barak is a story in itself, one could say it started when as a 11 year old child, Peter Schipperheyn was struck more by the proud image of an Aboriginal man standing on the cover of "THE PAST and US" than he was by the astronaut. Peter has always kept this book from his Croydon West Primary school days, and according to him this image is the inspiration to create a monumental sculpture honouring the original Australians.

As a child going to school in the 60's, Peter has vivid memories of a school trip to the William Rickets Sanctuary in the Dandenong's, and accords this experience, as being fundamental in shaping as an adult his vision to create an artwork that is significant to our nation. Peter had school mates who were Aboriginal kids, and he experienced first hand prejudice towards them, and did not understand why this was the case. Peter Schipperheyn has gone on to become renowned for creating works in marble and bronze of the human figure.

Peter received an Italian Government Scholarship in 1979 and studied marble carving and bronze casting at the Accademia di Belli Arti Carrara (Academy of fine Arts, Carrara in Tuscany Italy).

Around 1988 a conversation with Sinclair Hill sparked the idea to create a monumental bronze sculpture of an Aboriginal figure. The conversation centred around Sinclair's observation that "Peter you have had this amazing experience in Italy and you have honed your skills there, but you're living here in Australia, you are Australian, how do you relate this experience to your country of birth, how should Australia perceive you?"

Peter has said that this conversation affected him in a profound sense. From this conversation, a vision formed in his mind..... the image on the cover of "THE PAST AND US" of the proud Aboriginal man, standing naked with his spear and boomerang, sprang to mind.

Peter was very clear he wanted to sculpt an iconic monumental figure honouring Aboriginality with an Aboriginal figure, an Australian "Davide". He observed that there were no major representations in the city of Melbourne, nor Australia of the peoples who were here before the coming of the Europeans.

From 1988 until 1996 Peter was engaged on significant commissioned sculptures. The monumental bronze of an Aboriginal figure remained but a dream. In 1992 he was awarded the "Wynne Prize" for two colossal heads. Mr Ken Myer purchased the two sculptures and donated them to the Art Gallery of NSW.



In 1997 after 14 years of inner city living Peter and his wife Cinzia Ruffilli decided to sell their Collingwood studio warehouse and move to Donvale, on the outskirts of Melbourne.

For a number of years prior to moving to Donvale, Cinzia Ruffilli had been conducting Art tours for secondary school students. The tour consisted of a visit to Peters & Cinzia's Home and Studio where students were able see first hand how to model clay and carve marble in the studio. Peter would show slides of his artworks, talk about his practise and answer questions from the students, some with Aboriginal background.

After the move to Donvale Cinzia learned that there was a gallery called Mia Mia Gallery that showed Aboriginal Artworks, not far from their Studio & residence in Donvale. Cinzia contacted the Gallery owner and Director Colin McKinnon, a Western Australian Aboriginal, and discussed with Colin the possibility of bringing secondary age kids to Mia Mia Gallery, as she Cinzia wanted to broaden the Art Tour experience that she is offering to her student groups. Colin spent the greater part of his life fostering and developing Aboriginal Artists, he provided support and fiercely sought to protect the rights of Aboriginal Artists.

And this is where the project to create a monumental, massive sculpture of William Barak really begins. In a conversation with Colin, Cinzia spoke of Peter's ambition to create an iconic figure of an Aboriginal figure and showed him the cover of the book that Peter has carried from his childhood. Colin really liked the idea of creating a monumental sculpture, but said "Hey Sis your husband better talk to the local mob". Cinzia questioned him further. "Sis they wore possum skins down here, what would you be thinking, that they'd be walking around with nothing on, in a Melbourne winter?"

Colin McKinnon, Director of Mia Mia Gallery, Melbourne stated,

"THERE ARE A LOT OF WHITE FELLAS ON PEDESTALS AND IT'S ABOUT TIME WE SAW A BLACK FELLA UP ON ONE."

Colin put Cinzia into contact with Bill Nicholson Wurundjeri Elder who at the time was the Chief Spokesperson of the Wurundjeri. Cinzia met with Bill and explained the idea of Peters to create a monumental bronze sculpture of an Aboriginal figure.

Bill was very enthusiastic about the idea (writing many letters endorsing the project) and said to Cinzia that she should speak to Margaret Gardiner a Wurundjeri Elder. Cinzia arranged to meet with Margaret at the Mirimbiak National Aboriginal Corporation in Johnston Street Abbotsford. and at this meeting Margaret said to Cinzia to "Have a look through these two boxes of photos of some of our old people, they date back to the 1800's".

Whilst looking through this box of photo's Cinzia came across the Image of William Barak and his cousin Simon Wonga, she was immediately struck by the image, and excitedly brought a copy back to show Peter. The impact on Peter was profound, here was history and personality all in one image. He could see Barak transformed into a monumental bronze sculpture. Cinzia researched the life of William Barak and together with Peter learnt much about the life of William Barak. As Ngurungaeta, (The Head man and Tribal Leader) Barak was both a skilled diplomat and politician and famously walked from Coranderrk to Melbourne to negotiate and fight for the social justice of his people. He was a bridge between his people and the European settlers.



GROCON'S "PORTRAIT BUILDING" BUILT ON THE OLD CARLTON UNITED BREWERY SITE



FROM THE LEFT WILLIAM BARAK WITH HIS COUSIN SIMON WONGA

In 1998 Peter & Cinzia working with Senior Elder Bill Nicholson put together a proposal which was sent to the all the Elders of the three main family groups of the Wurundjeri, and descendants of William Barak for their approval. In September 1999 the project was put to the Liberal Government of the time under the Premier Jeff Kennett. Mr Kennett responded positively and said he could see the sculpture placed in Federation Square, under construction at the time. Kennett said "Get the approvals from the Wurrundjeri and my Government will fund this work."

The long and difficult process to obtain the endorsements began. Many many meetings, hundreds of telephone conversations and letters were made in the process to have the project endorsed by the Wurundjeri. The process took many months. As well as Wurundjeri support many other letters of support were sought and gained, from both prominent indigenous and non indigenous leaders in the community. Steve Bracks who was leader of the opposition at the time, wrote a letter of support (letter dated 1st of June 1999) stating that he thought the project to create a monument to William Barak was "deserving of bi-partisan support".

Finally the required letters of endorsement were obtained, these came through just prior to the elections of 1999. Mr Kennett said "I've got half the funds available now, the rest we'll find after the election provided I'm still the Premier".

With the change of Government Peter & Cinzia were advised to re submit the project, this they did but the Barak project was not funded.

Years went by with Peter & Cinzia pushing for the sculpture to be commissioned. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at the time Mr Gavin Jennings became well acquainted with the project, and was positive that the sculpture should be commissioned.

By 2009 Cinzia had developed a special relationship with the Wurundjeri, which led to a job offer at the Wurundjeri Land Council as an Art Consultant, her role involved conducting workshops for the creation of artworks.

Over the past two decades Peter & Cinzia become friends of the Wurundjeri, many of the Elders have passed away. All expressed their profound wish to see the bronze sculpture of their ancestor William Barak standing in the City of Melbourne.

In 2010 ARM Architects and Grocon sought permission to use Peter's portrait bust in clay of William Barak to create the "face" of Barak for the "Portrait Building" (on the old Carlton United Brewery Site), employing a technology know as xylography.

As part of the agreement Grocon commissioned the 4.5 meter tall sculpture of William Barak to be cast in bronze, the sculpture to be based on the model that Peter had created. The contract for the commission stipulated that the funding for the project would be available when Grocon had secured planning permits and funding to construct the building. In 2013 Grocon commenced construction on the "Portrait Building".



"CINZIA HAD DEVELOPED A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WURUNDJERI, WHICH LED TO A JOB OFFER AT THE WURUNDJERI TRIBE, LAND & COMPENSATION CULTURAL HERITAGE COUNCIL INCORPORATED AS AN ART & CRAFT CONSULTANT".



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT PETER SCHIPPERHEYN, WURUNDJERI ELDER ALICE KOLASA AND CINZIA RUFFILLI WITH THE "PORTRAIT BUILDING" IN THE BACKGROUND. ARM ARCHITECTS USED A TECHNOLOGY KNOWN AS XYLOGRAPHY CREATED THE APPEARANCE OF WILLIAM BARAK'S FACE BASED ON PORTRAIT BUST PETER HAD MADE IN CLAY. PHOTO TAKEN 4TH MARCH 2015 AT THE UNVEILING OF THE "PORTRAIT BUILDING"

In 2014 with the "Portrait Building" well under way Peter was able to start work on the "Maquette" (working scale model). After finishing the "Maquette" in early 2015 it was sent to a foundry in Pietrasanta Italy, and the process to enlarge the work began.

In July of 2015 Peter travelled to Pietrasanta to start work in the full size clay, working through the winter for seven months on the full size clay of the sculpture, completing the clay in March 2016. At this stage and prior to casting the work in bronze, Peter sent images of the completed clay work, specifically of the head to the Wurundjeri Elders, seeking their approval of the likeness, expression and character.

PETER WORKING IN PIETRASANTA ITALY ON THE FULL SIZE CLAY FOR THE WILLIAM BARAK SCULPTURE (FIRST VERSION)

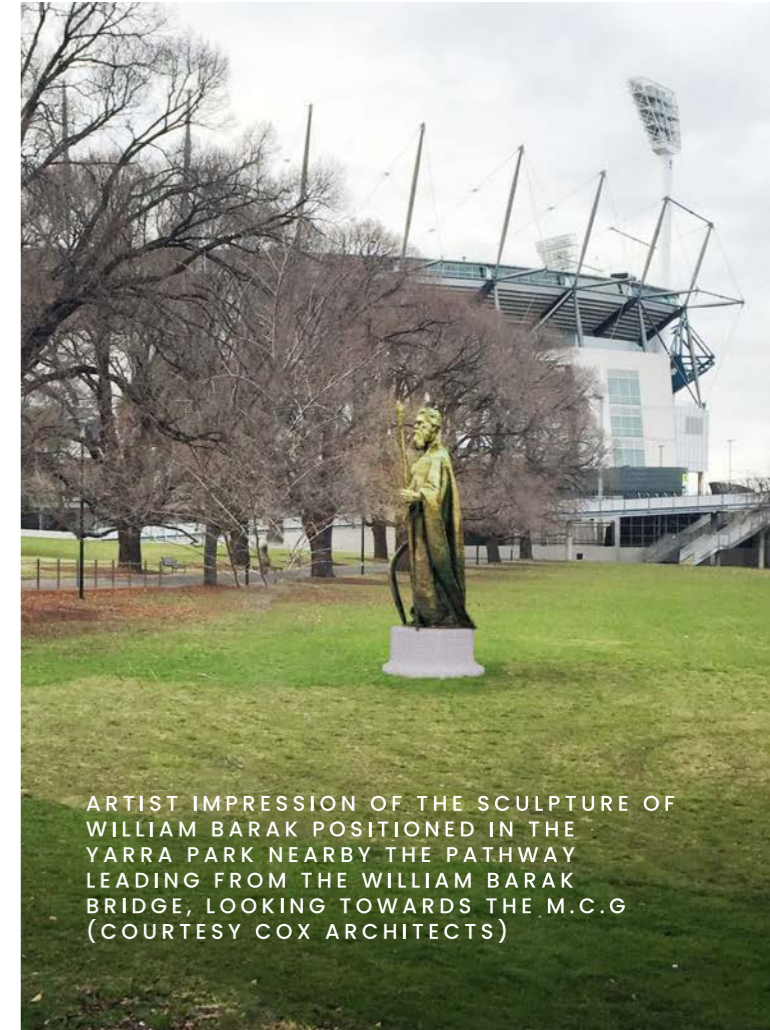


Sculpting the likeness of William Barak to the satisfaction of the Wurundjeri Elders was a long and demanding process taking nine months. At one point Peter had four Elders in his studio, keenly making suggestions, some requesting a sterner appearance in Barak's character, others wanted changes to the nose. Peter listened and made changes to the bust, working with the Wurundjeri and finally arriving to their ideal of what they wanted to see in the sculpted face off their ancestor.

The nine month period that it took to receive the approval and formal endorsement off the likeness of Barak from the Wurundjeri had a major impact on the clay sculpture in Italy. The European summer of 2016 was the hottest on record, and the clay dried out and deteriorated too such a point there was nothing that could be done to save it, Peter made the difficult decision to abandon seven months of work and to remake the sculpture in his studio in Melbourne. The process to make the second version in plasticine (oil based clay) took a further ten months to create, (the sculpture standing in his Melbourne studio ready to be cast in bronze).

On the 21st of September 2017, three Elders, Ronald Jones, Alice Kolosa and Alan Wandin representing the three main family groups, visited the studio to see Peter's progress on the full scale sculpture of William Barak. There was unanimous approval for the sculpture. On the 27th of September the Wurundjeri Council held a special meeting, and letter was composed and signed by representatives of the three main Wurundjeri family groups, (descendants of William Barak) formally endorsing the likeness, the sculpture and the proposed site in Yarra Park

Peter said, "In the end the Wurundjeri Elders pushed me to do a better sculpture". It goes without saying that the physical, emotional and financial impact on Peter & Cinzia over the past twenty years has been significant. Both remain philosophic about the whole experience.

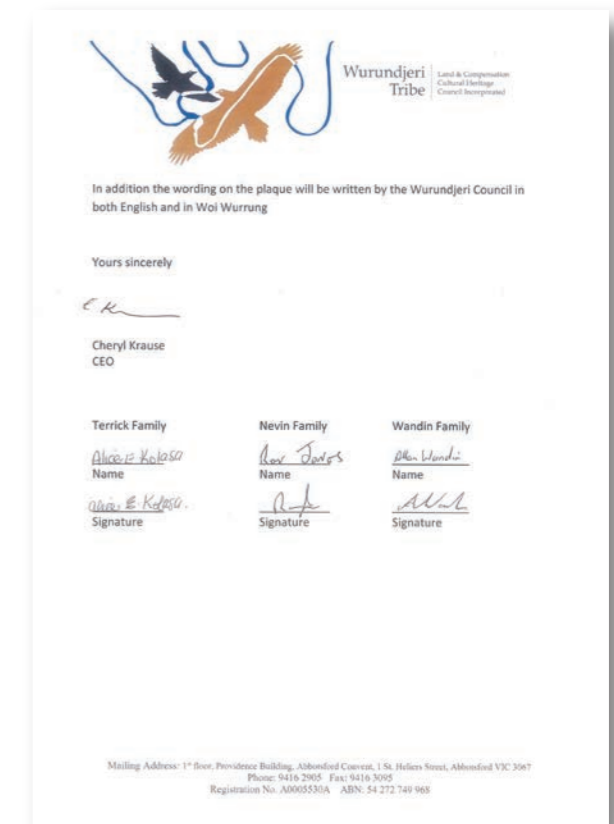


ARTIST IMPRESSION OF THE SCULPTURE OF WILLIAM BARAK POSITIONED IN THE YARRA PARK NEARBY THE PATHWAY LEADING FROM THE WILLIAM BARAK BRIDGE, LOOKING TOWARDS THE M.C.G (COURTESY COX ARCHITECTS)

The response came back, the Elders were not satisfied with the likeness of Barak. Peter decided that the only way forward would be for him to return to Melbourne, and work more closely with the Wurundjeri Elders.

Peter produced six life sized head studies in clay and plasticine, culminating in a full size likeness in plasticine, seen here in a photo taken with the Elders on the 1st March 2017, the day the portrait bust was finally approved.

PRESENTATION OF THE FULL SIZE HEAD STUDY OF WILLIAM BARAK ON THE 1ST MARCH 2017 TO THE WURUNDJERI ELDERS.



Whilst these negotiations were going on with the Wurundjeri, David Waldren (the then National Executive Design Manager Grocon) text Peter on the 28 July 2017 "I now have a go ahead from the City, the State Planners, the State heritage commission and have nearly finalised the MCG approval. So all going ok but slowly."

Positioning the William Barak sculpture near the bridge bearing the same name would be an excellent outcome and natural choice.

In November of 2017 Peter contacted Grocon to let them know that the sculpture was ready to cast the sculpture into bronze.

Months went past, culminating on the 15th of December 2018 when Daniel Grollo came to Peters studio in Donvale to view the sculpture in plasticine, he was very impressed, but said that Grocon could not proceed to the next stage to cast the sculpture in bronze at that stage.

The meeting concluded with Daniel saying that maybe in six months Grocon might be able to fund the completion of the sculpture.

In July 2018 Peter & Cinzia contacted Grocon, but by this stage it was becoming clearer that Grocon could not complete the sculpture. Later again further exchanges with Grocon established that Grocon would definitely not be proceeding with the commission and that all further title to the work was relinquished.

With the contract agreement with Grocon annulled, Peter & Cinzia are nonetheless thankful that they were able to advance the sculpture to the stage that a bronze casting can be made. The CEO of Grocon Daniel Grollo, said he is happy that he helped get the sculpture to this stage. If it were not for Daniel Grollo and the Grollo family this flagship Barak reconciliation opportunity would not exist.

WHY IS WILLIAM BARAK SO SIGNIFICANT?

William Barak's story is a vitally important part of our history and our heritage. He is a connection to a time before white settlement and was responsible for helping form a cultural bridge between two civilisations. When John Batman famously penned "This will be a place for a village" in his journal in 1835, he wrote about the "natives on shore", of what is now known as the Yarra River. The "natives" he referred to were the Woiwarrung tribe, of which William Barak was a young member at the time. As a boy he was present when the elders of his tribe signed Batman's Treaty. His long life began before the arrival of the first European settlers. It spanned the early settlement of the Yarra district, the difficulties of racial integration, the opening up of vast tracts of land by the pastoralists, the discovery of gold, the growth of prosperity and the rapid development of the City of Melbourne. He witnessed the loss of his tribal lands and the appalling treatment of his people. An old man of high intelligence and great dignity when he died in 1903, two years after Federation, William Barak was his tribe's last chief and sole full blooded survivor. His story and that of his people should not be forgotten.

"WILLIAM BARAK'S STORY IS A VITALLY IMPORTANT PART OF OUR HISTORY AND OUR HERITAGE. HE IS A CONNECTION TO A TIME BEFORE WHITE SETTLEMENT AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR HELPING FORM A CULTURAL BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO CIVILISATIONS."



NOW IT'S UP TO THE NATION TO SAY "YES"



WURUNDJERI DESCENDANTS LETTERS OF ENDORSEMENT

- Bill Nicholson, (Chairperson/Elder Spokesperson) for the Wurundjeri People (1994 - 1999)
- Margaret Gardiner, (Elder) Former Spokesperson for the Wurundjeri People (1988-1994), Cultural Attaché for Mirimbiak Aboriginal Corporation)
- Martha Nicholson, (Terrick) (Senior Elder of the Nicholson Family)
- Jessie Terrick, (Senior Elder)
- Jessie E Hunter, (Senior Elder of the Hunter Family),
- Norman Hunter (Elder),
- Ian Hunter, Gary Hunter (Elders)
- Wilma Nevin (Senior Elder)
- Ewan Gardiner (Senior Elder),
- Jemima Gardiner
- Ruby Williams (Elder)
- Bret Ross (Kurnai), Brett.A.Ross (Jur) (Kurnai)
- Donna M Punch
- Trevor Coombes, Gloria Coombes, Barry Coombes
- Julie Stahl
- Tammy Hunter (Capocchi), Jodie-Lee Hunter, Sharon Ann Hunter, Sean Hunter Sue-Anne Hunter, Kellie (Hunter)
- Loughron Vicki P Brown (Nicholson)
- Wandin Family, Juby Wandin, Joy Murphy and Alan Gloria Coombes (Nicholson) Patricia Ockwell (Nicholson)

LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM LEADERS IN THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

- Evelyn Scott Chairperson (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation)
- Dr. Lowitja O'Donoghue AC, CBE
- Senator Aden Ridgeway, Australian Democrats Senator for New South Wales
- The People's Movement Committee
- Colin McKinnon, "Mia Mia Gallery"
- Rodney Carter, Manager Bunjilaka Aboriginal Centre, Melbourne Museum



AN ENDORSEMENT OF HIS WORK BY PHILLIP ADAMS A.O.

On a first meeting with Peter Schipperheyn, I was awed by what he could do with a block of white marble. Now I wholeheartedly endorse his ambition to create a monument to a black hero. There are very few statues of blacks in this country. Our cemeteries are crowded with marble angels, all bright as snow, and our war memorials contain entire regiments of white soldiers in bronze. Public parks pop politicians up on pedestals, many of them entirely undeserving of the honour, whilst I've noted a plethora of Queen Victorias around the place. But apart from Ricketts' carvings and sculptures of indigenous people in his Mount Dandenong eyrie, too easily dismissed as hopelessly romanticised and sentimental, the only monuments to Aboriginality are such unsculptured rocks as Uluru. Mysterious, looming monuments to what is widely regarded as the most ancient culture on earth. In recent years, historians have suggested that it's time to end the White Australia Policy that limits public sculptures to white explorers, white politicians, white royals and white ANZACS. Henry Reynolds thought it appropriate to honour fallen Aborigines on our war memorials - victims of the conflict between black and white during earlier stages of our national history. This was immediately met with scorn and hostility by social and political conservatives. What Peter Schipperheyn and Cinzia Ruffilli are proposing is rather different. A monumental sculpture in honour of William Barak, a truly heroic and tragic figure whose story, and significance, needs to be far wider known. I'd like to endorse this project wholeheartedly. I've previously been involved in two commissions for Peter Schipperheyn. The first was to have Peter honour Joan Sutherland with a significant piece of sculpture for Sydney Town Hall. Now Peter evocation of Dame Joan's gifts can be seen in close proximity to a much older effort, honouring Dame Nellie Melba. I then asked Peter to do a bust of Patrick White, our first Nobel Laureate in Literature. My intention was to have Peter do portrait busts of all the Australians of the Year, a truly monumental undertaking. But shortly after receiving the bronze of Patrick, I retired as Chair of the National Australia Day Council and the momentum was lost. However, I've watched Peter's career with growing respect. Using marble acquired from the same quarries in Italy that provided Michelangelo with the flawed block that would become David, the most famous statue in Florence, Peter has continued that Renaissance tradition in Australia with work after work of majesty and quality. With Cinzia's management skills, Peter would bring to William Barak, and this country, a majestic work of true historical significance. And at long long last, Australia would have a 13 black man amongst the serried ranks of whites, immortalised in bronze. Such a work is long, long overdue. Peter is more than capable of meeting the challenge. Let us hope that there are patrons who can meet the challenge as well.

- PHILLIP ADAMS

SELECTED WORKS

1. "Paura del Intimita" (Fear of Intimacy) Moree Plains Regional Gallery Carrara Marble 1986-87
2. "Baptismal Font" St Stephens Cathedral Brisbane, Carved in Carrara Statuario Marble 1989
3. "Maschera Femmina" Winner Wynne Prize Art Gallery of New South Wales 1992 (Female Mask - one of two enormous heads carved Carrara marble).
4. "Zarathustra" Monumental Bronze Commissioned by Dame Elisabeth Murdoch for the McClelland Sculpture Park Langwarrin. 2004 - 2006
5. "Asleep" life size sculpture carved in Carrara Marble, Mt Macedon Cemetery 1987

EDMUND CAPON AM OBE DIRECTOR OF THE ART GALLERY OF N.S.W

"In the annals and history of Australian art, sculpture has forever taken second place to the art of painting. It is a fact that the landscape has been the source of eternal inspiration for the Australian artist, and painting is the medium for the expression of the landscape theme in art. The figurative traditions, the ultimate source of inspiration for Western sculpture, have therefore received essentially scant attention in Australia.

Peter Schipperheyn is one of the rare exceptions to that rule. His art and vision is wholly inspired by the great figurative traditions in Western art: his delicate drawings reflect an extraordinary sensitivity for the human figure, whilst his majestic marble sculptures are expressions of the grandeur and vision that aspire to the greatest European traditions. He is currently unique in Australia; no other living Australian artist has so totally dedicated himself to seeking a truly contemporary expression of Western arts most inspired tradition.

Peter Schipperheyn's work expresses hope, sensitivity, classicism, contemporaneity: it shows above all that the fundamental concerns and emotions of mankind, like great art, transcend time."

MANY THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

- Phillip Adams
- Paul Keating
- Meg Goulding Former CEO Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Heritage Council Incorporated
- Peter Garrett, Australian Conservation Foundation
- Daniel Grollo CEO Grocon
- Steve Bracks
- Jeff Kennett
- Edmund Capon AM OBE Director of the Art Gallery of N.S.W
- Sinclair Hill AM OBE
- David Waldren
- Think Graphics

SELECTED WORKS



Schmir



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"THE ALCHEMIST, AND THE TALE OF THE WOODEN COTTON REEL" CARRARA MARBLE 2013

