

# Media Release



## 'Sheilas', 'fake truths' and a 700th celebration - you'll be amazed at the State Library -

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Artist Peter Kingston's quirky portraits of prominent Australian 'Sheilas' — including Ita Buttrose, Julia Gillard and Wendy Whiteley — will go on public display for the first time, alongside other newly acquired items, when the State Library's Amaze Gallery reopens tomorrow, Saturday 20 March.

Kingston's new series of personal portraits of 27 unique and powerful women in his life (Ita is his cousin and Whiteley, his neighbour) form his latest artist's book *Sheilas* — a companion to *Blokes* and *Gents* — recently donated to the State Library, which holds an extensive collection of his etchings, prints and artist's books.

According to Elise Edmonds, State Library Senior Curator: "Kingston is best known for artwork documenting Sydney and the Harbour, so we're thrilled to be showing off his lesser-known portraiture work which was created using his signature playful style."

"*Sheilas* is a tribute to the women who Kingston is a friend, family, or a fan of (sometimes all three), and each portrait is accompanied by handwritten insights, anecdotes and quotations about each subject," said Ms Edmonds.

Kingston wrote: *Robyn is a Diva ... When I asked her to sit for a lino portrait for SHEILAS she immediately became lady Macbeth and delivered her lines in fluent Italian.*

Kingston revealed that not all of his subjects felt flattered by their depiction. Wendy Whiteley didn't like her portrait at all, so he painted another one, which shows her watering her award-winning Secret Garden.

Other highlights going on display in Amaze include *Fake truths: An historical novel* — a collection of paintings and stories offering a contemporary response to items in the Library's collection by its fifth artist-in-residence Hadyn Wilson.

"Where the history is incomplete, I visually compose a story in the tradition of the historical novelist in order to complete the work," said Wilson.

In addition, a selection of rare books by Italian poet Dante Alighieri, including his masterpiece *The Divine Comedy* (1320), will go on display from 27 March as part of worldwide commemoration of the 700th anniversary of Dante's death in 1321.

A selection of portraits from *Sheilas*, *Fake Truths* and rare Dante books will be on display in the State Library's Amaze Gallery until 13 June 2021.



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