



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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Felton Bequest acquires sculptures by Thomas J Price and duo Elmgreen & Dragset for National Gallery of Victoria



8 December 2023: A larger-than-life bronze of a young woman by British artist **Thomas J Price** and a mirror-polished statue of a young man by art duo **Elmgreen & Dragset** will enter the NGV Collection, instrumentally strengthening the state collection's holdings of important international contemporary sculpture. Generously acquired for the NGV by the Felton Bequest, the two works made their Australian premiere as part of the NGV Triennial 2023, a gallery-wide exhibition of art, design and architecture, which opened on 3 December 2023.

Thomas J Price is one of the most influential British contemporary artists of his generation. Working primarily in figurative sculpture, Price's work addresses issues of race, identity, representation, and power. Referencing classical sculptural traditions, Price questions which individuals are celebrated in monuments, while also questioning who gets to decide. He asks us to look again at those who are memorialised and elevated as people to look up to. His sculptures of 'someone ordinary' highlight the inadequate and prejudiced representations of people of colour in public life.

The large-scale bronze sculpture *Reaching Out*, 2020, presents a casually dressed young woman looking at her phone. The work was created in response to the lack of people of colour represented in public statuary in the UK. Intentionally ambiguous, Price's sculptures do not depict a particular individual, but are instead drawn from an amalgamation of found sources, including observed individuals and stereotypes represented in the media.

Created especially for the NGV Triennial by Elmgreen & Dragset, *The Examiner*, 2023, features a reflective, polished stainless-steel man who leans on a Juliet-style balcony. The lustrous figure holds in his hand a camera, an invention of the early nineteenth century that has since fundamentally changed the way we see the world around us. With its reflective surface, the sculpture creates new images as one walks around it, the whole object reflecting and changing the viewer's perception. The artists see the work as a metaphor for people's increasing passivity, as we watch more and more and participate less and less.

Since they began collaborating in 1995, Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset have challenged and reshaped the way in which art is presented and experienced. The Berlin-based duo focuses on exploring themes related to identity, sexuality and the human body, as well as the physical and digital spaces that people create and occupy. They have held numerous solo exhibitions at art institutions worldwide and made international headlines with their installation *Prada Marfa*, 2005, an architectural work in the likeness of a fashion boutique located along U.S. Route 90 in Jeff Davis County, Texas, United States.

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: 'With more than 75 of the works on display entering the NGV Collection, the NGV Triennial is an important vehicle for building our collection of contemporary works, creating a legacy for Victoria that can be accessed and enjoyed for many generations to come. We are grateful to the Felton Bequest for generously acquiring these two contemporary works for the NGV. The Felton Bequest has significantly assisted the growth and development of the NGV Collection, making it one of the finest collections of art in our region.'

Rupert Myer AO, Chair, Felton Bequests' Committee, said: 'The NGV has established itself as a major destination for contemporary art and design – and we are thrilled to be further strengthening the NGV's holdings through the acquisition of these two outstanding contemporary sculptures. The NGV Collection is one of Victoria's major cultural assets, reflecting the vision and legacy of Alfred Felton.'

ABOUT THE NGV TRIENNIAL 2023

NGV Triennial 2023 is a powerful and moving snapshot of the world today as captured through the work of over 120 artists, designers and collectives at the forefront of global contemporary practice. Uniquely bringing contemporary art, design and architecture into dialogue with one another and traversing all four levels of NGV International, the NGV Triennial features nearly 100 creative projects by artists including **Yoko Ono** (Japan), **Sheila Hicks** (USA), **Tracey Emin** (UK), **Betty Muffler** (Australia), **David Shrigley** (UK), **Maison Schiaparelli** (France), **Maurizio Cattelan** (Italy), **Iris van Herpen** (Netherlands), **Jean Jullien** (France), **Fernando Laposse** (Mexico), **Azuma Makoto** (Japan), **Flora Yukhnovich** (UK), **Yee I-Lann** (Malaysia), **Farrokh Mahdavi** (Iran), **Hugh Hayden** (USA) and many more.

With more than 25 world-premiere projects commissioned by the NGV especially for this presentation, the NGV Triennial reveals the extraordinary ways in which leading and emerging artists and designers have responded to the most relevant and critical global issues of our time.

The NGV Triennial is on display from 3 December 2023 – 7 April 2024 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Entry is FREE. Further information is available via the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au)

ABOUT THE FELTON BEQUEST

The Felton Bequest, established in 1904 in accordance with the will of Alfred Felton, was Australia's first great philanthropic gift. Managed by Equity Trustees, it remains the most valuable bequest ever made to the Arts in Australia. Its income is divided into two Bequests, one funding acquisitions of works of art for gifting to the NGV, and the other making distributions to charitable organisations in Victoria, particularly those that benefit women and children.

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IMAGES: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/v1uq8w9gjd1erhsrt7y3l/h?rlkey=rafsnrmyzgmwgf1stebkty05&dl=0>

Image caption: **Thomas J Price**, *Reaching Out* 2020 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 2023

© Thomas J Price and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Ken Adlard

Installation view of Elmgreen & Dragset's work in NGV Triennial on display from 3 December 2023–7 April 2024 at NGV International, Melbourne. Photo: Sean Fennessy

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