

Ben Quilty

Archibald Winner, Acclaimed War Artist

Critically acclaimed Archibald Prize-winning artist Ben Quilty is the leader in his field, one of Australia's most well-loved artists whose iconic images will sit proudly amongst Australian art history commanding their own hero status.

In October 2011 Ben went to Afghanistan as official war artist, commissioned by the Australian War Memorial and attached to the Australian Defence Force. His task was to record and interpret the experiences of Australians deployed as part of Operation Slipper in Kabul, Kandahar, and Tarin Kot in Afghanistan and at Al Minhad Airbase in the United Arab Emirates. Getting to know the soldiers revealed a level of intelligence and a depth of emotional distress that shocked him to his core. He says he now feels a huge respect and responsibility to help them tell their own powerful stories.



Ben Quilty's 'After Afghanistan' exhibition was a resounding success which captured the country's imagination and toured nationally for two years. His exhibition told the story of the aftermath of war from the artist's perspective and from the close personal relationships he formed with his subjects. He subsequently launched his own personal media campaign to bring to light the severe effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder he had recognised in those he had met or painted.

Ben was featured on ABC TV's Australian Story not just once, but twice, a rare sequel, due to unprecedented demand for his 'War Paint' narrative which detailed his 2011 War Artist travels via the Australian War Memorial's distinguished programme of commissioned war artists and his awe inspiring portraits and works that arose from that honour and experience. His hero images of those fighting in Afghanistan conveyed a strong emotional and psychological power capturing the impact the war has on those at the frontline.

Ben's artworks are held in private, corporate and institutional collections in Australia and around the world. His numerous art prizes include the 2011 Archibald Prize for his portrait of Margaret Olley, The Doug Moran National Art Prize, The Redlands Westpac Art Prize, The National Self Portrait Prize and the Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship.

He also guest lectures extensively across the country and internationally. He is a practising artist and has held more than 20 solo exhibitions and been involved in more than 70 group exhibitions.

With sell out shows and an extremely high profile in the media, there is wide public interest not only in Ben Quilty's art and personality but also his thoughts and his opinions. When Ben comments he frequently creates a media storm; The Sydney Morning Herald commented that they had never met with such a huge response to an article with the public vigorously and emphatically supporting his opinion. He even has politicians heeding his words.

In 2013 Ben was appointed Trustee of The Art Gallery of NSW, one of Australia's oldest and most distinguished cultural institutions, and will work with some of the country's top leaders in the corporate world to ensure the development and future of the Art Gallery and its collection and future audiences.

Ben talks about:

Ben speaks with knowledge, unique insight and passion on a diverse and exciting range of topics, from his personal experience of conflict to the emotional and psychological consequences of war service, from concepts of masculinity, national identity and mortality to Olympic swimmers behaving badly and the inequity of sports funding.

Highly intelligent, quick-witted and engaging, Ben is a fascinating man and a fascinating speaker with great presence and charm. He has such wide appeal across all markets and demographics that he is in very high demand.

Ben Quilty is animated, expressive and imaginative ... just as you would expect one of Australia's greatest artists to be. Ben will deliver one of the most entertaining and thought-provoking evenings your guests will ever have the privilege to enjoy.

Client testimonials

“ At NAB Private Wealth we focus on providing an exceptional experience for our clients, and seek to align ourselves with those who meet this vision. This year we have been fortunate to feature Ben Quilty as guest speaker at two events. Our guests were captivated by Ben's down to earth personality and sense of humour. He is an erudite raconteur and speaks with knowledge and passion on a great many subjects - not least the arts and humanity.

- NAB

“ Ben Quilty is one of the most engaging and diverse speakers of his generation. He entertains and commands attention from a wide range of audiences. Students, arts audiences of all ages and leaders in the corporate and political world all stop and listen to what he has to say. He is a most powerful presenter. Ben has a sensibility to engage on many levels and is respected for his opinions across a range of issues. Most importantly his presentation is extremely personal, offering great empathy and sincerity mixed together with an inherent wit. Ben has spoken numerous times at the Art Gallery of NSW including with Margaret Throsby and Margaret

Olley and also journalist Scott Bevan in conversation as part of Art After Hours following his war artist tour. Ben spoke of what was an extremely difficult experience with grace and compassion to a crowd of enthralled people and he gave an amazing insight into his influences and life as an artist

- *The Art Gallery of New South Wales*

“ It was such a pleasure to have Ben on our panel for MCA on the Rocks, he is such a warm and engaging speaker and our audience connected with him immediately. He managed to tread that rare and perfect balance between intellect and humour. The event he participated on was the first sell out of the season and I have no doubt that this was due to Ben's wide appeal and popularity. We hope very much that he will join us again for speaking engagements in the future.

- *Museum of Contemporary Art*

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[VIDEO OF SPEAKER](#) 