

Robert William Senior

Doctor of Civil Law

Durham Cathedral, 30 March 2022

Chancellor, it is my honour to present to you **Robert William Senior** for the degree of Doctor of Civil Law *honoris causa*.

To situate the creative diversity and prolific success of our honorary graduand, let me begin with a simple orientation question:

What do a drumming gorilla, 250,000 coloured balls bouncing down a street in San Francisco, and a flash-mob of 400 strangers at Liverpool Street Station have in common?

The answer is that these indelible images came to life, reaching a cinematic height of advertising excellence, thanks to the audacious industry & leadership of Robert Senior. These were award-winning, show-stopping visuals which rose the high watermark for creative currency in this industry.

As Founder of Fallon and later Worldwide CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, Robert's unique gifts helped to define so many global brands over a prolific 30+ year career as one of the world's top 'Ad Men'.

These attributes include: firstly, an insistence on 'excellence'. A stance captured by the motto of Saatchi: 'Nothing is Impossible'; and the strapline of the Castore brand Robert has nurtured: 'Better Never Stops'; and secondly, a completely lack of ambiguity. You are never unsure of what Robert has thought about a conversation and/or whether you will have the chance at another one: the mark of a true impact player.

So: how and where did these skills develop?

Born in Middlesbrough, Robert and his family's movements followed his father's career around Europe. He later attended Sevenoaks before applying to study History & Politics at Castle, starting Durham in 1984.

The competitive edge that has defined his career was forged in those wider student involvements which set the Durham experience apart.

President of the Skiing Society and Vice President of the Durham University Athletic Union, Robert enjoyed the collegiate and competitive environment. This love of sport has stayed with Robert until this day: still a keen golfer, a board member of the ATP, and a fully qualified ski instructor.

All of these passions have, as noted at the outset, complemented a near-unparalleled executive role in advertising and brand leadership which saw Robert and his teams reaping rewards from Campaign, the British TV Advertising Awards, and at coveted Grand Prix at the Cannes International Advertising Festival

Following this sensational executive career, Robert is now a Founding Partner of Redrice Ventures: a venture capital firm supporting innovative consumer brands around the world.

Robert has also been the founding Chair of the University's *Durham Inspired* campaign leading an international effort which has raised over £52M to support student life, innovative research, and the development of an inspiring campus.

He has met with and inspired thousands of alumni, students & benefactors, applying that aching clarity of vision to help one of the world's most distinctive and distinguished universities – in his words – achieve 'excellence in perpetuity'. An ambition we wish for all of our graduands here today.

The *Durham Inspired* campaign has changed many things here in Durham and both assisted and amplified our impact across locally and around the globe. The *Durham Inspired* North East Scholarships cast a dragnet for hidden academic talent here in our region; the AMI Women in Tech programme breaks the ceiling for young women entering the industry pipeline; and the Sir Harry Evans Memorial Fund which Robert launched in December 2021 in New York, called time on abysmal standards & practice in modern journalism. These are life and world changing initiatives put on the map with thanks to Robert's commitment and energy.

For everything he has given to his profession, and to the University, I know he would want me to note that none of this would have been possible without the enduring love

and careful support of his family: his amazing wife Inge, his children – Lotte, Bas, and Sana – and his parents.

A story that started in the North East and went around the world has now landed back in its spiritual home here in Durham: the never uninteresting, and never half-done, gallery of accomplishments of our honorary graduand.

And so, Chancellor, I present to you **Robert William Senior** for the degree of Doctor of Civil Law *honoris causa*.