

Robert MacPherson
Nominal Gestures

3 December 2020 - 13 March 2021

Exhibition
Labels

Robert MacPherson: Nominal Gestures

3 December 2020–13 March 2021

Robert MacPherson (b.1937) is one of Australia's most respected contemporary artists. This exhibition brings together several works exploring his fascination with wordplay and modes of classification.

MacPherson is deeply interested in the ways language creates systems of knowledge, and how objects might be designated as art. In the first room we see the artist's personal collection of elegant water divining tools, used in the practice of dowsing or 'water witching' to locate groundwater. Each tool is dedicated to a figure from MacPherson's personal history.

In the second room, a selection of recent paintings from MacPherson's ongoing 'Mayfair' series use a myriad of painted surfaces and supports to play with the possibilities of reading and seeing.

Painting has been one of the central concerns of MacPherson's 40-plus year career as an exhibiting artist, and in his hands has been a continually ingenious vehicle for thinking about art as well as the pleasures of invention and mark-making. The framed text piece linking all the works 'I ALWAYS BUY MY LUNCH AT THE MAYFAIR BAR' 1983 is an account of sandwich-making that MacPherson has also called 'a recipe' for abstract painting. Once again, dedications to individuals are noted in each work's title.

In the final room, "PELICAN DREAMING: 18 FROG POEMS, FOR GREG C." 1984-2020 is a major installation conceived in 1984 and realised here for the first time.

For thousands of years the waters that cause occasional flooding of Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre, in the lands of the Arabana people of far north South Australia, have flowed from rivers running through Channel Country in south-west and central Queensland. The filling of the lake creates a major breeding ground for birds including Australian pelicans, gulls, sandpipers and terns—alluded to here by simply-folded wire coat hangers.

MacPherson's 'Frog Poems' series involves the conjunction of objects with forms of language and classification, in this case papier-mâché dates indicate records of Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre's flooding within the recent settler past.

MacPherson's nominal yet capacious gestures invite us to delight in the transformative and playful potential of language and artistic hierarchies.

“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT, ‘WONDER WHITE’ FOR DI. REES” 1983–2016

Diptych: Derivan Matisse Titanium White structure on two pre-primed canvases; Derivan Matisse Titanium White Unbleached structure on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT, WUNDA WHITE (SIDE SWIPE) FOR B.F.” 1983–2018

Derivan Matisse Titanium White structure, Liquitex flexible modelling paste, gesso and matte medium on artist's board affixed to pre-primed canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT, ‘BLACK RYE’ FOR D.N.R.M.” 1983–2017

Derivan Matisse structure, Aquadhere exterior PVA wood glue Liquitex clear gesso and matte medium on hessian over two pre-primed artist's canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT, (BETTER BOY) FOR B.F.” 1983–2017

Triptych: Atelier Interactive Titanium White, Liquitex flexible modelling paste, Aquadhere exterior PVA wood glue, Liquitex matte medium and jam jar lids on two artist's boards

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT (MAINLAND) FOR GEORGE.N.” 1983–2016

Derivan Matisse Yellow Light Hansa structure and Titanium White on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

“MAYFAIR: STRZEMINSKI'S PIE AND 'MUSHY PEAS' SANDWICH FOR 'AVACHAT' M.” 1983–1990

Derivan Matisse Antique White, Permanent Green, Aqua Green Light structure, Liquitex matte and gloss varnish on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

**“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT, IKEY’S
DAUGHTER, 2ND STRAWBERRY
SHORTCAKE” 1983–2018**

Derivan Matisse Flesh Tone structure, matte medium and Liquitex gesso
on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

**“MAYFAIR: LANDER’S POCKET, ‘PUPPY
LOVE’ CHOOSING WATERMELONS WITH
IKEY’S DAUGHTER XMAS 1954” 1983-
2018**

Derivan Matisse Ash Pink Flow, Magenta Light structure and matte varnish
on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

**“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT, WINTER, FIRST
DAWN (SKY WINDOW) BULWER ISLAND
1967 IN MEMORY OF ‘CRACKER’ M.”
2020**

Derivan Matisse Ash Pink, Australian Sky Blue structure, gesso, Liquitex
modelling paste, gloss and matte varnish and gloss medium on two pre-
primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

**“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT
‘STRZEMINSKI’S’ AVOCADO RIPPLE
SANDWICH FOR THE MEMORY OF MICK
GUBALA” 1983–2020**

Derivan Matisse Primary Yellow, Cadmium Yellow, Permanent Green Light, Aqua Green Light, Ash Pink, Titanium White, Monte Marte modelling paste, Liquitex gloss and matte varnish on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

**“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT, (LEMON CURD)
FOR ‘WEE EDDIE’” 1983–2017**

Derivan Matisse Yellow Light Hansa structure, Atelier Interactive Titanium White, Liquitex matte medium and tea towel on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

**“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT,
SUMMERHAYES ‘MISTY MORN’ G. STEIN
DOZEN FOR EDNA MAY B.” 1983–2019**

Derivan Matisse Titanium White, Cadmium Yellow structure, Liquitex matte medium, matte and gloss varnish, and egg carton on two artist's boards

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

**“MAYFAIR: DOUBLE FAT, “SKY
SANDWICH” FOR GRACE B.” 1983-2020**

Derivan Matisse Ash Pink, Cerulean blue, Australian blue, Antique White, Titanium white, Liquitex flexible modelling paste, gloss and matte varnish on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

**“MAYFAIR: (DOUBLE FAT) LIME DONUT,
LIME SPIDER FOR ELEANOR.S.” 1983–
2019**

Derivan Matisse Titanium White, green plastic ring, Titanium White Unbleached structure, Titanium White flow, gesso, polymer matte varnish on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

“MAYFAIR: ‘TURPS RUN’ A MEMORY, BULWER ISLAND 1964” 1983–2019

Derivan Matisse Naphthol Scarlet (Red Light) structure, Aquadhere flexible modelling paste, gesso and matte and gloss varnish on pre-primed canvas affixed to artist's board

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

“MAYFAIR: (DOUBLE FAT) XMAS DAY, LOW TIDE AT THE MOUTH OF DOWNFALL CREEK, WHITING FISHING WITH MORRIE JAY, DUSK, BULL SHARKS TRAPPED IN THE CHANNELS BETWEEN US AND THE SHORE, SHITS WERE TRUMPS” 1983–2018

Derivan Matisse Titanium White structure, Titanium White flow, flexible modelling paste and polymer matte varnish on two pre-primed canvases

Courtesy of the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

“PELICAN DREAMING: 18 FROG POEMS, FOR GREG C.” 1984-2020

Wire coat hangers and papier-mâché numbers

Courtesy of the artist, and Yuill | Crowley, Sydney

11 FROG POEMS, WATER WITCH, FOR
THE MEMORY OF:

TONY GOLDEN

JOE BIRCH

GUNTHER CHRISTMANN

“OLD CHARLIE” POLLOCK

ALEC WILSON

“OLD JIM” TALTY

ERNIE WILLIAMS

BRIAN CHANTRILL

“WIZARD SMITH”

GEORGE NOBLE

COX MIRIAM VALE 2020

Wire and copper

Courtesy of the artist, and Yuill | Crowley, Sydney