



*Robert MacPherson*  
*Nominal Gestures*

3 December 2020 – 13 March 2021

Exhibition  
Labels

# Robert MacPherson: Nominal Gestures

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

MacPherson is deeply interested in the ways language creates systems of knowledge, and how objects might be used to 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 specific local 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.

MacPherson's '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 surround Thanda-Lake Eyre, in the lands of the Arabana people of far north South Australia, have been used to irrigate crops through Channel Country in south-west Australia. 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 object and text.

## **“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 “

# “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







# “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 2y (POL)-0esTA6 0 Td[