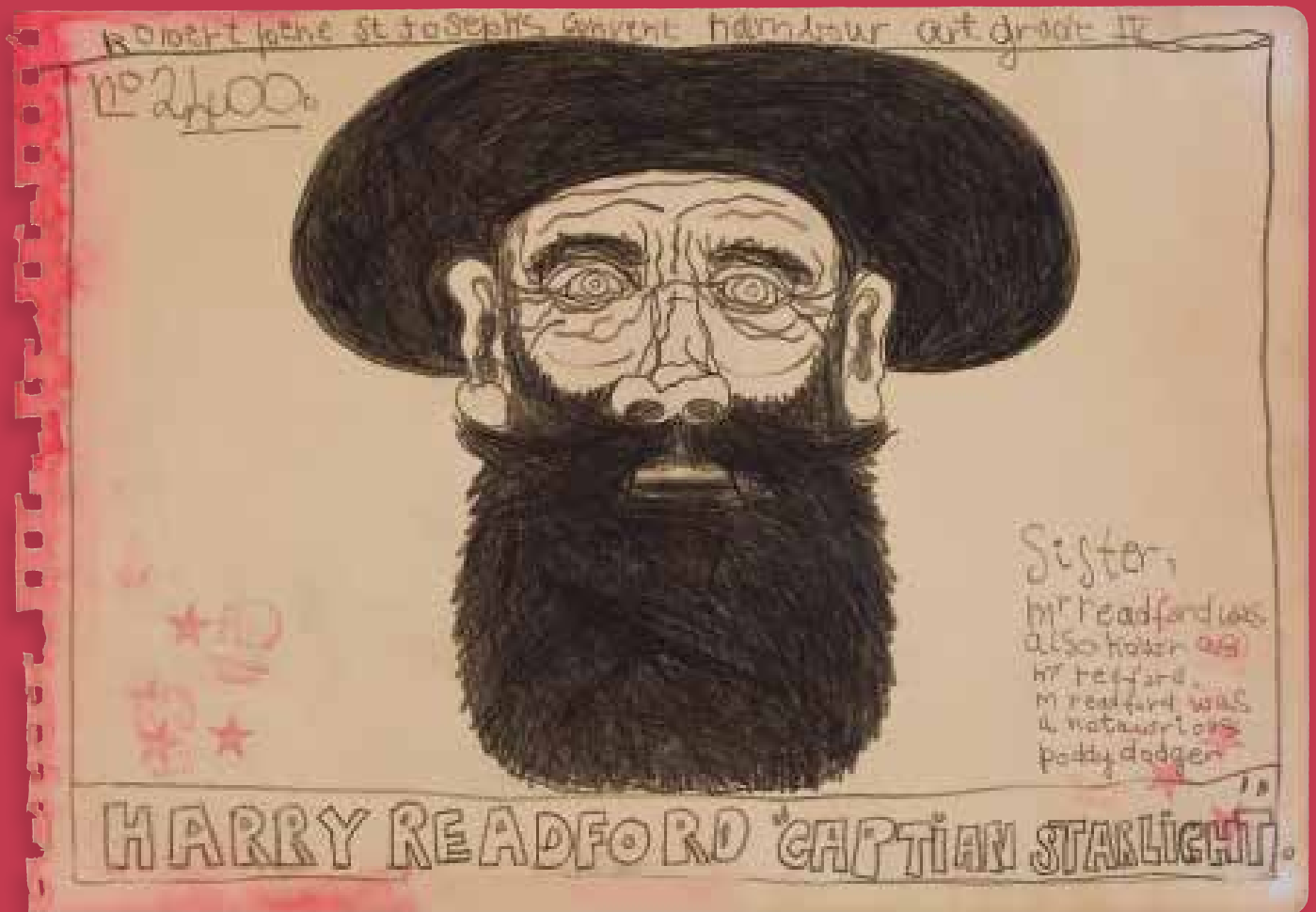


ROBERT MACPHERSON

BOSS DROVERS



ROBERT MACPHERSON

BOSS DROVERS

This touring installation of 200 drawings is only a fragment of the 2400 individual sheets Robert MacPherson made over two decades that together form the single huge work 'BOSS DROVERS' 1996–2014. The Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art is delighted to make this work from its Collection available for audiences throughout the state, along with a digital interactive that allows viewers to investigate 'BOSS DROVERS' in its entirety.

MacPherson was born in 1937 and is celebrated today as a senior Australian contemporary artist, renowned for apparently simple works that gently unfold to reveal something more complex. His works frequently explore overlooked aspects of his subject matter, allowing viewers to gain a more nuanced understanding of the circumstances surrounding a particular situation.

'BOSS DROVERS' demonstrates several aspects of MacPherson's practice, especially the way he plays with 'traditional' aspects of art, such as landscape, portraiture and the authority of an artist's signature. MacPherson made these drawings in the guise of his alter ego, Robert Pene, a Year 4 student at St Joseph's Convent in Nambour, Queensland. Each sheet includes the portrait and name of a boss drover responsible for moving livestock and teams of stockmen along the great pastoral stock routes of Australia.

The work is simultaneously magnificent in scale and remarkable for its intimacy, and at first seems rooted in a very specific way of representing these rugged bush personalities. However, 'BOSS DROVERS' ultimately opens up like the pages of a book, revealing richly interwoven poetic markers of places and people whose identities and life in the country are in danger of fading from view.

Allied with his concern about the disappearance of facets of bush life is MacPherson's enduring interest in how language morphs and adopts local traits, or peters out like so many terms used in 'bush lingo' since colonisation. The droving occupation itself is now almost a relic, as generations of horseriding ringers are replaced by trucks on our highways, and families move off the land.

The title 'BOSS DROVERS' works not only as a kind of nickname, in keeping with the way MacPherson riffs on the nature of slang, but also suggests a 'subset', and the fact that this selection is part of a much larger project. It is a reference by MacPherson to the unreliability of descriptive systems to capture information accurately.

The full title of this work is *1000 FROG POEMS: 1000 BOSS DROVERS ("YELLOW LEAF FALLING") FOR H.S.* 1996–2014, and it is attributed to Robert Pene. By inventing an alter ego who grew

up in a country town and was encouraged to draw by an unnamed teacher, MacPherson wryly plays with the viewer's point of view and interpretation of the drawings, as well as with the apparent authority of a signed work of art.

In drought-affected country where much-needed soaking rains bring the chitter of frogs and sudden autumnal colours, the full title also reveals the artist's astute research, lived experience and empathy for the bush, providing viewers with another way to connect with the work. Viewers might also identify with Pene's rudimentary education in drawing, which itself is an art form seen to be under threat.

Hints such as these allow us to appreciate that, even with modest means — a pencil, some paper and a few red herrings — there is no limit to how we can describe the poetry to be found in the everyday and in every person.

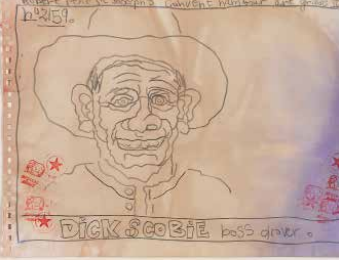
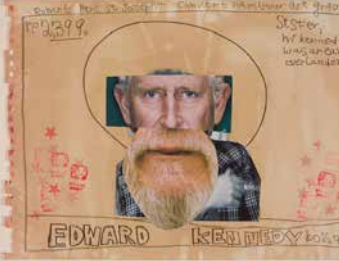
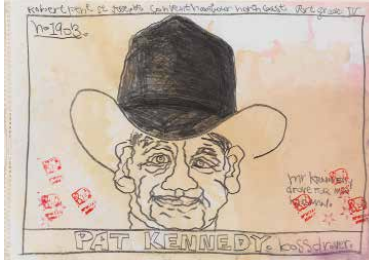
Simon Wright

Assistant Director, Learning & Public Engagement
Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If you were to make individual drawings of a large group of people, who would they be? How long might the series of drawings take you to complete?
2. What effect does the scale of 'BOSS DROVERS' and the drawings' style have on you as a viewer?
3. How does Robert MacPherson show the individual character of each boss drover?
4. What other professions are at risk of dying out due to modernisation or technology? How would you go about creating an artwork to honour one of these professions?
5. What historical references has Robert MacPherson included in 'BOSS DROVERS'? What do they signify?
6. How does the full title invite different readings of concepts and stories in this work?







BILL VEALE boss driver.



FRANK MANN boss driver.



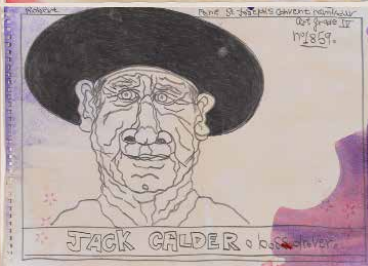
CHARLOTTE MACKENZIE



MAY STEELE boss driver.



JACK CALDER boss driver.



JACK CALDER boss driver.



CHARLIE BRADLEY boss driver.



BLINKER BELLISTON boss driver.



JIMMY REAGAN boss driver.



GARRIE PANKHURST boss driver.



MR TYLER boss driver.



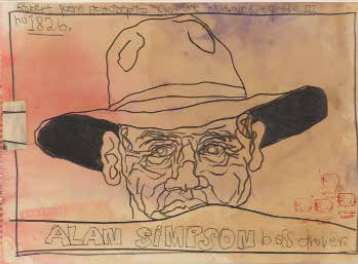
ROBERT SPENCE boss driver.



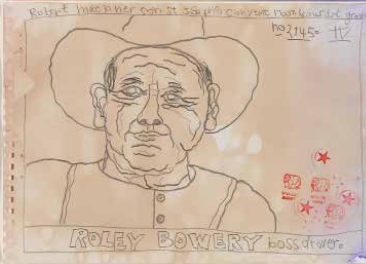
MYLEA JIM MACDONALD.



EDNA ZIGENBINE boss driver.



ALAN SIMPSON boss driver.



ROLEY BOWERY boss driver.



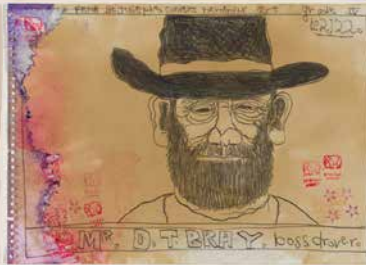
OLIVE COOMBE boss driver.



WALTER GORDON boss driver.



FIN FINLAY boss driver.



MR. D.T. BRAY boss driver.



EDWARD ROBINSON boss driver.



BOOMERANG BRADY boss driver.



FRANK KERR boss driver.



MICK KEMP boss driver.



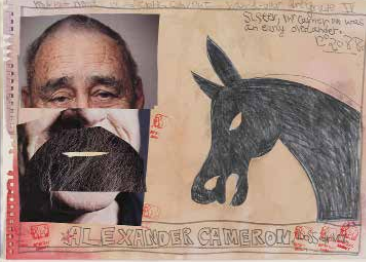
MIKE THYE boss driver.



ISABEL COLE boss driver.



CHARLES MALLER boss driver.



ALEXANDER CAMERON boss driver.



GORDY OLDFIELD, boss driver.



JACK WATSON, boss driver.



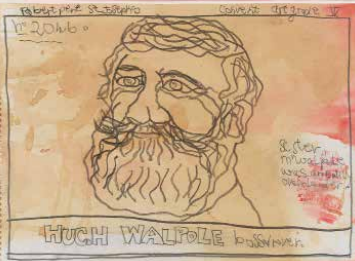
HARRY ZIEFFINE, boss driver.



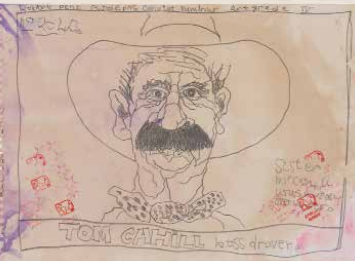
GEORGE DE LAUTOUR, boss driver.



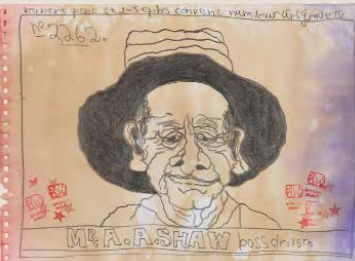
WATSON, boss driver.



HUGH WALPOLE, boss driver.



TOM CAHILL, boss driver.



M.A. ASHAW, boss driver.



WILLIAM GILLET, boss driver.



KATE WARRINGTON-ROBERTS, boss driver.



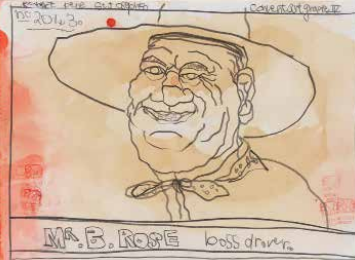
JAMES STIRLING, boss driver.



ROY MCMULLAN, boss driver.



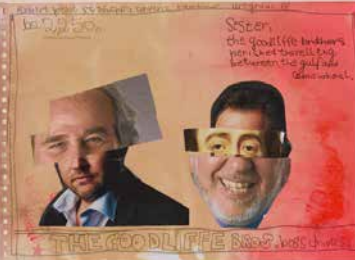
JAMES JARDINE, boss driver.



M.B. ROSE, boss driver.



'POP' FINLAY, boss driver.



THE GOODLIFE BROS, boss driver.



ROBERT GIBB, boss driver.



ESTHER BOHNING, boss driver.



LARRY SINGER, boss driver.



ELSIE BOHNING, boss driver.



HARRY LOMANI, boss driver.



HUGHIE PARKHAREN, boss driver.



JIM CHURCH, boss driver.



NORMAN CURR, boss driver.



PAUL CAMERON, boss driver.



GLEN SMITH, boss driver.



TOM COLIE, boss driver.



JIM LAFFIN, boss driver.

TOURING VENUES

Dogwood Crossing, Miles
19 January – 2 March 2019

Logan Art Gallery
9 March – 27 April 2019

Artspace Mackay
4 May – 7 July 2019

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville
13 July – 1 September 2019

Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery
19 October – 1 December 2019

Redland Art Gallery
8 December 2019 – 26 January 2020

Gympie Regional Gallery
18 March – 24 April 2020

Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery
2 May – 21 June 2020

Caboolture Regional Art Gallery
18 July – 5 September 2020

Warwick Art Gallery
12 September – 24 October 2020

Hervey Bay Regional Gallery
31 October – 13 December 2020

Mount Isa Regional Art Gallery
9 January – 7 March 2021

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Queensland
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