



and yellow buckets allude to the biological processes of birth, breathing, eating, reproduction, excretion and death. In *Povi Christeke*, Michel Tuffery uses a festively attired bull (constructed with flattened corn-beef tins) to highlight the damage done to traditional Samoan society through the introduction of the European diet and lifestyle. The multi-coloured tangle of exotic birds in Joanna Braithwaite's *Ascension* acquires an additional, religious, significance when it becomes evident that it is lifting a recumbent, if apparently serene, human body. In *Canterbury Garden Bird*, Don Binney places a native black fantail in front of the distinctive monkey-puzzle tree to powerfully evoke a specific sense of place.

The ambivalence of our relationship with animals is considered in Julia Morison's *Hermes*, which plays on the apparent polarity between 'dog' and 'god' (in this case, the dog-headed deity of the work's title). Historically, the dog has symbolised both fidelity and ignobility, contradictory qualities that are further emphasised by Morison's use of gold paint and excrement as painting materials. As illustrated by Barry Cleavin in his *Allegations* series, a droll group of etchings that deftly weaves together image, language and the printing process itself, using animals can provide an artist with the means through which to expose the flaws and idiosyncrasies of our own species. Like many of the works in *Menagerie*, in the process of focussing on animals, they also invite us to consider what it means to be human.



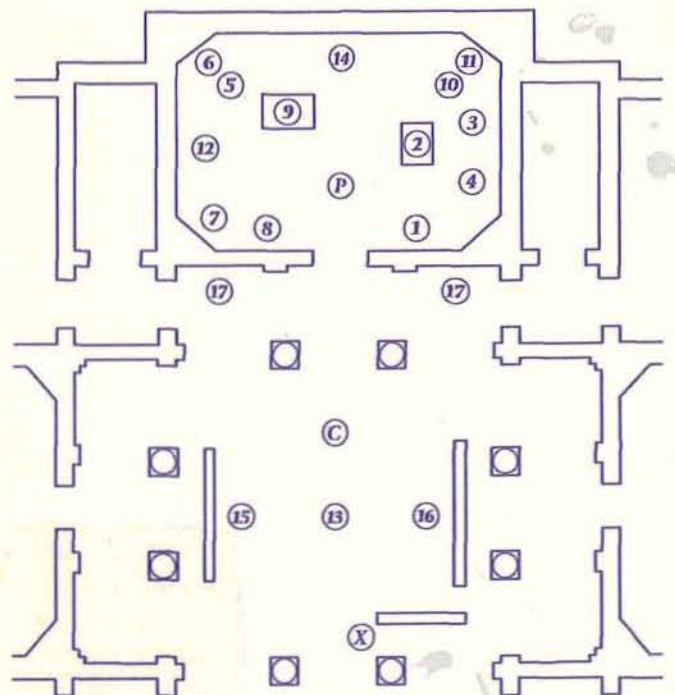
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# Menagerie

Robert McDougall  
Art Gallery

December 2001 - May 2002



entrance

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# Menagerie

## Introduction

*mènā'gerie* n. a collection of wild animals in captivity for exhibition

Ever since the first images were carved and painted by humans on the walls of caves over thirty thousand years ago, artists have found their inspiration in the creatures that share our world. From those early, stylised pictographs to the ornate bestiaries of medieval Christianity, artists have represented almost every species ever identified, in almost every style, to illustrate both our connection to nature and our separation from it. Drawn from the Gallery's Permanent Collections, *Menagerie* brings together the work of sixteen artists, each presenting a distinctive vision of the natural world.

### Key to Map on Cover

- © — Centre Court
- P — Print Room
- X — You are here

## A Fine Tradition

- ① — Arthur Wardle, *Hill Leopards*, 1911
- ② — Chrystabel Aitken, *Untitled (Bull)*, 1930
- ③ — Lucy Kemp-Welch, *Sunlight Through the Leaves (Mare and Foal)*, (1904 - 1905)
- ④ — Lucien Simon, *Chevaux Dételes*, c.1910

The varied history of animals in art is indicated by several of the earlier works in the exhibition. Painted in the early 1900s, Arthur Wardle's elegantly brooding leopard pair reflects the Victorian obsession with the untamed and exotic wildlife of distant continents, while Chrystabel Aitken's bronze bull is a faithful homage to the acclaimed French animal painter and sculptor, Rosa Bonheur (1822 - 99). In *Sunlight Through the Leaves (Mare and Foal)*, Lucy Kemp-Welch, considered one of the most gifted horse painters of her generation, offers a serene moment of familial harmony in contrast to the bustling village scene captured in Lucien Simon's fine observed *Chevaux Dételes*.

## Animals and Us

- ⑤ — Duncan Grant, *Cat*, c.1938
- ⑥ — Eileen Mayo, *Mother and Son*, c. 1947
- ⑦ — Trevor Moffitt, *Upstream*, 1970
- ⑧ — Michel Tuffery, *Mumu, Savai, Luamea, Pea, Ula, Sami, Fa sua, Pa, A*, 1988
- ⑨ — Greer Twiss, *Greyhounds Racing*, c.1966
- ⑩ — Louise Henderson, *Untitled (Cat)*, c.1953
- ⑪ — Peter Peryer, *Chimpanzee*, 1981

Predator, quarry, protector, servant and pet: our relationship with animals is complex and multi-faceted. The content felines depicted by Duncan Grant and Eileen Mayo speak reassuringly of a connection based on affection and companionship, while Trevor Moffitt's *Upstream* and Michel Tuffery's *Mumu, Savai, Luamea, Pea, Ula, Sami, Fa sua, Pa, A* evoke the bounty of life present within the ocean, but also the act of capturing and consuming it. Greer Twiss' cast bronze greyhound pack speaks not only of the beauty of his bounding subjects, but also of the vested interests of their human observers. Applying a cubist approach, Louise Henderson transforms the ubiquitous household cat into something considerably more enigmatic and Peter Peryer's stark image of a pensive, caged chimpanzee also alludes to the ambiguous side to our co-existence.

## Allegorical Animals

- ⑫ — Ross Ritchie, *River Horse*, 1981
- ⑬ — Michel Tuffery, *Povi Christkeke*, 1999
- ⑭ — Joanna Braithwaite, *Ascension*, 2000
- ⑮ — Don Binney, *Canterbury Garden Bird*, 1970
- ⑯ — Julia Morison, *Hermes*, 1985
- ⑰ — Barry Cleavin, Six works from the *Allegations* series, 1988

Throughout history, artists have used animals to symbolise a range of virtues and vices or simply to express the wilder side of the human psyche. Several of the works in *Menagerie* continue this tradition of allegory, for a variety of reasons. Ross Ritchie's *River Horse* uses the metaphor of the hippopotamus, which spends its days in the water and feeds on the land in darkness, to explore a series of binary oppositions, such as day and night, reality and illusion, life and mortality. Plastic tubes