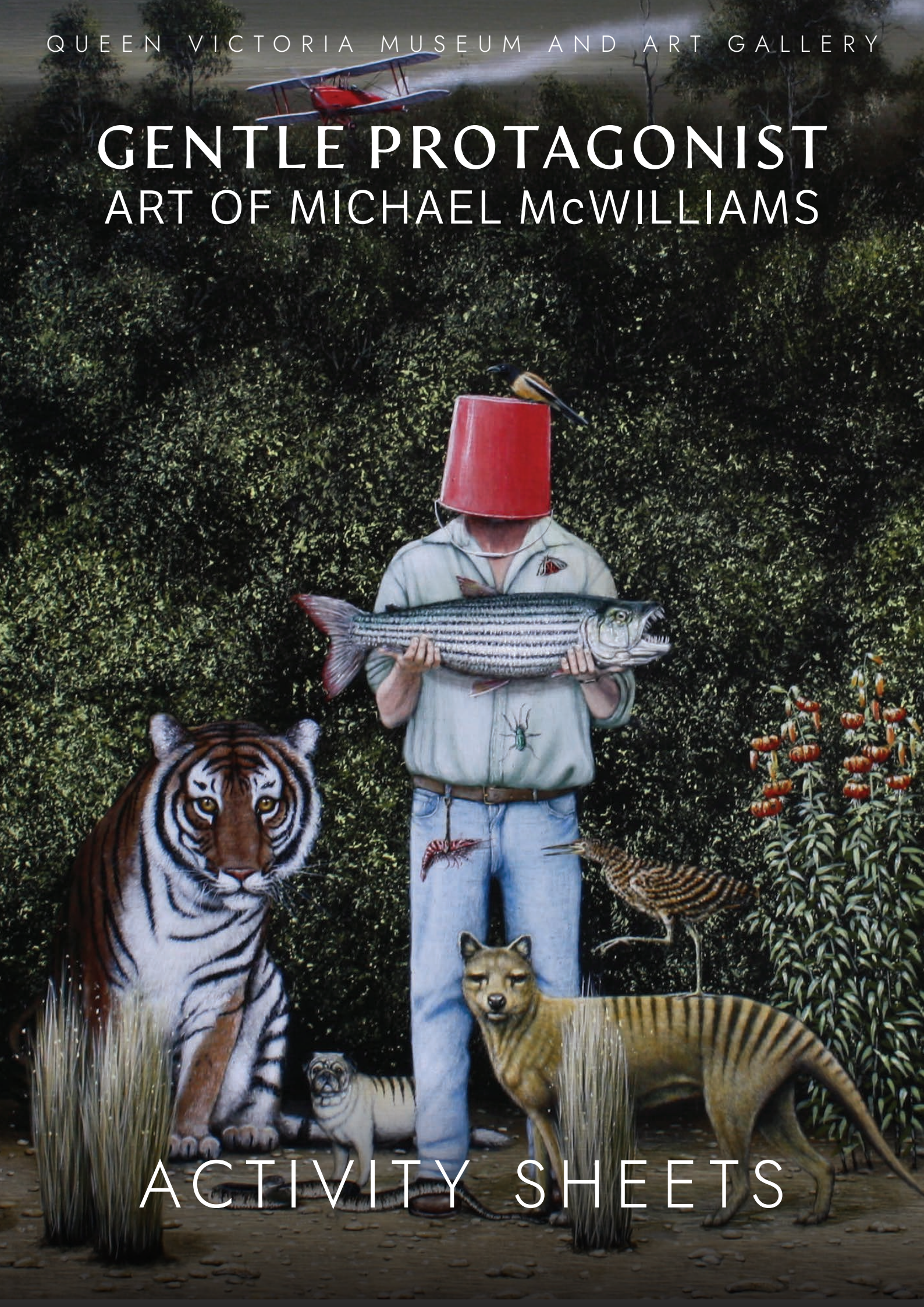


QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

# GENTLE PROTAGONIST

## ART OF MICHAEL McWILLIAMS



ACTIVITY SHEETS





M. McWILLIAMS

Michael McWilliams  
*The usurpers (self portrait)* 2016  
Acrylic on linen, 200 x 160 cm, private collection



# NATIVE & INTRODUCED SPECIES

MCWILLIAMS' WORK CONTAINS BOTH NATIVE AND INTRODUCED SPECIES.

A native species is a type of animal or plant that occurs naturally in an area. It has evolved in the area and has adapted to suit the environment there. Its existence is important for the balance of the local ecosystem.



An introduced species is a plant or animal that has been brought into the area and is not a natural fit in the environment. Plants and animals are commonly introduced for the purpose of serving or feeding humans.

What native animals can you find in the exhibition? .....

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What introduced animals can you find in the exhibition?.....

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Sketch an animal below. Is it native or introduced?

Locate the work titled *The usurpers*; this is a self-portrait the artist has created of himself made up entirely of introduced species.

Why do you think he painted himself in this way? .....

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# SCALE

As well as containing the six themes we have explored in the pre-learning section, McWilliams' works express varied art genres and concepts, including scale, metaphor and symbolism, repetition, and influence from historical art movements and works.

The size of works in the exhibition range from large scale, with sizes that dominate a large wall, to tiny miniature pieces the size of your hand. Across these varied scales, the work retains McWilliams' distinctive style of highly detailed precision mark making.



Michael McWilliams  
*Don't call me Daisy* 2007  
Acrylic on linen, 180 x 240 cm, private collection



Michael McWilliams  
*After hours* 2010  
Acrylic on panel, 18.5 x 16.1 cm, private collection

## FIND A SMALL-SCALE WORK IN THE EXHIBITION

Title of work.....

Description of work.....

## FIND A LARGE-SCALE WORK IN THE EXHIBITION

Title of work.....

Draw it below



# METAPHOR & SYMBOLISM



Michael McWilliams  
*Taking a stand* 2009  
Acrylic on linen, 100 x 120 cm, private collection

This painting of McWilliams' work, containing repeated metaphors and symbols, is a good example of how McWilliams uses them in his work to present an idea or tell a story. In the foreground of this painting you can see the stumps of trees that have been cut down. Five timber chairs line the edge of the native old-growth forest behind. From behind the chairs, we can see the forest's native inhabitants peeking out at us.

How many native inhabitants of the forest can you find?.....

What could the chairs be a metaphor for? .....

Why do you think the native animals are staring back at us, the viewer?  
What do you think they are trying to tell us?  
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What story do you think this painting is telling us?.....  
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# ART HISTORY & MOVEMENTS

McWILLIAMS' WORK DRAWS INFLUENCE FROM ART MOVEMENTS SUCH AS SURREALISM, REALISM AND APPROPRIATION.

Find this work *Frustrated soil protector* (image below). It has characteristics of **surrealism**, which is art that has a dream-like quality, or scenes that are strange, uncanny and unconventional.



Michael McWilliams  
*Frustrated soil protector* 2021  
Acrylic on linen, 60 x 60 cm, private collection

Why do you think this work has qualities of surrealism?.....  
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Find this work *Comfy pears*, (image below). This is a still life painting. It has characteristics of **realism**. Unlike surrealism, it represents characters and subject matter truthfully and accurately to life.



Michael McWilliams  
*Comfy pears* 2010  
Acrylic on Australian cedar panel, 17 x 17.5 cm, private collection

Can you find any other still life paintings in this exhibition?  
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McWilliams also uses **appropriation** in some of his work. *Appropriation* is an art term that refers to when artists use pre-existing images or objects in their own work, refer back to page two *The usurpers*. This work is a reference to a well-known European painter from the 1500s, Giuseppe Arcimboldo.



**RESEARCH** type 'Giuseppe Arcimboldo' into a Google search to see the similarities of these works.

Find the work *Invasion of Venus* (image below). *Invasion of Venus* appropriates a very famous historical artwork titled *Birth of Venus* painted by Italian artist Sandro Botticelli in the 1480s. It is very similar in its composition to the original painting, however McWilliams' work includes the addition of his pet pug dogs, perhaps to add a sense of humour to the work?



Michael McWilliams  
*Invasion of Venus* 2010  
 Acrylic on linen, 130 x 210 cm, private collection

The title *Invasion of Venus* gives another layer of meaning to the work, as McWilliams' titles of his work often do. Looking at the work's title, and the fact that it appropriates a famous historical artwork, why do you think he gave it this name?.....

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Can you find any other works where the titles give another layer of meaning to the piece?

Title of work.....

How does the title add another layer of meaning to the work?.....

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# ASSIGNMENT

CHOOSE ONE OF THE EXHIBITION THEMES BELOW

## CLIMATE | IMPACT

Works that show scenes of how the modern human impact has led to changes in climate and natural environment.

## ECOSYSTEMS | ENVIRONMENT

Works that describe the environment and natural ecosystems such as wetlands.

## EXTINCTION | ANTAGONISM

Extinction refers to species that have been lost. Antagonism refers to something that is opposing or against something.

## WHIMSICAL | HUMOUR

Whimsical presents playful, odd, appealing, amusing themes in a unique way.

Humorous means funny, amusement, sense of humour.

## METAPHOR | LANDSCAPE

Metaphor is when something has a hidden meaning. It can be an object that is representative or symbolic of something else.

A landscape is visible features of an area of land.

## PASTORAL | PORTRAITS

Pastoral refers to the pastures that are used for the grazing of animals.

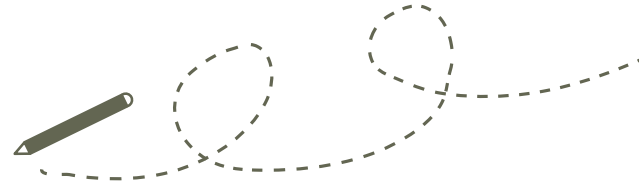
Portraits are usually paintings of the head, face and/or shoulders. Sometimes they can be abstract.





Drawing on inspiration you have gained from your visit to the exhibition, create an art piece that represents your chosen theme. Give it a title and write a description outlining why it represents that theme.

Draw a plan for your artwork below



Work title..... Theme.....





OV  
MAG

Michael McWilliams  
*Millie's snack bar* [detail] 2018  
Acrylic on linen, 100 x 120 cm, private collection

Cover: Michael McWilliams  
*Tiger arrangement* [detail] 2014  
Acrylic on linen, 75 x 120 cm, private collection