

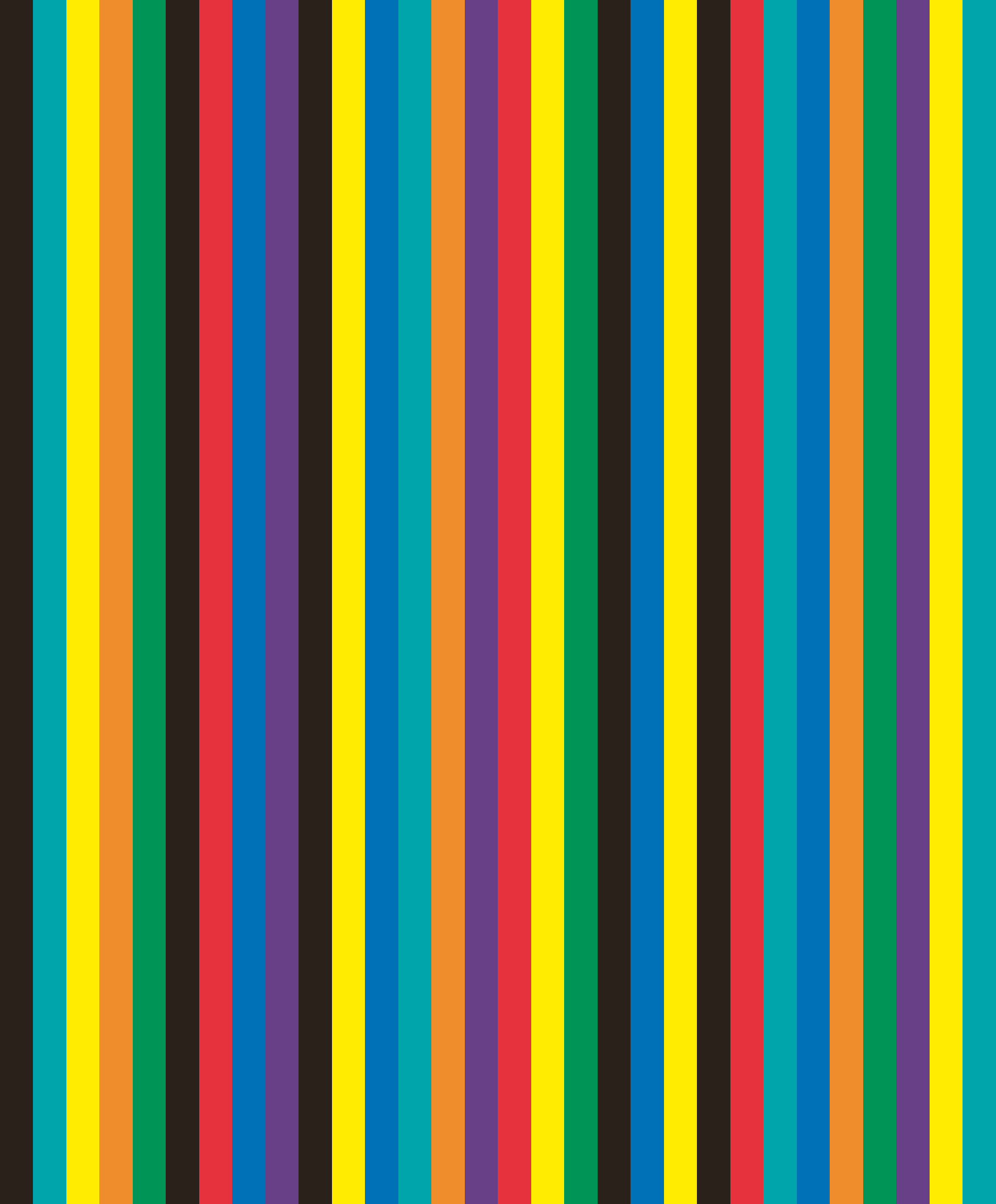
Pienke
W.H. Kal
The
colourful
life of
Harold
Leslie
Thornton
alias The
Kangaroo
1915-2004



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**The colourful life
of Harold Leslie Thornton
alias The Kangaroo
1915–2004**

Compiled and edited by Willem Campschreur



Contents

Foreword **6**

John McDonald

Introduction **8**

Part I **Biography and art historical context 11**

1 Bringing art to the people **12**

The biography of a sign writer who became an artist 1915–2004

2 The painted world of Harold L. Thornton **32**

Erica Kubic-Vegter

Part II **Harold Thornton's writings 45**

3 Autobiographical notes **46**

4 Songs/poems **64**

5 Tales of Harold the Kangaroo and Captain Beefheart the Dog **76**

Part III **Gallery of paintings and murals 93**

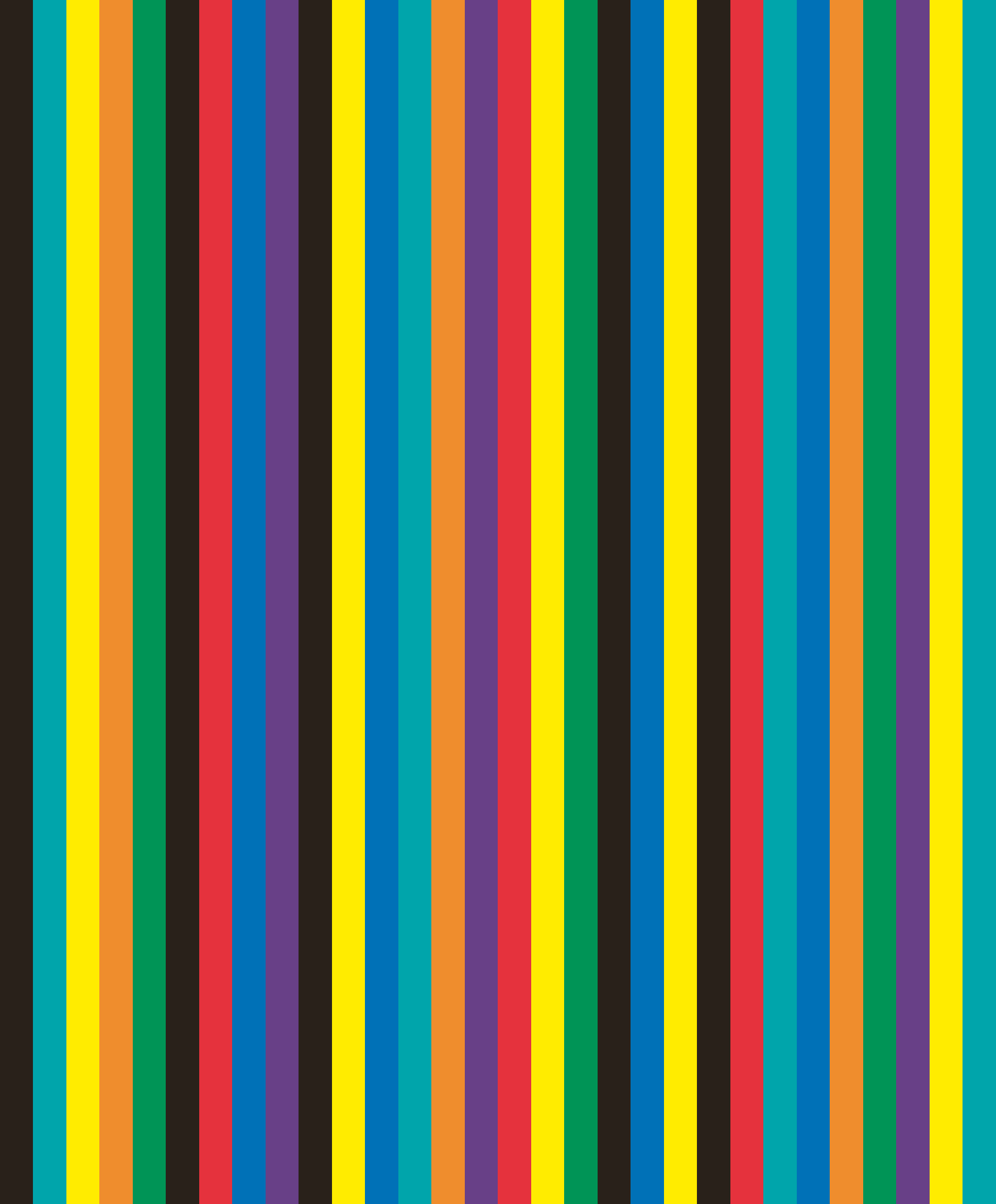
Entries in Major Art Prize Contests **158**

Exhibitions **158**

Bibliography **158**

Acknowledgements **159**

Credits photographs and illustrations **160**



Part I

Biography and art historical context

Bringing art to the people

The biography of a sign writer who became an artist 1915–2004

The adventurous and eventful life story of Harold Thornton is full of gaps and vague anecdotes, which occasionally made it difficult to relate it in the proper sequence. Instead a more thematic approach was chosen that nevertheless tried not to lose sight of chronology. Whereas this chapter offers a broad outline, in his Autobiographical notes [Chapter 3] Harold shares much more of the sometimes hilarious details of his exuberant life.

The genesis of an artist

Harold Leslie Thornton was born in Enfield, a Sydney suburb, on 26 August 1915. He was raised in a lower middle class family; his father was a tram driver and his mother a housewife. The first child of father John and mother Ann was daughter Dulcie, born in 1907, followed by Reginald, Basil, Elvie and Harold; Norman, an afterthought, was born in 1927. At the time of Harold's birth his father was in Europe fighting in World War 1, so Harold actually only met his father for the first time when he was three or four years old. After his return to Sydney, father John took up his former job on the trams.

Harold was fond of his father, a gentle, but shaken man, who had returned shell-shocked from the trenches in France. He had horrendous nightmares, which was hard on the children as he dragged them down with him into his hallucinations. At times, all the siblings – Harold was still the youngest – were woken up and to stand in line and then their father pretended to shoot them. As young as he was Harold understood what his father wanted of him: if he dropped dead, he would be left alone as a casualty.¹ The family suffered greatly because of their father's post-traumatic stress disorder, and with a mother who couldn't cope with this situation.

Harold described his mother as constantly knitting and crocheting for the Red Cross, and always away, helping families in need. But little Harold suffered from her lack of attention. His mother was unhappy with his birth anyway. 'You've got no brains', Harold remembered her telling him and everyone else [Chapter 3, 53]. Consequently, when it came time for six-year-old Harold to go to school, he was absolutely terrified. Fortunately, his eldest sister Dulcie was there to comfort him. But school was a nightmare and after several years the school authorities told his parents that it would be better if Harold left. Harold never fully overcame this childhood trauma. Later it turned out that he suffered from a form of dyslexia. Meanwhile, as he relates in his autobiographical notes, from the age of eight he started sign writing all kind of advertising texts that were written out for him so that he wouldn't make any spelling mistakes. Apparently this earned him some money.

When he did finally leave school at the age of fourteen, it seemed quite obvious that he became an apprentice sign writer with a local company, Sydney Sign & Co. A 'natural' in terms of technique and his use of colour and



1
Harold as a boy.



2
Harold painting a portrait of his mother.

bold forms, Harold proved to be a promising pupil, and some clients were amazed that a fourteen-year-old kid was already so skilled. He was lucky – in these first years of the Great Depression it was difficult to find work – and he used this opportunity to further develop his abilities. Despite spelling remaining a problem, he had become an exceptional sign writer and painter, and was earning money, but spent it all on beer. He left Sydney Sign & Co after a while for a ‘top sign firm’, but regular jobs with long working hours and ‘mean’ bosses couldn’t keep him for long. He worked on his own for a while under the name Thornton Signs, while also earning money as a wrestler! He’d been wrestling since school and was very confident in the public arena. It was in Griffith that his transformation from sign painter to artist began. His first painting on canvas was a portrait of his father (1942), who was very ill and would die soon afterwards.

When World War II spread to Asia in December 1941, Harold was 26 years old. He didn’t want to go and fight, but wanted instead to serve his war duty in Australia. ‘Being different’ kept him out of the army, anyway. He worked at the Royal Australian Air Force Station at Tocumwal Aerodrome in the southern Riverina region of North South Wales (NSW) as a camouflage painter for oil companies, for the railways, and also painted warning and instruction signs in St Marys Munitions Factory in Penrith, near Sydney. At the request of the labour unions, he staged weekly concerts to entertain wounded soldiers and the factory’s approximately 2000 – mainly women – employees.

He met another sign writer who talked to him constantly about art and took him to a sketch club in Sydney to draw nude models. At the time, Harold regarded this as complementary to his sign painting in that he could add portraits to the lettering. Eventually Harold realised he wanted to be a fulltime artist – there was an artistic streak in the family: his eldest brother Reginald became a graphic designer and his other brother Basil proved to be an accomplished story illustrator.

Harold understood that to become a professional painter he needed formal training, so in 1944 he enrolled in the Julian Ashton Art School in Sydney. Working at St Marys Munitions Factory by day, he had to attend evening classes, two nights a week and on Saturdays, travelling 130 kilometres to and fro by train each time. Harold was most interested in the anatomy drawing classes, for which gypsum replicas of antique Greek and Roman heads as well as live models were used. Sometimes he was so tired that he fell asleep during the lessons, his charcoal in his hand. He didn’t have enough time to practice so he tried to draw portraits on the train ride home, which was too bumpy to put in the eyes. After a year Harold left Julian Ashton’s and enrolled in the newly founded (1943) Desiderius Orban School of Art.



3
The Thornton Family, c. 1918. From left to right: Reginald, mother with Harold, Elvie, father, Basil, Dulcie.



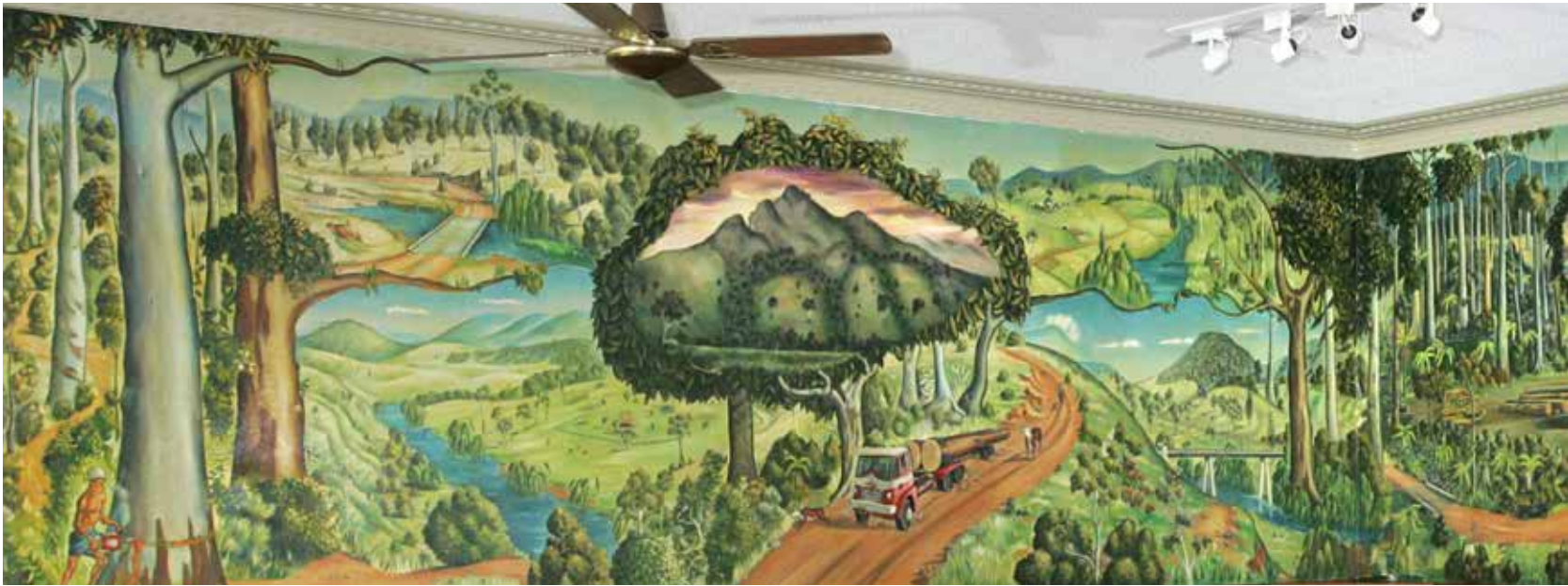
4
Signboard ‘Thornton Signs’.



5
Father’s portrait in studio.



6
Harold (right) and his eldest brother Reginald (Reg), 1946.



10

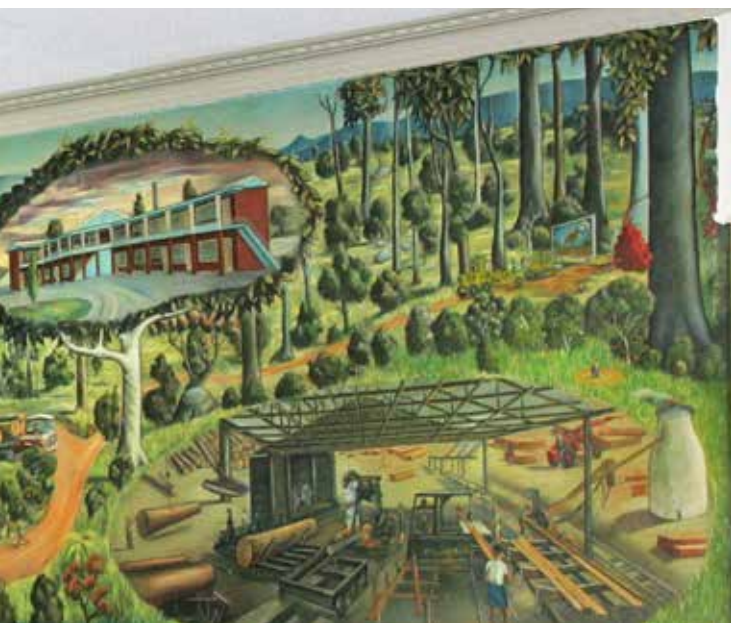
Mural in the restaurant in Bucketts Way Motel, Gloucester, 1967–1968. A historically listed mural that took over one year to complete. The various scenes depict life in and around Gloucester. The owner of the Bucketts way Motel used to own a wood construction company around Gloucester.

falling apart with its limbs scattering everywhere. He was not arrested, but there were letters to the editor of the Area News calling Harold a devil and suggesting he should be run out of town. A year later Harold entered the Water Wheel Festival with a float. He rode a pushbike dressed only in skimpy bathers, his lips painted bright red and all his teeth painted in different colours, which apparently he did often. On his head he wore bull's horns with a sign saying 'The Devil Returns' [see p. 49].¹¹

At times his procession acts were criticised on the radio or were condemned by the Wade Shire Council. Harold went to the council meetings and made drawings of the people who were discussing his evil deeds. Some covered their faces with their hands to prevent him from drawing them. He would even walk up to them in the street, pretending to draw their faces and 'they would run for their lives'. Even after his return to Sydney, Harold still visited Griffith at Easter for the Vintage Festival, where he would set up a tent on the grass in the main street and sell his artworks while painting during the day.

Now and then Harold 'went bush', roaming the outback in his hearse, accompanied as always by his dog, Van Dyke, and his paintings. He stopped frequently to set up an exhibition, usually in the open air, where he would unfold his easel and invite visitors to have their portraits painted by him. Such exhibitions were held in Condobolin, Leeton, Wagga Wagga and elsewhere. It wasn't always easy: 'There was an easel up on the platform with little me painting portraits of a local. Was bloody hard, with moths, insects in my eyes, and clawing over my wet canvas, attracted by the light'. People tried to sneak into his exhibitions for free, but were frightened off by Van Dyke. Once, he needed all of his wrestling skills to trounce some local mugs who came to complain about the portrait of the town mayor he had painted the night before. In Wagga Wagga Harold submitted a portrait for the local art prize; his old art teacher Mr. Orban was one of the judges, and Harold tried to let Orban know which painting was his. He didn't succeed, but received a 'highly recommended' commendation anyhow.

One day, while roving the countryside, Harold found himself in Gloucester (NSW). He didn't have work, needed a place to sleep and spotted the Bucketts Way Motel. During a chat, the motel proprietor asked Harold to paint a mural depicting the story of the wood construction company he had once owned.



His payment would be food and a place to stay. The present large mural in the conference/dining room in the Bucketts Way Motel was the result. Almost a year later, in 1967, the mural was officially unveiled by the director of the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane, around the same time that 'Harold Thornton's Internationally Famous Art Exhibition' opened to the public in the Gloucester School of Arts.¹²

Many years later, in 1988, Harold returned to Griffith with a large exhibition of his paintings, created there and elsewhere after he had left the country town. He wanted to show the residents what had become of the larrikin they once knew, how his art had developed. He loved Griffith and its inhabitants. However, the exhibition was a great disappointment. People in Griffith had carried on with their lives and Harold had over-estimated their reception of the exhibition and the results of the accompanying auction. He never went back.

A restaurant in Papua New Guinea (1968–1970)

It is not exactly clear why Harold left for Papua New Guinea (PNG). There are several accounts. A medical friend from Griffith might have invited him, or possibly an acquaintance from Sydney who moved to Papua New Guinea asked him to come and paint a mural in his hotel. Whatever the reason, he embarked on a new adventure, but he had to leave his beloved dog Van Dyke behind in Stewart's Dogs' Home at Randwick.¹³ So it was clear from the beginning that Harold planned to be back after not too long. When he spoke about it, Harold was never specific about his adventures in Papua New Guinea, but his written memoir of this period is full of wild stories [Chapter 3, §39-52].

A reasonably accurate impression can be gained from newspaper and magazine articles that appeared about Harold in Papua New Guinea. Stuart Reid wrote in the *Pacific Islands Monthly*: 'Harold isn't a merchant in facts; he deals in images. This is the story of Harold in New Guinea. About a year ago (1968) a "millionaire friend" of his asked him to go to the Gulf of Papua and paint murals in a pub. Harold agreed to go. He flew to Port Moresby and then on to the Gulf country in an airplane. Once there, Harold had to do quite a bit besides painting. He had to work as a builder and small ships operator. But he enjoyed himself and he liked the locals. Harold stayed in the Gulf for eight months, living the ideal life. Then he fell out with his European boss and he made for Moresby, again in an Otter, and did for a living the best he could, which is paint murals and signs. He painted, or at least started to paint, a mural in the Four Mile Club. He almost completed this when, for unspecified reasons, he decided to return to Sydney.'¹⁴



11

Harold in Papua New Guinea.



12

One of the Papua New Guinea apprentice's works of art; name of artist unknown.



21

Façade of The Bulldog coffeeshop, with Harold.



22

Details of the façade.





23

Harold starts painting the owner's bulldog, Joris, on the façade.



24

Lounge of the Bulldog Hotel with Harold relics, including a painting of Henk de Vries, owner of The Bulldog.

applied to their windows in a special font named 'krulleletters' after its extremely curly letters ('krul' is the Dutch word for 'curl'). Harold was unfamiliar with that tradition but for his assignment at Large Leather he used bold 'krulleletters' and surrounded them with his unique colour patches.

Harold's largest commission in Amsterdam, and one that deserves special attention, came from Henk de Vries, owner of The Bulldog 'coffeeshop' at Oudezijds Voorburgwal 90: painting the coffeeshop's façade. The Bulldog, which opened in December 1975, was the first coffeeshop in the Netherlands where the sale of soft drugs was tolerated. At first it was like an ordinary sitting room in an ordinary house. Later it was transformed into a 'coffeeshop', to differentiate it from the traditional Amsterdam coffee houses ('koffiehuizen').

Henk de Vries saw Harold painting murals in the neighbourhood and became curious about this colourful Australian who called himself 'The Kangaroo' and who always had his dog with him. He invited him to the coffeeshop and while they were having tea, Harold said: 'I could paint the façade of your coffeeshop.' 'Okay Harold, show me', responded Henk, and much to his surprise Harold started painting immediately without showing him any sketches.

Looking at the façade of Oudezijds Voorburgwal 90, the adventures of Henk's dog, Bulldog Joris, begin at bottom right (to left of the doorway) with Joris smoking a water pipe. The narrative continues towards the left (below the window) with a depiction of the Oudezijds Voorburgwal. Joris is seen jumping into the canal and swimming to the next alley, the Dollebegijnensteeg. The painting continues up the vertical wall to the left of the window: Joris eats magic mushrooms, grows in size momentarily, and then visits the 'ladies' for a friendly chat. Above this is Dam Square with the Freedom Monument; the Royal Palace is behind it. The magic mushrooms have made Joris sick, but he turns in Superdog. Turning right above the coffeeshop window, the painting passes the town hall and opera house, and then descends via a juice bar with a band that includes Harold's dog, Captain, playing the drums; Henk, his family and guests dance to the music. Above the door Harold signed the painting with 'Harold Kangaroo Thornton, The Greatest Genius That Ever Lived' (the same epithet he painted on the back of his jacket). Above the doorway and extending to the right is a portrayal of the Leidseplein with the then newest Bulldog coffeeshop. The wall to the right of the doorway has fantasy figures, some of Henk's other dogs, and a self-portrait of Harold.

Henk grew attached to this unique man who was struggling to make a life for himself and wanted acknowledgment of his talent. Harold enjoyed and

relaxed pose by countering the diagonals of the upper legs with those of the lower arms.

In comparing this portrait with that of his dying father (1942) [p. 94] one can see that the relative flatness of the older work has given way to a strong treatment of depth and textures. Much attention is given to the folds in the shirt and the bulging veins on Old Bill's rugged arms.

Also from 1946 is the townscape *Old Bathurst* [p. 95]. This is a copy of a painting by the well-known Australian artist Russell Drysdale (1912–1981). In making this copy Harold was testing his abilities, seeing if he could do it.

In 1946 he was apparently confident enough to enter *Old Bill the Bootmaker* in the Archibald Prize Contest and Exhibition. There were three major art prize contests in Australia at that time, all organised by the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney. Between 1946 and 1994 Harold regularly entered a painting in one of them [see p. 158].

The Fifties and Sixties – Development

Then, in 1949 and the early 1950s, Harold seems to have generated a real body of work again. In his notes he comments on these works: 'Painted in 1949 whilst at Desiderius Orban's Art School', or 'Orban Style', and suchlike. And indeed, the influence of the styles of the artists Orban liked is visible in the paintings Harold created during this period.

There is the *Still Life* of 1949 [p. 100], which shows how Harold explored Cézanne's and the Cubists' still lifes; the earthy colours, the diagonal angle of the table, the draped towel, the fruit in the foreground and the reflections on glass and metal. Even though it is not a very inspired painting, from this exercise he learned to look at objects in a three-dimensional space so that he could make an interesting and dynamic two-dimensional composition. In many of his later portraits, landscapes and views through windows, the specific arrangements of objects, draperies and other elements make the paintings engaging and lively.

Much more interesting is the *Self Portrait* [p. 99] of 1949. We see a dapper young man from the waist up, his right hand on the hip, wearing a freshly unfolded shirt. With the shirt folds Harold created shapes similar to the way the Cubists fragmented their volumes into shallow, rectangular and triangulated forms. The slightly raised ridges of the folds are painted as if sculpted from clay, as is the forelock of his hair. We see a similar rendering of textile in, for example, Miró's *Self Portrait* of 1919. In the background an interior is visible with what appears to be stored bags and boxes. Harold placed himself slightly diagonally to the picture plane, which is enhanced by the flowing lines curving from the tip of each shoulder. Here too the colours are earthy, except for the pinks and oranges in his face and tie.

Self Portrait with Dog Beetlebum and Cat [p. 103] from 1951 shows Harold in roughly the same pose with a dog on his left arm and a cat under his right one. But this is a very different painting, full of bold colours and stylisation. Harold always loved colour and here he breaks free from the Cubist earth tones of what he called the 'Orban style'. At front right is a vase with paintbrushes, behind Harold is a tilted painter's easel with a canvas with brightly coloured abstract shapes and, perhaps, a draft of another self-portrait with a dog. Behind the easel are more coloured abstract shapes on a black background. Here Harold shows one of the great strengths of his art: an innate sense of composition in the way the windblown shirttail echoes the shape of the shirt collar, with the two circular forms in the top corners of the painting, and in how he balances each colour over the surface.

During this period his landscape paintings underwent their own development. *Rushcutter's Bay* (1950) [p. 102] shows a harbour with small sailboats, their prows pointing towards the town, with a church in the background, a view reassembling those Matisse and the Fauves painted in the early 1900s.



6
Old Bathurst



7
Still Life



8
Paul Cézanne | Pommes et oranges | vers 1899



9
Self Portrait



10
Joan Miró | Self Portrait | 1919



11
Self Portrait with Dog Beetlebum and Cat



12
Rushcutter's Bay



13
Henri Matisse | Open Window Collioure | 1905



14
Wagga Wagga in Flood



15
Irrigation Works, Griffith



16
Sewer Drain, Griffith | 1952 | Oil on board | 54 x 63 cm



17
Gypsy Tanya



18
The Famous Michael Kmit



19
Highbury Hospital, Dog Looking for Harold



20
House in Croydon | 1953 | Oil on canvas | 62 x 72 cm

The boats, buildings and trees all have strong, dark outlines. The colours are subdued but saturated, except for a patch of red on a boat deck or a roof. This is a classical – harmonious – composition with the triangle of the boats in the lower corners pointing inward towards the church steeple at the top.

Wagga Wagga in Flood [p. 106] from 1952 is very different. This is a lyrical painting of trees standing in water that reflects the house in the background. Gone are the hard lines and the symmetry of composition. The curving lines of the trees and river are rendered with an almost tentative, subtle touch. The colours are much lighter, with the branch in the lower left hand corner echoed by branches along the left edge and the slope of the roof. Harold decorated the painting's frame with patches of paint in shades of the painting itself. This pleasant, decorative feature recurs occasionally in Harold's work.

Yet another style is handled in two strong paintings of waterworks of that period. Both show firm outlining, a subdued colour scheme and a dynamic angle of sight. *Irrigation Works, Griffith* (1951) [p. 104] portrays the irrigation sluice and the canal. The water is greyish brown with rusty brown patches; the horizon with some trees and distant mountains is high up in the depiction. What makes this painting so powerful is the way Harold represents the scene from a perspective that makes the sluices of the irrigation works zigzag diagonally across almost the entire painting. In 1952 he painted *Sewer Drain, Griffith* in which this same, well-chosen perspective makes for an interesting, dynamic painting of a rather commonplace subject.

Different approaches can also be discerned in the many portraits he painted during his period in Griffith. They seem to be chosen to suit the character of the sitter. An interesting comparison can be made between *Gypsy Tanya* (1954) [p. 107] and *The Famous Michael Kmit* (1954) [p. 108]. *Gypsy Tanya* is a rather small bust portrait of a young girl with intense, melancholic, black eyes in a long white face with full red lips and dark black hair. She wears a black sweater over a white shirt with an oval blue brooch beneath her chin. In his comments about this painting in his autobiographical notes, Harold tells Tanya's tragic story: 'She was beautiful. I found her wandering the streets, took her in, but she [was] wretched and committed suicide.' Harold used no hard outlining here, but a much softer touch. The edges of the blue and black background, echoing the colour of the brooch, are undetermined on the white canvas, and the white frame enhances the paleness of her face and the white of the shirt. It is immediately clear that this is a sad girl, painted with compassion for her fate and admiration for her beauty.

The opposite can be said about *The Famous Michael Kmit* [p. 108], a painter friend of Harold's. Here we see a strong, energetic artist in his somewhat chaotic studio. Portrayed from about the waist up, Kmit poses confidently, leaning on his right arm. The outline of the slightly opened yellow curtain is countered by the curve of the right shoulder and the edge of the painting in the right hand corner. The subtle play with diagonals continues in the painting hanging against the wall, the sagging hem at the top of the curtain and the string that seems to hold the curtain together. The three-quarter turned face has strong dark outlines to set it off against the yellow background. Harold uses the same shade of yellow to highlight the forehead, cheek and chin. As usual, he accurately balances his colours, the green outside the window on the left recurring on the wall on the right, the red patches spreading from the red tablecloth on the left into the art objects and paintings on the right. The frame picks up the red again to complete the zing of the painting. For all its apparent casualness, this is a powerful painting of an obviously strong person.

Off-and-on Harold painted 'portraits' of buildings he had a personal connection with, such as *Highbury Hospital, Dog looking for Harold* [p. 109] and *House in Croydon*, both from 1953. Additionally, when a building symbolised the sitter's profession, he used them as backdrops to portraits, for instance,



Part II

Harold Thornton's writings

3 Autobiographical notes

Harold wrote about episodes in his life in notebooks, on scraps of paper, on pub coasters, on any material he could lay his hands on. He didn't date his notes, but they must have been written in the 1980s, when he lived in Amsterdam and Sydney.

He wrote when alone in his room, while waiting for friends or transport, or while sitting in a pub with a glass of beer. The result is a bundle of serious tales and wild, hilarious anecdotes in which he shares with the reader an insightful account of his life, starting at the age of 8 and continuing into his early 70s.

From what he wrote it isn't difficult to get a vivid picture of how Harold experienced the world – it is another matter whether all of it is truthful, however. In real life he could easily indulge in fantasies, which he often expressed in his writing.

Details in his notes were confirmed through interviews with Harold's family and friends and by checking publications that had articles about him. This information found its way into the biography in Chapter 1.

A selection was made from his autobiographical notes and arranged chronologically; the numbering and headings are mine. Spelling was corrected when necessary.



1
Harold draws himself.

HELLO YOU BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE. I am going to try and write you an Introduction to this, it is not a Book it's an auto-grog-og/autobiography.

My real name is Harold Leslie Thornton. I am 76 years old, born in Enfield (in 1915), near Burwood, Sydney NSW. My father was a tram driver, son of a publican. My mother was the daughter of a Methodist preacher. That makes me a very good artist, one of the reasons to tell you that my main aim is to open a museum, a permanent home for my big art collection of my own work that can bring big crowds and when I die it will still carry on. This book (oh I mean it's not a book) may earn me some money to help me do that. I want an old building where people can come and see my art. That's why I done my best to not sell my major works and have lived like a rat for years. Also I don't like selling my paintings, they are my children. Put the fun back in art and bring art to the people. If you sell your art to the rich only they can see it.

I am famous in Amsterdam, and Australia, and known around the world. What do I paint; I have many styles, and change to suit the subject. My real painting is psychedelic.

I don't follow the old masters, no, I am one. My art is honest, so is the writing of this book.

Youth

§1 Born in 1915 in Enfield, Sydney. My father was at war. I don't know where I came from because the rest of the family were to me square and goody goodies.

§2 I was the second youngest of 6, 4 boys and 2 girls. Oh oh well again, my younger brother was 12 years younger than me, so I was the youngest for 12 years. The first day at school I shit myself and my young sister was sent for to take her smelly little fat brother 2 ft high 2 ft wide home.

§3 As early as I can remember my mother told me I didn't have any brains. Maybe I wasn't governed by her; she was a strong woman with plenty to say, and she always told everybody 'we'll never rear our Harold, he has no brains', and they never reared him. So by the time I went to school I was convinced I couldn't learn; how could I with no brains.

ps. In support of my dear mother she was a beautiful woman; if anyone was sick, even if she didn't know them, she was there to help.

§4 At the age of 8 years old I was painting signs for my father who was a Labor man. He was a tram driver; his mate, the conductor, was standing for Parliament.

So I was sign writing: 'Vote Labor E. E. Cook'. Then turned to sign writing milk carts, bankers cards etc. Was seen up a ladder, people watching me. Then days I couldn't spell; they wrote it down. I was earning more money than my dad. I left school at 13 coming on 14; was apprentice sign writer at a big firm in Sydney named Sydney Sign & Co. Painted father Xmas on shops, painted signs on windows, got offered 2 jobs, I took for better class of work, learn more.

§5 It came about that I was an entertainer. A big school concert was held in the old big house theater in Enfield on the Liverpool road; it was made of tin. There was a big guy nobody liked, the stage manager. I used to sing like I was stuttering all of a sudden, I got nervous and forgot my lines. So I did a little dance. The crowd started throwing things at me, oranges, cardboard boxes etc. I picked them up and threw them back. Then the stage manager tried to get me off the stage and chased me around and around the stage but I wouldn't go. All of a sudden I run through his legs and tripped up; he fell over, the crowd jumped up and roared with laughter. I was a hit. They thought all this was an act by my little self. The next day I was told by the mob that I was the best turn that night and it would have been a dull show without me.

§6 I would never be an artist, though I used to draw well at school. I was kidded into being a sign writer and they done me a good turn, because sign writing is part of art. Sign writers make good artists, better than being a commercial artist. Commercial artists are inside an office, trying to trick the public.

Well I went in to see about my job as a sign painter. I saw

the sign writers sitting near me waiting also to see the boss; could tell they were by the paint on their cloths and I could hear them talk. They said I must be the new office boy with my short pants and pinched in hat with a small feather. They got a big surprise when I turned out not to be the new office boy.

§7 For the sign writing firm who sent me on a job I always looked young. The big company I was doing the job for, would ring up and say you sent a little boy on the job. I still had down on my face. Then I would take the big boy who didn't have much experience on the job, give him the docket to interview the guy we were doing the job for, stand by and listen. Then after we would come out of the room, I would take the docket off him and set the job out. One time the sign firm got a ring on the phone; they wanted to know why the little one was doing the scale plain in the lift room on top of the building, while the man was over the side on the scaffold painting out the space where the lettering was to go.

§8 Depression was with us. Things were bad, no work and I didn't get on well with the boss' son. There was a job advertised for a lad 2 years at the trade. That's me, 1,5 years at the trade, so I applied for the job. There were 250 boys trying for the job. I was given a brush and asked to write a sign. They didn't believe the samples of my work I showed them. They really wanted [to] see [how] I did sign writing at my young age. I was only about 14,5 [years old], small, short and still in short pants. Yes I got the job.

§9 Well I worked with that firm for about a year, then the other firm saw I was good and they were the best sign writers ever and they told me I could work for them. So I left the coupon company, and worked for the top sign firm.

He was a very mean man. I used to have to pick up the tacks before he would buy any, and send me to put up a sign on my way home at 5 o'clock. I lived 10 miles or more from where he sent me. It would be 7 or 8 o'clock when I got home. So I worked around Sydney before I was 21.

Griffith

§10 I used to sit next to a boy in school who used to talk about a place which was irrigated, where there was no drought so I made for there; it's a long way out.

We made up our minds to go to the country put a big top on the Box on the side of the old Harley, had a big drunken sendoff party, set out to the country with only 3-10-0 pounds. The old Harley was not registered, it had a painted number plate.

Boy was it hot, my shoes were odd, one different than the other, hair was dirty dry and straight up by this, my trousers was more ripped and about nobody would give us a job. We slept on the channel bank. This place had a big irrigation, plenty of water (Christ I've got a bad cold tonight can't stop sneezing, can hardly see to write, won't be writing much tonight).

Gee, it got hot, a heat wave. We drank the 3-10-0 pounds the first stop. It was impossible to get work, we didn't look presentable as far as getting work. I was fat 16,5 stone, long hair, curly like waves going, arse out of my pants. My music



2

Griffith, 1950s.

friend mate had straight long hair, funny big eyes and teeth, pimply skin and dry, both of us looked very funny. We were stuck in this town, no money, no food, slept in the open. After a while I got a little job doing prices for cakes in a cake shop. We had to cut tin, we did that with a pair of scissors. I had got a little money, filled up the Harley cycle and moved on. Came to a big town (Griffith NSW). It was so hot, you couldn't get a glass of cold beer, in fact there was no beer mostly. They grow grapes so there was plenty of cheap wine, rum and brandy. We had no blankets, just a bottle of rum and fall over, in the winter woke up with a heavy dew all over you.

Griffith NSW, where I built a sign business, taught art in my own school, had about six art exhibitions and became the first Hollywood wrestler.

§11 A store keeper in Griffith took me down to Sydney. He owned a very nice posh house. He proudly showed me a beautiful house and asked me to paint it.

The next day I turned up with a canvas, stood in front of his house and started to paint. After a while when I got the painting well on the way he came out of the house and looked at my painting and said I didn't say paint a picture of it, I meant paint



3

Harold working on a scaffold at Tom Appoloni's Grocery, Griffith, 1950s.

the gutter and windows, but now you are painting a nice painting of it, when you finish I will buy it. The painting turned out well.

Wrestler Sign Writer Brave

§12 It was in the town of Griffith where I first started wrestling. It was just before the war started. Some chap started a wrestling gym. I was always getting attacked so I had to learn to defend myself. Also I was 16,5 stone, maybe I could get some weight down. I was a natural wrestler said my trainer and I worked very hard, like everything I take on.

There was a stadium in a theater, called Reo (Christ I can't spell, forgive me). It was run by the football club. Casie Dooke was the manager. He wanted to put me on a bout for me. He said I have a wrestler about your weight who will take you on. I had some wrestling matches before in towns where I was not known and won a few. But nothing written about. All right I said, I'll take him on. Now being a good showman, and wanted to get more known in this wild blow in town of Griffith. So I go in very hard training.

(Stop, have to leave it, better go and get a drink. Back with four bottles of Tooheys Red, my favorite beer. Don't fuck about Harold, get on with the story.)

The football club manager brought out a poster and put it all over the town. It read Sign Writer Brave vs Scenic Hill Jack. Sign Writer Brave invites the public to see his training displays. Sign Writer Brave will introduce to Griffith the famous Xmas hold, a hold which is even unknown to brother Jonathan. Then it read King Ellet Champion of New Zealand, veteran Champion of Italy. Now I'd had called myself Sign Writer Brave but I never knew I was to wrestle Scenic Hall Jack, as high as the door. Fancy, a fat 16,5 stone 5ft tall by 5ft wide wrestle a guy as high as the door. What could I do now.

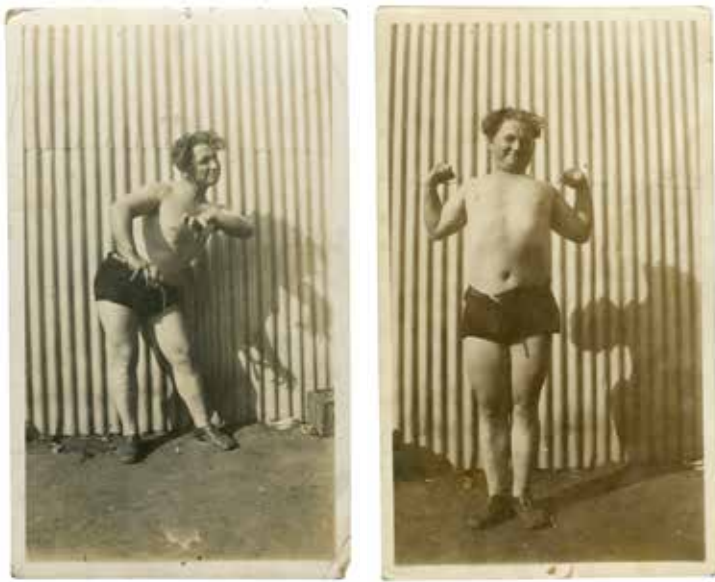
The wrestling was spectacular. I made an air conditioner; it was like a wind mill, you turn the handle. I still had Jim Helder working for me, was a funny looking boy with very stiff half long hair going everywhere and big teeth moving about. I got him a southwester hat and called him 'fan em fanny'. For me being brave I got some feathers, painted tattoos on my body. With a Union Jack sowed on my big orange short pants. I may as well say I was the first Hollywood wrestler.

The match was on. The main match was boring, they knocked one another out in 5 minutes. They supposed to be champs. I came in to the stadium at the front door, wrapped in my orange dressing gown with red flowers on it, my second dogs and all.

I am turning this page over. It's the 3 bottles of beer I've drunk. Maybe I should every time I write to you.

Oh, I almost forgot to tell you that night the Japs came into the war.

My turn came. I see I've packed the stadium with people. The match was held up. They couldn't find my opponent. I was doing my exercise in the ring. Kicking my legs up swinging my legs around when all of a sudden this funny tall bloke jumped on my back. The gong had not gone, so this big bloke was on my back. I could tell something was wrong. They were getting at me, with a tall legged bloke on your back made me angry, so I gave him an airplane spin round and around went his long legs



4

'Wrestling day', Harold posing as a wrestler at the age of about 29.

sticking out; then I threw him. I knew I had to work hard so I jumped on him giving him the body press. I noticed the Ref who started the match stepped out of the ring and another Ref stepped in. He also was wrestling me; this Ref was a champ fighter, every time I got my opponent down he wouldn't count. So I counted myself. At one time I had the Ref in the head lock and my opponent in the scissors they both were pleading to let them go. At one time my shoulders would touch the ground, he would count 12 then.

I would get up and knocked him [to] the other side of the ring. Then I would down the tall guy and count myself. The match was only 3 rounds. The Ref got into the ring and said out loud, this match was a draw, there was no fall.

I said there will soon be one and took two handfuls of hair out of his head, then I jumped on him, got the Ref in a head lock; my trainer came into the ring and was trying to pull me off him around the ring by the legs. I wouldn't let go then and his hands slipped and I had him in the strangle hold. I could have killed him but I am not a killer, so I let go. I sat on top of them and said I won and held my own hand up.

Sorry I forgot to tell you someone let my dog go and he bit the Ref.

My second got tangled up in the ropes and the air conditioner fell to bits as he landed in the middle of the ring, it broke in bits, he picked it up, turned the handle and a bit of the fan hit me on the head.

I forgot to tell you my second gave me rum instead of water.

I never stopped wrestling for one month after.

§13 I had many acts in processions at Griffith and sex was used a lot because it was the best thing to upset them and it was just another Peyton Place. I can remember one where I put a well painted nude on an easel with a ribbon across the beautiful spot, dressed up my work boy as an artist with brushes in his hand to make out he is painting it. They looked good on the platform of my Ford truck. I was the driver. We joined the procession. In front of my float was a very nice float with lovely beautiful girls

giving out wine. They kept asking me to have a drink as we stopped. Oh dear, I was getting a bit high so I said to my work boy better drive the truck or I'll run into the wine float and there will be wine and lovely girls everywhere. He said I thought that would happen boss.

Of course I ripped the ribbon off and was painting her thing and running up and making sexy acts, when all of a sudden the truck stopped and I fell through the nude canvas. I looked good sitting there with a nude wrapped around my neck. Oh well, it's almost the end. I was told a woman walked up to the sergeant and said arrest him, it's indecent. The sergeant said I don't see anything wrong with it really. It makes me feel young again; can't you close your eyes for a bit?

5

Harold in various costumes at various Water Wheel Festivals in Griffith [see Chapter 1, p. 15-16].



AH CHOO

AH CHOO I have the dutch FLU I am HAROLD the KANGAROO
I am a Kangaroo not used to this bloody FLU, whate to do
I dont know, so may be ill blow, the Nice dutch Nurse
Said your getting worse whate a jerk curse!
AH CHOO I have the dutch FLU I am HAROLD the KANGAROO
she put the thermaneter in my backside, you could feel
my Temperature Rise. OH said the Nurse, But your
getting high because you are getting High,
because you are a Kangaroo. Now its 4 months Ive been sick
they said your in a fix, they took me to a lady doctor
she lay me on the couch in my birthday suit, pushed me
and shaved me and said Your bute, theres nothing wrong with you
havent got the dutch FLU? your a Kangaroo the man doctor said.
theres nothing we can do you may have a virus or two, so I think
I'll shot thought to the ZOO AH CHOO I have the dutch FLU.
I am HAROLD the KANGAROO. I had to go to the doctors again
at the Nurses I smiled and smiled, they took a sample of my blood
I thought this is it Ive got painters colick, but they said,
theres nothing wrong with you. you smile.
I am HAROLD the KANGAROO, that Night things were a bit skook
next day they Kicked me out and said your not a Patient
Your suffering from imagination. so I went to see the Nice
GG & GD. sister she said Allow MR you look Yellow. AH CHOO I have
the dutch flu I am HAROLD the KANGAROO a Pretty german girl,
mixed me up a witches BREW, it was so strong through I was
going wrong Now I am in a HUFF 3 times a day I take this temable
in my day Ive drank a Brew or two but this little drop will
send you to the MOON. AH CHOO I have the dutch FLU.
I am HAROLD the KANGAROO. I had to go to the doctors again
he said you have no pain but we must fix whate it is
the Nurse said as she played with a string we wont a sample
3 times 3 times I cried my water No said the Nurse the ~~thing~~
thing she gave me 3 cartoons & sticks for 3 days to fix I felt Sick
the days went by with a haze they put me under a xray the doctor said
how many times have you been Yellow my fellow I dont look at my self
I am a Kangaroo strike me lucky I ought to knew stick to my
witches Brew. AH CHOO I have the dutch FLU. I am HAROLD the
KANGAROO AH AH AH CHOO O O O O O O O O O O

© Harold Leslie Thornton
1971-26 August

This section presents a number of poems or songs (Harold uses both words) that Harold wrote for roughly a decade from the early 1970s. In this period he lived alternately in Amsterdam and London. The focus is therefore mainly on his experiences in these two cities, as is the case with the cartoons. His output of poems or songs seemed to wane in the 1980s, but in this same period he began keeping his autobiographical notes. It is interesting that these notes, while constantly referring to his paintings, exhibitions and murals, lack any reference to, or quotes from, his songs.

But Harold does tell us about his first contact with music that made him confident enough to start singing and writing. In Papua New Guinea, Gerry Gardiner, the former bass player of the then famous Johnny O’Keefe band, became front-man for the house band in Harold’s restaurant in Port Moresby. Harold had been on stage before: doing funny dances, as a wrestler, in art shows, so felt at ease in front of an audience. He sang along with the band and then wrote: ‘Gerry Gardiner said: you missed your vocation Harold, you have timing, should be a singer. One night he taught me how to write music.’ [Chapter 3, 549] Not much later, in Amsterdam, he wrote his first song or poem. One cartoon portrays him and his dog, Captain Beefheart, in ‘their’ studio in Amsterdam: ‘...they could write rock songs with one hand and play guitar with the other, write signs with one foot and play drums with the other, write poems with their tail and paint with a brush in their mouths’. It’s a good example of how he saw himself, with all his capacities. Whether Harold wrote these as real poems or as lyrics with music already in his head is unclear.

In London he bought an old guitar but struggled to play it – the song *The Guitar* describes how he put the instrument aside in frustration. In spite of that, he recorded almost all of his songs on tape and sent them to a record company in London. In his cartoons he depicts three Mr Wormy’s (one ‘with keen cold eyes and half a smile’) from Wormy Bros Record Company. The cartoon is part of the imaginative tale about Harold and Captain Beefheart having their own band.

Harold’s language is direct and simple; his short lines not only rhyme but often also have internal rhymes, too. He echoes words or uses onomatopoeia, sometimes together (e.g. *Ah Choo* and *Dressmaker*). These elements of poetic style contribute to the strong rhythm that carries the poems/songs, so they are as

easy to read out aloud as they are to sing, and sometimes their metre resembles that of rap songs. Harold himself occasionally referred to them as rock songs.

We don’t know how many of these he wrote, but it could have been a hundred or so. This selection represents all his important subjects: his time in Amsterdam (mostly happy), in London (often gloomy), his paintings, his character, Aboriginals, girls, and the eternal dilemma of being caught between love and art. Harold often wrote his songs as strings of little tales (like his autobiographical notes and cartoons), connected through repetitive lines. The best example of this kind of writing is *I am an Aussie, looking for a Possie*, a long song in which he describes his attempt to settle in London. There are several versions of it, like many others: in some only a few words or a couple of lines have been altered, but in others the entire story has been adapted.

Since Harold was highly dyslexic and because his songs often incorporate Australian slang they were sometimes difficult to decipher. He was inconsistent in his use of capital letters, and they often emphasise whole words or even repetitive lines. The editors chose to correct obvious spelling mistakes and brought some uniformity to the use of capitals and punctuation.

AH CHOO I have the Dutch FLU I am HAROLD the KANGAROO
 I am a Kangaroo not used to this bloody FLU, what to do
 I don't know, so maybe I'll blow, the nice Dutch nurse
 Said you're getting worse what a jerk curse!
 AH CHOO I have the Dutch FLU I am HAROLD the KANGAROO
 She put the thermometer in my backside, you could feel
 My temperature rise. OH said the nurse, but you're
 Getting high because you're getting high,
 Because you're a Kangaroo. Now it's four months I've been sick
 They said you're in a fix, they took me to a lady doctor
 She laid me down the couch in my birthday suit, pushed me
 And shaved me and said: You're beaut, there's nothing wrong
 with you
 Haven't got the Dutch FLU? You're a Kangaroo the man doctor
 said.
 There's nothing we can do, you may have a virus or two, so I think
 I'll shot through to the ZOO, AH CHOO I have the Dutch FLU.
 I am Harold the Kangaroo. I had to go to the doctor's again.
 At the nurses I smiled and smiled, they took a sample of my blood
 I thought this is it: I've got painter's colic, but they said
 There's nothing wrong with you, you smile
 I am HAROLD the KANGAROO, that night things were a bit skook
 Next day they kicked me out and said you're not a patient
 You're suffering from imagination. So I went to see the nice
 GG & GD-sister. She said: hello mister you look yellow. AH CHOO
 I have
 The Dutch FLU I am HAROLD the KANGAROO a pretty German
 girl
 Mixed me up a witches' BREW, it was so strong thought I was
 Going wrong. Now I am in a HUFF three times a day I take this
 terrible
 In my day I've drank a brew or two, but this little drop will
 Send you to the MOON. AH CHOO I have the Dutch FLU.
 I am HAROLD the KANGAROO. I had to go to the doctors again
 He said you have no pain but we must FIX what it is
 The nurse said as she played with a string we want a sample
 Three times, three times I cried my water. NO said the nurse
 the nice
 Thing she gave me three cartons & sticks for three days to fix
 I felt sick
 The days went by with a haze they put me under an x-ray the
 doctor said
 How many times have you been yellow my fellow? I don't look
 at myself
 I am a Kangaroo, strike me lucky, I ought to know, stick to my
 Witches brew. AH CHOO I have the Dutch FLU, I am HAROLD the
 KANGAROO AH AH AH CHOOOOOOO

26 August 1971 (written on Harold's 56th birthday)

Since I've been in Holland
 All I've seen is Blue and Green
 Blue and Green – Blue and Green – Blue and Green
 There is blue and green walls
 And blue and green balls
 Blue and Green – Blue and Green – Blue and Green
 There is blue and green rain
 And blue and green brains
 Blue and green trains
 They're all the same
 So there is blue and green teeth
 That are too sweet
 Monotony – Monotony – Monotony
 But there's blue and green beer
 That fills us full of cheer
 Blue and green mud and blue and green love
 Blue and green lies
 And blue and green eyes
 Monotony – Monotony – Monotony
 Blue and green soap
 And blue and green hope
 It's blue and green and green
 BLEW me out.

20 October 1972

Amsterdam is a fairyland

Man! Oh Man! Amsterdam is a fairyland is a
Fa Fa Fa FAIRYLAND it has porno shops, you may think they're HOT
Leaning buildings that seem to go, to-and-fro and some with a bow
Man! Oh Man! Amsterdam is a Fa Fa Fa FAIRYLAND
Winding canals you ought to see all the muddy water
The ducks swim past with a quack, the child band close their act
Amsterdam is a fairyland, the big clock chimes on the tower
As a rich sound you can hear it all around.
Pretty lights, and narrow streets made of cobbles
With little shops I like a lot. Somewhere to buy chocolate pop
Because Amsterdam is a fairyland
Heineken Beer, I can smell it from here I always order it large
Drink it until it runs out of my ears and eyes
The little boats and bridges have charm and
Nobody wants to do you any harm, the friendly people
Have nice smiles white skins and red lips
The pretty girls I like to kiss
For man, Oh man, Amsterdam is a Fa Fa Fa FAIRYLAND
Rijksmuseum is a very fine building and if you go in
For a walk you will think you're a back number for
Having to look at all that burnt humbler by the time
You get to Rembrandt you're browned off
Amsterdam is a fairyland
The Modern Museum I adore
The masters as I stroll around the floor
Because I am a lover of their beautiful colour
You always notice everybody looks at Van Gogh
Because man, Oh man, Amsterdam is a Fa Fa Fa
FAIRYLAND

7 April 1972

I am a little Aussie looking for a Possie

I am a little Aussie looking for a Possie
In LONDON LONDON
The customs let me through
They said we know you
You're Harold the Kangaroo
You have two art shows
So you will have to find a studio
I am a little Aussie looking for a Possie
In LONDON LONDON
For the start offhand
I was staying with the Clancy rockband
Was a bit of bore sleeping on the floor
I had no room to move
But I could get into their groove
I always knew they knew their game
Now they are a band of fame
They are good blokes
Always ready for a joke
I am a little Aussie looking for a Possie
The underground is strange with little red trains
Somewhere to get out of the rain
You feel like a rabbit and get the habit
Bakerloo line Piccadilly line I can never find
It's a flop I get squashed blow my top and then get lost
Can't even breathe can't even sneeze
I am a little Aussie looking for a Possie
In LONDON LONDON
Went to Trafalgar Square;
I was told there's a man standing on a big pole there
As high as a mountain next to a fountain
So beautiful don't want to go anywhere
The coppers looked twice
And the people are nice
Black and white seem to mix alright
I am a little Aussie looking for a Possie
In LONDON LONDON
How are you mate I sensed London a Bonzer Place
And sport there are plenty of good sorts
The booze is crook and tastes like horse's piss
But I don't feel quite I can
Still buy Aussie beer
I am a little Aussie looking for a Possie
In LONDON LONDON
I met the politest nice chappies
When I was about the roundhouse
They took me to the Stone Henge
Told me it was legal I believed them
Everything went well there was no hell
What a shame the coppers came drove us insane
Then farmer Brown popped up through the crops
And said you can't camp here this is my ground
It's a pity you're dirty hippies and bold
I bet you're all on the dole, I work for my living
Not much, one hippie cried, by the size of your guts

TALES of Harold the KANGAROO

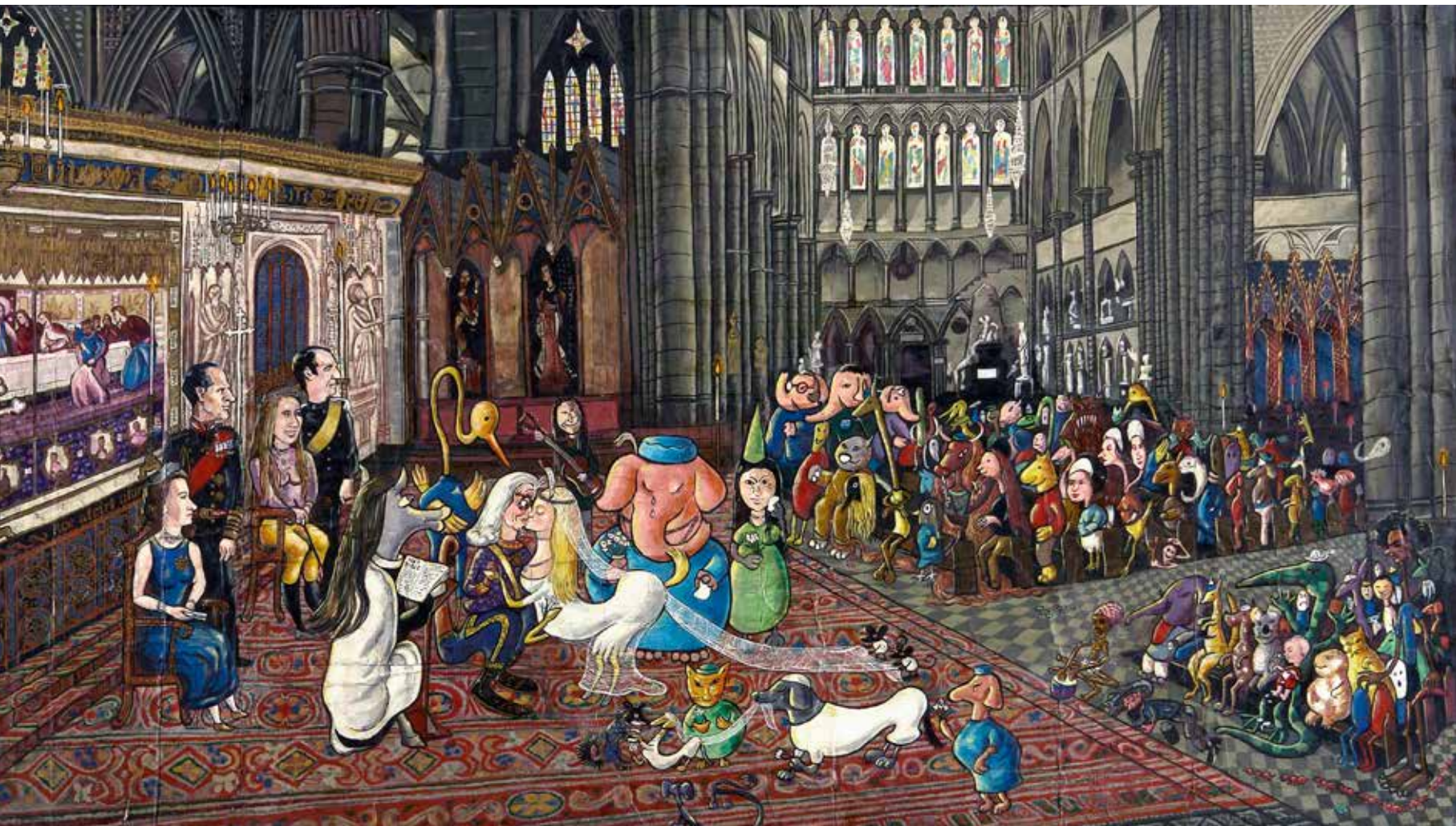
the Greatest Genius
that ever Lived ?!

&
Captain
Beefheart
the Dog



written by *Harold Thornton* (A VERY HUMBLE MAN)

Harold Thornton
1974



5 Tales of Harold the Kangaroo and Captain Beefheart the Dog

Harold drew his cartoons – as he referred to them – in the 1970s on (corrugated) cardboard or paper of different sizes with coloured crayons or paint. These were probably the only materials he could afford during these quite difficult years. The accompanying texts were handwritten on lined sheets of paper and glued to the back of the cartoons.

The original folder of cartoons, of which the cover drawing and ten tales are presented here, contained approximately 60 pictures. The tales have all kind of loose endings and there must have been more, unfortunately lost during Harold's nomadic life.

The scenes are all located in Amsterdam and London,

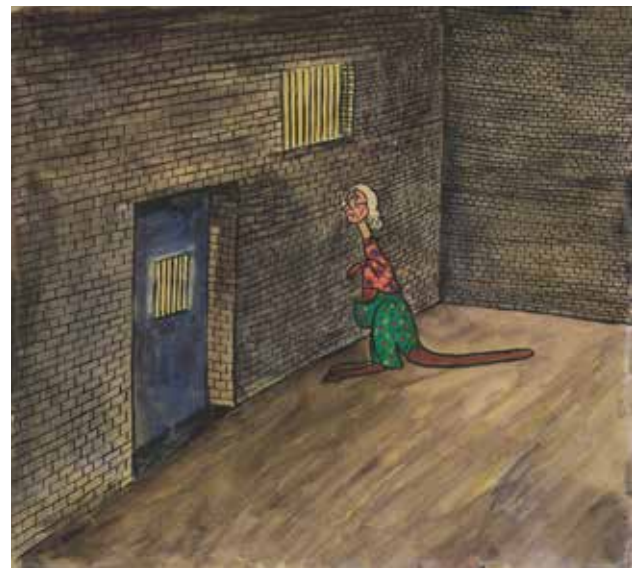
between 1971 and 1976, and portray Harold's adventures in these years. They comment in an often highly ironical and fairy-tale style on what happens to him and his dog Captain Beefheart, going back and forth between reality and sheer fantasy. Many of the fantasy figures that surround Harold refer to real people, but they are given a new life as animals or even ghosts. Being the lead character in the tales, he depicts himself as a kangaroo. In the wondrous world that he creates, he mixes the unpleasant things that happened to him with his most deeply cherished wish: to marry Sky, who he had met in Amsterdam, in Westminster Abbey. This very short story closes the tales.

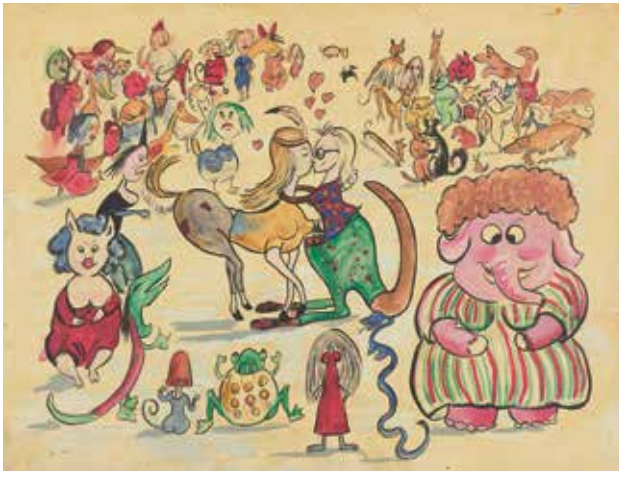
When Harold arrived in Holland the young coppers wouldn't believe him. He had no return ticket, so he couldn't get in. They put him in jail until the end of the day. The coppers took Harold's shoes, because they said if he gets away he wouldn't be able to run fast. They were wrong, as a rule Kangaroos don't wear shoes. They run better without shoes. But Harold didn't try to escape.

Harold, the Kangaroo arrived in Amsterdam from Australia. He found a place called De Laurier. A lot of freaks from every country of the world worked there. They looked after junkies who wanted to kick drugs; also helped those who needed it. The workers got no wages. They lived like monks, just received their food & second hand clothes, that were given them. So five of his good friends: Judy the lovely Elephant, Sky the beautiful blonde Pony Californian Indian girl, and the beautiful Dutch actress named Karin the good Witch. Karin's boyfriend from the USA, he was called the Washed Out Owl; not forgetting Storky, who brought the babies. We have brought you some clothes; you better wear them or you will have to leave and it is going to be cold here in Amsterdam this winter. Kangaroos don't wear clothes in Australia, it's too hot. But I will have to get used to them, he said.

One day Karin the good Witch was going for a walk in Amsterdam and she found four little puppies in a rubbish bin. Some cruel people had put them in a rubbish bin and left them. One was a clever little black puppy with a curly tail and big eyes. He looked a clever little dog. Karin the good Witch is a beautiful water rat. Mostly the population in Holland are water rats and they like dogs, and are very kind to them.

Harold the Kangaroo just loved the little black puppy and the little black puppy loved Harold. So he begged the beautiful Karin the good Water Rat Witch to give him the puppy. At first she said no, but her boyfriend Paul, the Washed Out Owl, got her to give the little black puppy to Harold the Kangaroo. He was so pleased he got down and kissed her feet and she had big wooden muddy Dutch shoes on. Karin the beautiful good Water Rat Witch has never forgiven her boyfriend to this day. But with Harold the Kangaroo's teaching the puppy turned into the cleverest dog in the world. Because Harold the Kangaroo is the greatest genius that ever lived. Harold the Kangaroo called the little black puppy that used to ride around in his pouch Captain Beefheart, after Captain Beefheart the Bandsman.





All the boys tried to win the beautiful Californian American Indian girl named Sky, but she fell in love with Harold the Kangaroo, who had all the girls crazy about him also. Alas, he fell in love with beautiful Sky; what a good match. Captain, very handsome lover boy dog, the girl dogs had their turn of kissing him as Lady, his real sweetheart, got jealous. Lady belonged to Sky, so there were four lovers.

Harold, Sky and Captain had fun in their studio in De Laurier, Amsterdam. Harold the Kangaroo said I love colour, so Harold and Captain painted their shoes & clothes. I am a colourful Kangaroo, he shouted and they all laughed.

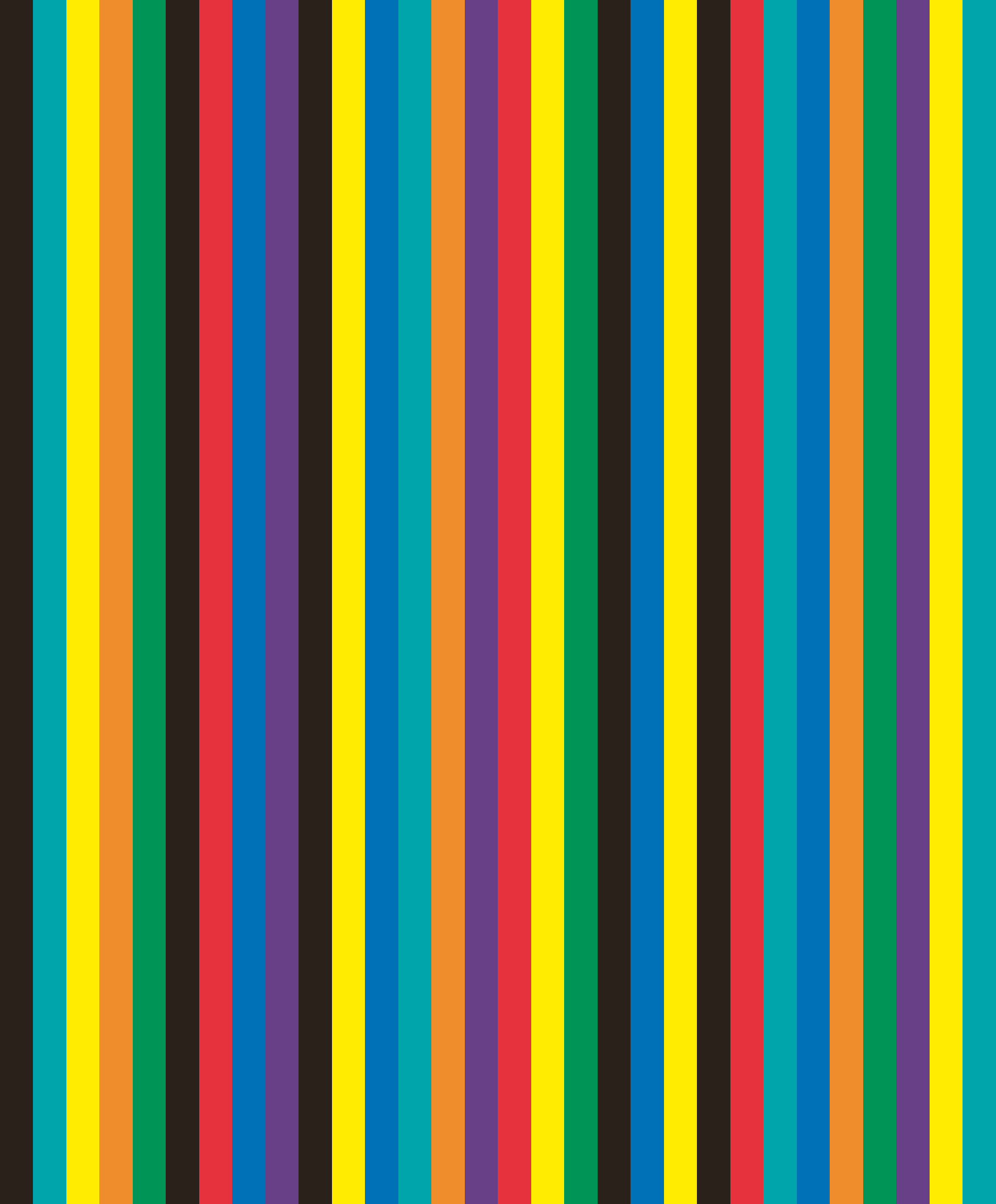


Harold the Kangaroo's job at De Laurier was to teach the junkies & workers how to paint. To Harold most junkies are artists, too sensitive for the world, so they go for drugs and drugs are no good. It's a hard job teaching, so Harold and Captain used to love working in their studio on their own. Being the greatest genius that ever lived they could write rock songs with one hand and play guitar with the other, write signs with one foot and play drums with the other, write poems with their tail and paint with a brush in their mouths. Of course Harold the Kangaroo couldn't do this with clothes on.



When Harold the Kangaroo first went to De Plorea [De Laurier] in Amsterdam he was told Australia was 50 years behind the world and had no culture. But after he painted some abstract murals, oh what a big upset, his abstract murals flipped out the flippers and flipped out the non-flippers. So they painted them all-out. His cultured friends saw what was happening. There's Sky, Karin the good Witch, Paul the Washed out Owl and the very cultured Hurry the Crow. They were all horrified.

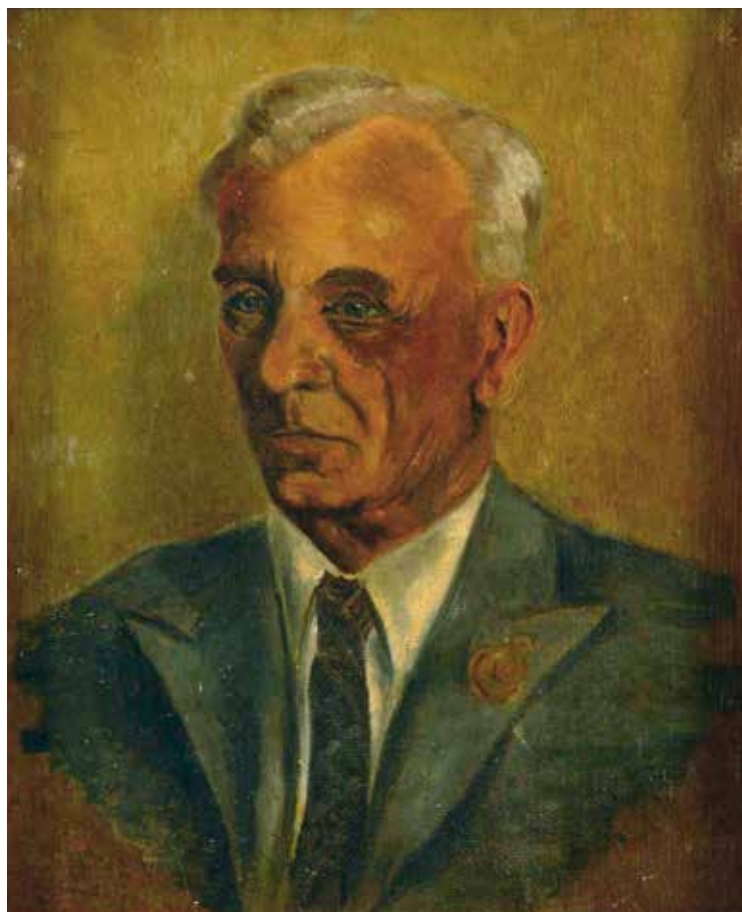




Part III

Gallery of paintings and murals

My Father
1942 | Oil on canvas | 46 × 39 cm



Sunrise in Camden
1946 | Oil on canvas | 44 × 52 cm



Old Bathurst
1946 | Oil on canvas | 75 × 91 cm



Old Bill the Bootmaker
1946 | Oil on canvas | 121 × 90 cm



Old Freddie, One of the Last Cobb & Co Drivers
1946 | Oil on canvas | 48 × 37 cm



Portrait of Dooley Murray, Griffith
1952 | Oil on canvas | 67 × 79 cm



The Famous Michael Kmit
1954 | Oil on canvas | 107 × 135 cm



Highbury Hospital, Dog looking for Harold
1953 | Oil on canvas | 106 × 137 cm



Mrs McGrath
1957 | Oil on board | 140 × 82 cm



One Morning at the Gold Coast
1958 | Oil on board | 126 x 94 cm



The Waterwheel, Griffith
1958 | Oil on board | 61 × 57 cm



Blast Furnace, Wollongong
1959 | Oil on canvas | 106 × 116 cm



Kangaroo Country
1963 | Oil on canvas | 80 × 90 cm



Sun Rise over Sydney
1963 | Oil on board | 123 × 92 cm



Models in Park Street Studio
c. 1963 | Oil on canvas | 136 × 91 cm



Dancing in the Streets
1973 | Oil on canvas | 97 × 204 cm



Send Up Salvador Dalí
1973 | Oil on canvas | 120 × 83 cm



First impression of Friesland
1973 | Acrylic on board | 80 x 120 cm

Small Psychedelic Flower
1973 | Oil on canvas | 63 x 93 cm



Renée Geyer
1984 | Oil on canvas | 196 × 155 cm



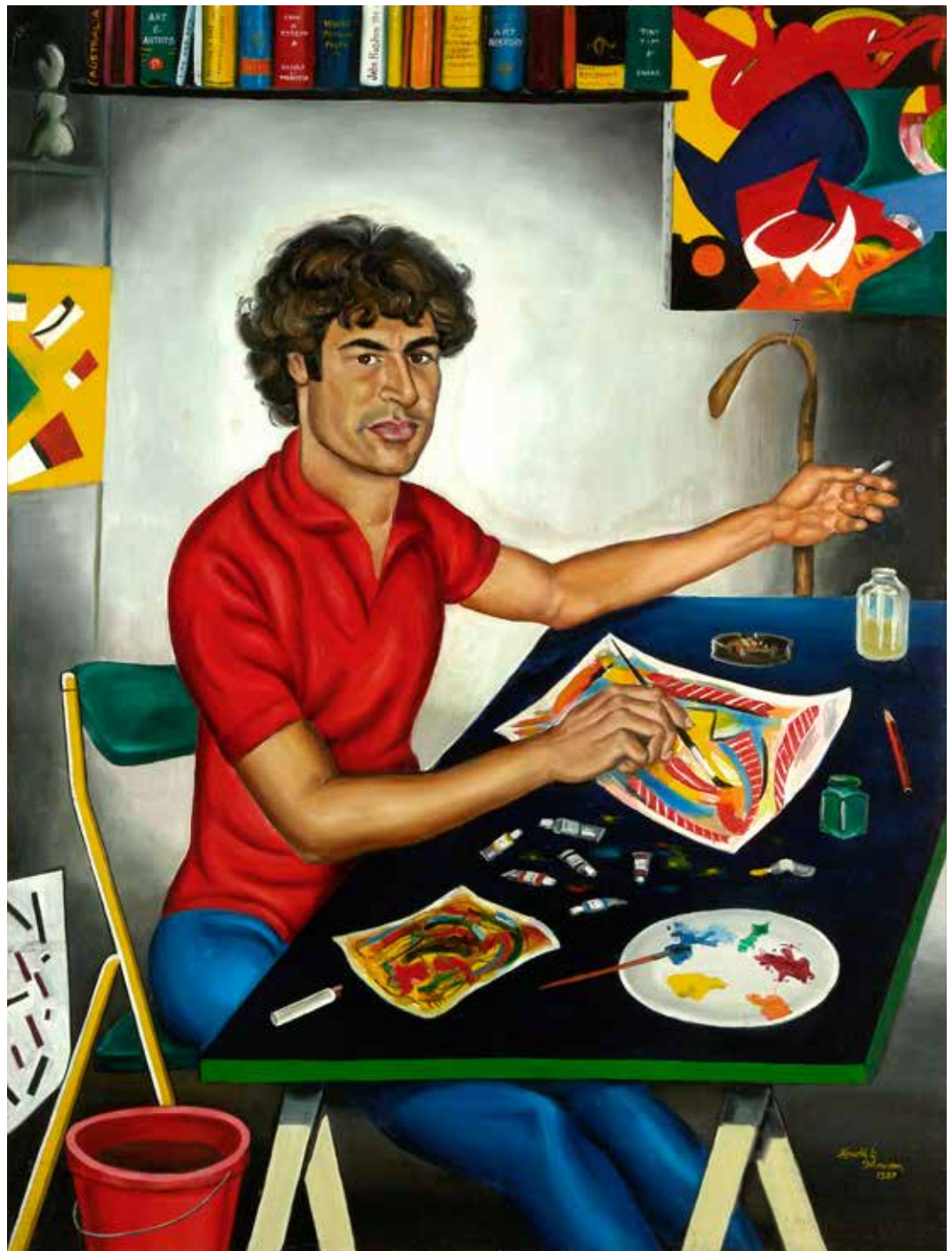
The Mystical Princess Yen Tsun
1984 | Oil on canvas | 88 × 70 cm



Little Hartley Dam
1985 | Oil on board | 67 × 91 cm



Ruark Lewis, artist
1985 | Oil on canvas | 124 × 93 cm



Aboriginal Girl
1955 | Oil on canvas | 62 × 56 cm



Aboriginal Warrior
1988 | Oil on canvas | 184 × 125 cm

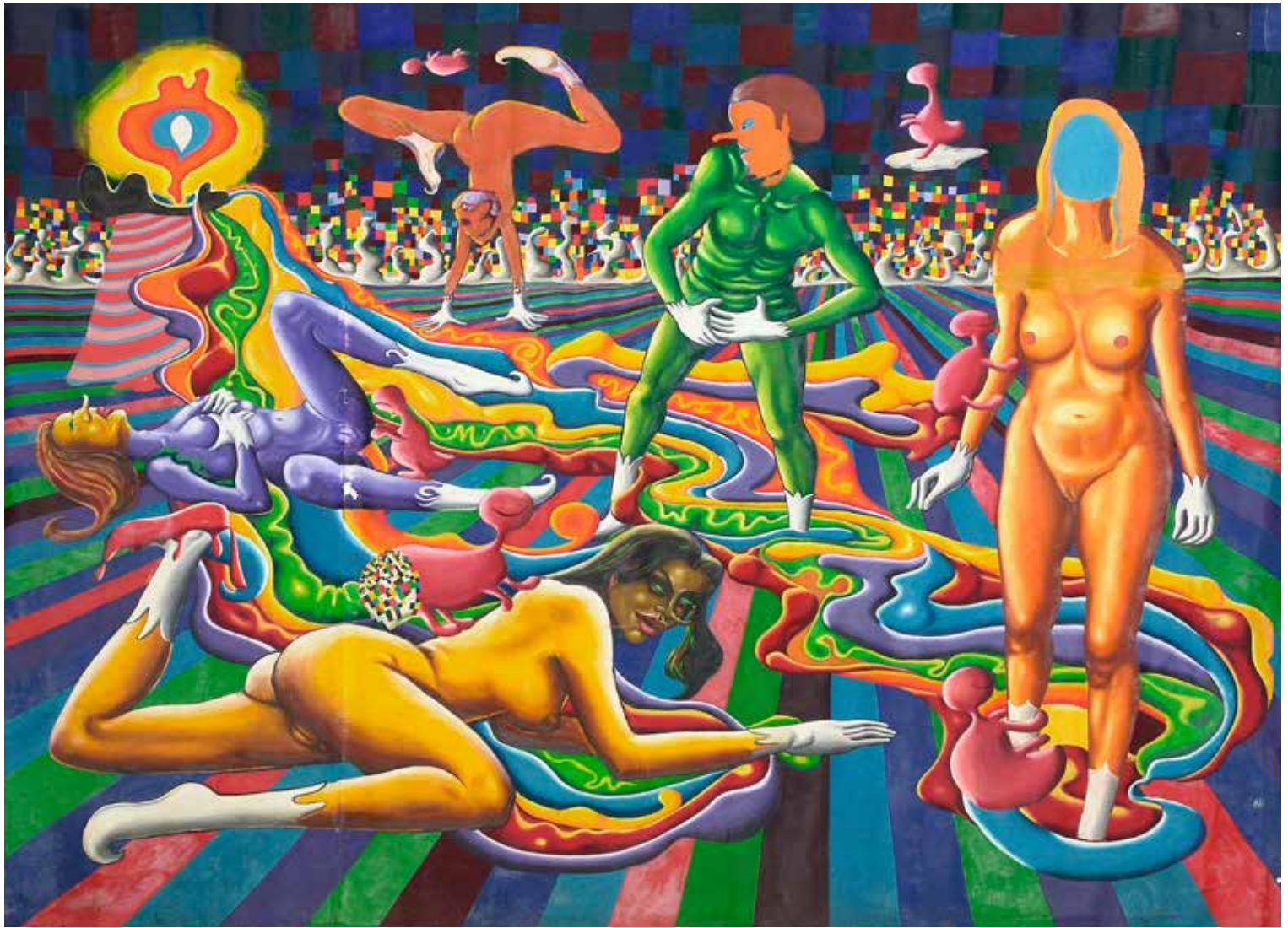


Griffith
1988-89 | Oil on canvas | 70 × 103 cm | Private collection



Dancing under the Sea
1993 | Acrylic on canvas | 270 × 310 cm

Michelle Kennit
1994 | Acrylic on board | 61 × 89 cm



Surfing with Mermaids
1994 | Acrylic on canvas | 91 × 63 cm



Old Man of the Sea and his Nudes
1994 | Oil on canvas | 124 × 149 cm



I Never Believed in Mermaids until I Saw Them on the Harbour
1994 | Oil on canvas | 170 × 261 cm



Entries in Major Art Prize Contests

- Archibald Prize Contest
1946
Old Bill the Bootmaker (William Roberts)
- 1948
Roy René (Mo)
- 1952
Mr. E.V. Timms (Author)
- 1954
Chief Attendant of the Art Gallery NSW
- 1954
The Famous Michael Kmit
- 1955
The Genie
- 1982
Al Grassby
- 1983
Dr Brown and Green Old Time Waltz
- 1984
Renée Geyer
- Wynne Prize Contest
1945
Redfern Lane
- 1948
Weir, Lake Cargelligo
Old Bathurst
- 1949
Sydney
- 1953
Darlinghurst Steps
- 1955
Backyards of Darlinghurst
- 1957
Chapel Lane, Sydney
- 1959
Blast Furnace, Wollongong
- 1982
Sydney Opera House
- 1984
Blue Waters of Sydney Harbour
- Sir John Sulman Prize Contest
1959
Blast Furnace, Wollongong

Exhibitions

- 1958
Wollongong, NSW, Australia (with catalogue)
- 1958
Bissietta Art Gallery, Sydney, Australia
- 1963
Gloucester, NSW, Australia
- 1984
United Artists Gallery, St. Kilda, Melbourne, Australia
- 1985
Pitt Street Studio, Sydney, Australia
- Jan–March 1988
Woodside Hall, Griffith, NSW, Australia
(large retrospective exhibition)
- 1989
Oude Kerk (Old Church), Amsterdam,
the Netherlands (large retrospective exhibition)
- 1991
Moore Park Gallery, Sydney, Australia
- 1992
Inner Circle Gallery, Sydney, Australia
- 1993
Pod Theatre, Darlinghurst, Sydney, Australia
- 1999
'Sydney Eccentrics, A Celebration of Individuals in
Society', State Library of NSW, Sydney, Australia

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