

LEIGH HOBBS



**MR CHICKEN
COMES TO
BAIRNSDALE**
28 FEB - 04 APRIL 2020

EAST GIPPSLAND ART GALLERY

2 Nicholson Street | Bairnsdale 3875
eastgippslandartgallery.org.au | 03 5153 1988

LEIGH HOBBS

Born in Melbourne 1953, Leigh Hobbs is an artist and author best known in Australia and overseas for the twenty three children's books he has written and illustrated featuring his characters Old Tom, Horrible Harriet, Mr Chicken, Mr Badger, Fiona the Pig and the Freaks in 4F.

Some of Leigh's characters have come to life with Old Tom and his owner Angela Throgmorton being adapted into a popular animated ABC TV cartoon series and Horrible Harriet being adapted into a production developed and performed at the Sydney Opera House.

Leigh's 'Mr Chicken Goes to Paris' was shortlisted for the 2010 Prime Ministers Literary Awards. and has been a constant seller in the Louvre Museum bookshop in Paris for eight years. Leigh was Australian Children's Laureate 2016-2017 and in 2019 Leigh was honoured by Australia Post with his own 'Australian Legend' postage stamp.

Leigh says "I've always been fascinated by characters, and regarding the artwork I produce in its various forms and mediums, this

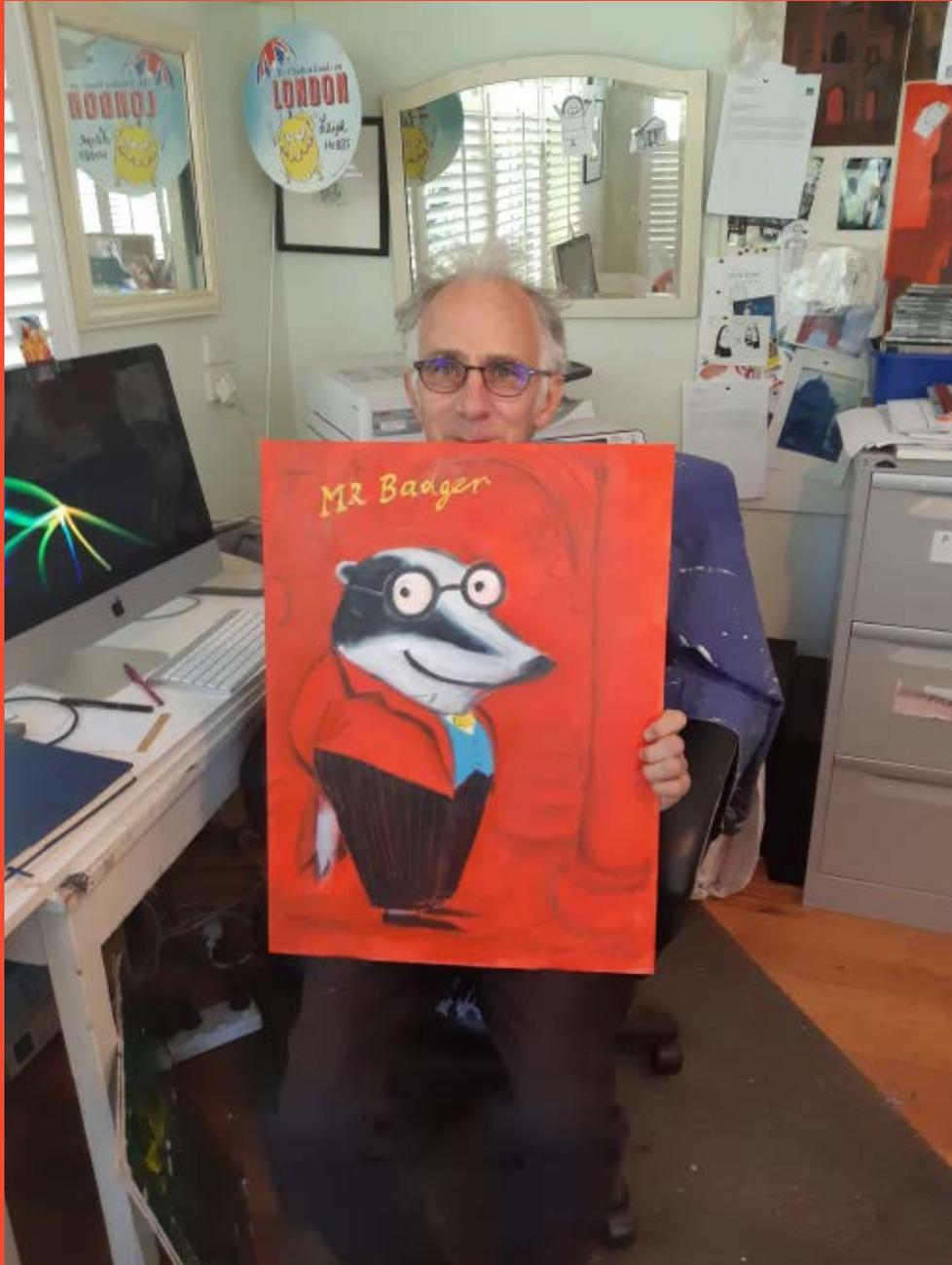
is a constant theme. Children's books have provided me with an excellent way to explore and develop this.

Most children have an innate sense of fun and the absurd. I find their willingness to trust and follow me into a world, that I as an author have created in a story, touching. And, it provokes in me a feeling of responsibility if not protectiveness. My books are 'character studies' rather than being 'issues driven'.

Undeniably my characters Old Tom, Horrible Harriet, Fiona the Pig, The FREAKS in 4F, Mr Badger and Mr Chicken range from the strange to the berserk.

However, while they and my stories may appear to an adult to be subversive, I think children relate to the characters and the relationships between the characters because the themes are classic story telling ones. For example, love, friendship and most terrifying of all perhaps to a child, being deemed 'different!'





Francis Street Bairnsdale: Leigh Hobbs, his sister Jenny and Di Orgill

Leigh spent his early years in Bairnsdale and the Hobbs family lived in Francis Street. Leigh was a student at Bairnsdale Primary School 754, his grade three teacher was Miss Corker, and later at Bairnsdale Technical School. Leigh's father Jack, now aged 96, was a teacher at Bairnsdale Technical School from 1961 - 1966.

"I loved my time in Bairnsdale. Saturday arvo matinees at The Prince Regent Theatre, playing in the 'Tannies', next to the tennis courts, exploring the 'jungle' along the Mitchell River below Riverine Street. It was a wonderful place to grow up and my many memories are all extremely happy ones."





HORRIBLE HARRIET

As well as being an author and illustrator Leigh works as an artist in a wide range of mediums. He designed the colour scheme for the entrance to Melbourne's Luna Park and the creature that sits atop a ride inside the park called the 'spider'. A Flinders Street Station tea-pot he made is in the National Gallery of Victoria, and two caricature sculptures he created for Sydney's Luna Park in the early 1970s are at The Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

East Gippsland Art Gallery Director Crystal Stubbs said "We are thrilled to have someone of Leigh's celebrity exhibit at East Gippsland Art Gallery. His unique characters are instantly identifiable by children across Australia and will be greatly appreciated by children and I'm sure adults, from across Gippsland.

Leigh's success and ability to speak to children through story and illustration is extraordinary. The characters and narratives are humorous and children are immediately enthralled with each word and every illustration.

Leigh is an extraordinary artist who is in a constant state of heightened creativity. He is an illustrator who draws and paints constantly and develops each character into works of art.

You can't help but smile or even giggle when you're immersed in one of Leigh's books!"



Vue de derriere



de Monsieur Poulet

Clair Hobbes