



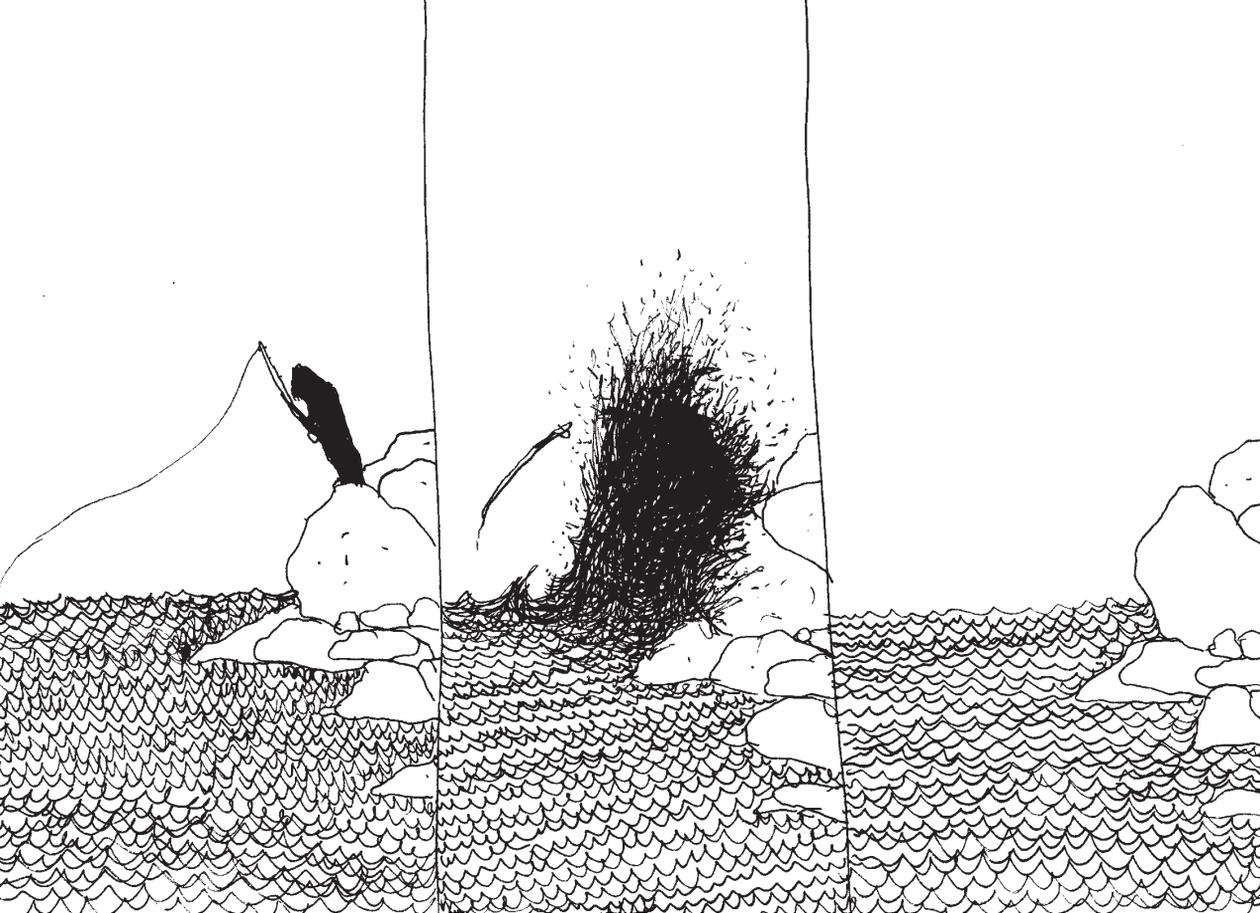
*Woodchop* 2000  
DVD, 8:00 mins  
Filmed by Dave Simpkin



RICHARD LEWER  
NOBODY LIKES A SHOW OFF

CURATOR: KIRRILY HAMMOND

MONASH UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART | MUMA  
1 JULY – 5 SEPTEMBER 2009



*Goodnight* 2004 (detail)  
artist's book, reproduced from drawings in  
permanent marker on paper  
image: 21.0 x 29.7cm

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## Foreword

Continuing MUMA's ongoing series of survey exhibitions by significant artists at mid-career, *Richard Lewer: Nobody Likes a Show Off* focuses upon a decade of work, from the artist's early animations and performance to the ambitious series of paintings and installations of recent years.

Marked by a sceptical humour and a focus upon the darker sides of human behaviour, place and social identity, Richard Lewer's work involves subjective encounters with family, sport, religious and criminal subjects, leading to insightful and absurd narrative reflections on good and evil, life and mortality.

Richard Lewer grew up in Hamilton, New Zealand, and relocated to Melbourne in 1996, where he continues to live and work. Embracing painting, drawing and installation, as well as animation and performance, Lewer is a polymath whose work is richly various in focus and form, as the contributing essayists to this catalogue attest.

Exhibition curator Kirrily Hammond addresses the processes, materiality and work ethic which infect the production and reading of Richard Lewer's intriguing oeuvre. Peter Simpson reflects upon questions of faith, related to matters of art history and the artist's familial and religious upbringing. In counterpoint, Glenn Barkley focuses upon the raw materiality of everyday existence, the tawdry underbelly of human behaviour, and the so-called 'banality of evil' represented in Lewer's 2008 series *True stories – Australian crime*. Kyla McFarlane adopts a literary voice to invoke the multiple senses of kitchen-sink realism and gothic psychodrama which lie at the heart of a range of New Zealand art, film and literature of recent decades. Finally, David Richards invokes the discipline and visceral drama of the boxing ring as testament to the ways in which Richard Lewer puts his 'body on the line' in both art and life.

The entwined rituals of the studio, sport and religion are central to Richard Lewer's work. Equally, the register of marginal voices and vernacular expression animates the artist's oeuvre, from his focus on the culture of criminality, to narratives of failure and redemption exemplified in his celebrated *Stations of the Cross*. Humble in demeanour yet profound in effect, Lewer's work

honours the local cultures of the neighbourhood and sporting club, and the tender expression of family and friendship, whilst meditating on the human condition more broadly. Drawing upon art history as much as crime-writing, poetry as much as pulp fiction, *Richard Lewer: Nobody Likes a Show Off* explores a gritty suburban realism, and the underlying psychologies of fear and desire that rest at the heart of our daily lives.

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It has been a great pleasure to work closely with Richard Lewer to present this first major survey of the artist's work. We congratulate him on the achievement of his practice to date, and hope that the current exhibition and publication serve as a platform for future development.

We would like to acknowledge the collaboration and support of our catalogue designer Yanni Florence, for his inspiring design of this next instalment of MUMA's publication series.

This survey exhibition involves well over one hundred works from public and private collections in Australia and New Zealand, and we are especially grateful to the many lenders – identified in the catalogue list of works – who have entrusted us with the loan of key works for the exhibition.

We are especially grateful to Rex Armstrong and Jennifer Buckley of Orexart in Auckland, Richard's gallery representatives, for their commitment to the research and development of the exhibition, and for their generous involvement in confirming and consolidating New Zealand works for freight and exhibition.

I would like to especially acknowledge exhibition curator, Kirrily Hammond, for her dedicated commitment to the development of the exhibition and publication, which has involved conceptual skill, material sensibility and logistical complexity, and to all of MUMA's marvellous staff and volunteers for their inspiring work.

Finally, we extend our appreciation to Alex Baker, Senior Curator, Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Victoria, for his enthusiastic support in agreeing to officially open the exhibition.

Max Delany  
Director

I have  
Many Impure  
Thoughts

BLESS ME FATHER  
FOR I HAVE SINNED

And these  
Are my Sins

It is 11  
Years Since my  
LAST Confession

I Never  
give to  
Charity

I USE THE  
C-WORD ALOT

I SuFFer  
From Mood  
SWINGS

I will Lie  
Straight to your  
Face



Pages 3-5  
*Pegboard confessions* 2009  
acrylic on pegboard  
dimensions variable  
Private Collections, Auckland, Adelaide  
and Melbourne

ED  
I  
CANT STOP  
SWEARING

MY WISHES  
ARE ALL SELFISH

I Need to  
Be A Better Son  
To my Parents

# I DAY DREAM

I  
Have made  
Fun of the  
ELDERLY

agine  
Events  
Time

I have kept  
on eating even  
When Full

I HAVE  
KICKED  
ANIMALS

I  
And  
M  
Lost

Self Centered

le  
to your

I ALWAYS  
TRY [REDACTED] TO RIDE  
THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT  
FOR FREE

I Fantasise  
about taking  
A Whole town  
hostage

I [REDACTED]  
Secrets From

LUST-  
UGHTS

I Shouldnt  
Stalk Woman

I have  
Evil Fo

**Skill, discipline and training: Process and materiality in the work of Richard Lewer**  
Kirrily Hammond

A story lies at the heart of each and every work by Richard Lewer: from tales of a childhood growing up in New Zealand with a devout Catholic family, to infamous and vicious Australian crimes. Whether the subject is family, sport, religion or crime, Lewer's practice is characterised by an obsessive immersion in his subject matter. Before embarking on a major series of paintings, he researched Australian crime for seven years, reading widely and traveling to specific sites. In preparation for a fight performed for an exhibition, he enrolled in a boxing gym and trained for four months. He has drawn on a lifetime of experiences and memories in his autobiographical paintings about family and religion. With each series of works, Lewer draws strength from first-hand experience and invests that energy into his art. To varying degrees, his subjects are all concerned with human frailty and redemption, struggle and social interaction. It is the expression of individual experience that gives Lewer's works their immediacy, humour and pathos.

Lewer's single-minded commitment to his practice is possibly best demonstrated by *Fist a' cuffs*, a performance that featured in the exhibition *Adrift* at Conical Gallery, Melbourne, in 2001. Lewer challenged fellow artist Luke Sinclair to a boxing match, to be performed according to standard fight regulations, in a boxing ring constructed in the gallery. Characteristically, Lewer immersed himself in this project completely, enrolling at Northside Boxing Gym, enlisting a trainer and undertaking a stringent four-month fitness and training regime in preparation for the fight. The process took Lewer into a boxing subculture, which proved to be a challenging experience and a rich and ongoing source of friendship and inspiration. The rules and language of the gym were an important part of Lewer's training and they made their way into the lexicon of his text paintings. No spitting. No bludging. Nobody likes a show off. While gym culture might be considered alien to many art contexts, the focus and dedication required correlate directly with any art practice – skill, discipline and training are essential elements of both.

Lewer's artistic residency at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne in 2006 provided another opportunity to be immersed in an unfamiliar environment. Lewer spent nine months in the hospital's studio, surrounded by stark, sanitised hallways, constant sickness and trauma, and the coded warnings of the hospital intercom – all of which reminded the artist of Lars von Trier's hospital in *The Kingdom*. Lewer's research and engagement in this environment resulted in the *Get well* series of 2006, which comprised commanding portraits of the founding Sisters of Charity alongside narrative drawings of patients and their physical and emotional states. Lewer's obsessive marks in graphite express the unnerving and at times sinister context in a direct and unmediated way, embodying the intensity of the artist's as well as his subjects' experience.

Drawing forms an important basis of Lewer's practice. He deftly uses graphite and charcoal to create subtle and expressive images on paper as well as vast wall drawings. In his 2007 crime drawings, it wasn't the violent subject matter that first grabbed my attention. It was the indentations in the paper that caught my eye. They could only be made with repetitive jabs of the pencil – aggressive gestures that hinted at the fervor with which the drawings were made. Like clues at a crime scene, the indentations were traces of an artist completely absorbed in his work, willing to enact violence through drawing, thereby summoning and articulating the powerful emotions felt by the perpetrators and victims who were the subject of his research.

Lewer embraces a wide range of media in his practice including drawing, painting, animation and performance. Materials are a key conceptual element of his work. Each material is chosen in relation to the specific meaning, inspiration and site of the work. Perforated acoustic panels collected from police interview rooms were used as painting supports in his series *True stories: Australian crime* 2008. Another series of paintings employs the cloths from billiard tables as an alternate support material – chosen for its link to the night stalker, the case of Californian serial killer Richard Ramirez, who was caught because he bragged around the pool table to his friends. In this simple gesture of material connection, Lewer evokes a pub culture of beer and pool



table camaraderie, enfolding it into the texture of his works. In his 2005 series *It used to be so good*, Lewer drew with marker pens directly onto the shiny slats of Venetian blinds. With their inherent suggestion of voyeurism and the shifting boundaries between public and private space, the blinds were perfect canvases for suburban crime stories such as the *Ponytail bandit*. During a New Zealand residency at McCahon House, Lewer employed household enamel paint for the series *Stations of the Cross* 2008. This medium served to emphasise the domestic nature of the paintings and connected the works to Colin McCahon's practice.

Enamel's unwieldy nature also enabled Lewer to be challenged by the process, as he explains: 'The harder it is to work on a surface, the more I'm attracted to it.'<sup>1</sup> The physicality of the artist's process – whether it is the endurance required for a wall drawing or a rigorous training regime – is an important component of Lewer's practice.

*Drawing is one of the most physical activities. It's not just about sitting at a desk. I draw with my whole body, my whole physical being. I put myself under physical pressure, often working on a scaffold or squatting so my body starts to hurt. It influences the marks; influences the drawing.*<sup>2</sup>

An ethos of punishment and reward operates in Lewer's working process, where he sets out to challenge himself physically and mentally, striving for a genuine, and at times intense, experience of making, which translates unequivocally in his work.

Never afraid to confront a difficult topic, and no doubt sensing its potency, Lewer investigates Catholic confessionals in his recent installation *Pegboard confessions* 2009. In order to make the work he revisited his childhood ritual, attending confession at a Catholic church in the Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy. The small booth was divided by perforated pegboard, a material which evokes memories of a grandfather's tool shed and domesticity, the ideal support for Lewer's text paintings. The resulting installation consists of multiple text panels painted like brightly coloured warnings, filled with the artist's sins. *I never give to charity. I have many impure thoughts. I can't*

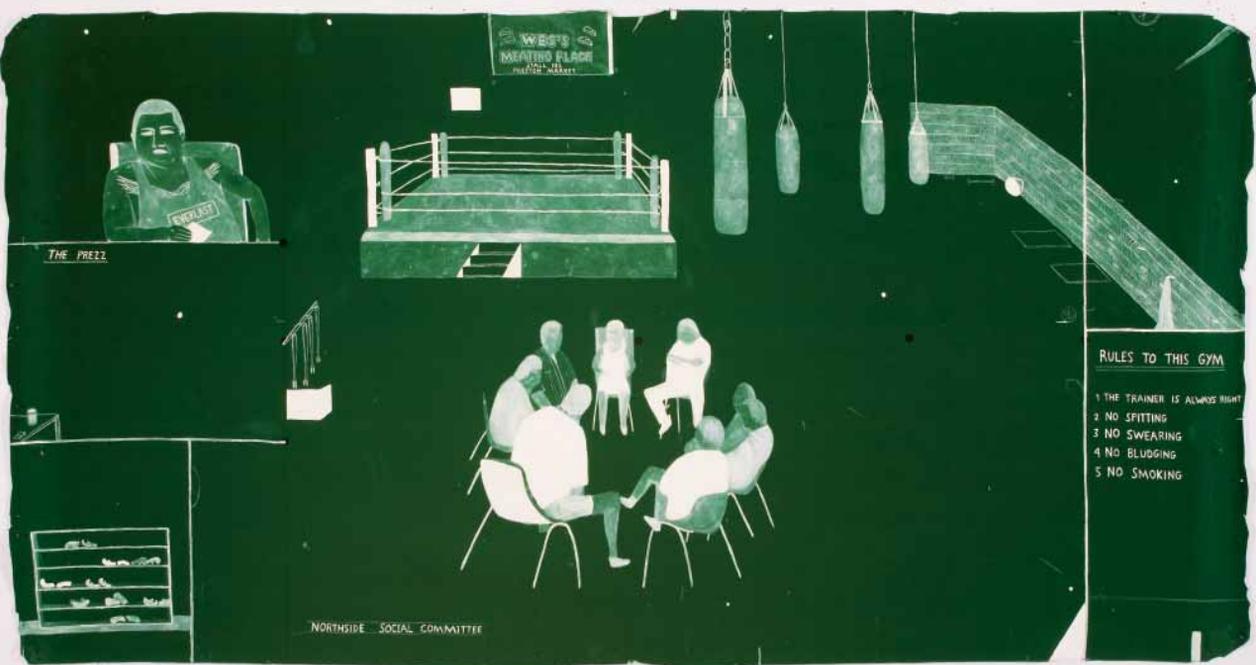
*stop swearing. I will lie straight to your face.* These bravely honest, humorous and confronting confessions cover the wall. Indeed Lewer regularly fills his studio walls with similar phrases, thoughts and homespun philosophies, collected from overheard conversations and everyday banter. They are variously morals to live by, words of warning, random thoughts, and vernacular poetry. As the painted texts start to crowd the studio walls in a cathartic outpouring, Lewer's equally prolific output of images compete for space – claiming a direct relationship to the life of the world around him. The *Pegboard confessions* are both admissions to which we can all relate, and a transparent, self-reflexive expression of Lewer's thinking and working process.

A common factor throughout Lewer's work is the way in which he approaches each artistic project. He is an artist willing to push his own limits and boundaries, to put his body on the line, to embrace unorthodox materials and processes, in order to best encapsulate the truth of his subject. In telling stories of crime, sport, religion or family, he explores aspects of life associated with heightened emotions and extreme situations, motivations and actions. His personal connections to the subjects and sub-cultures give the works their emotional intensity. Lewer's passion, energy and integrity translate into powerful art that carries the cynical, darkly humorous and sincere presence of the artist.

1 Richard Lewer, quoted in Dan Chappell, 'It's more than a game', *Art News*, Autumn 2007, p. 58.

2 Op cit. p.60.

Kirriily Hamond is Assistant Curator – Collection at Monash University Museum of Art, and curator of *Richard Lewer: Nobody Likes a Show Off*.



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*Mother Berchmans Daly* 2006

(from the series *Get well*)

graphite on museum rag board

105.0 x 82.0 cm

Paul O'Brien Collection, Auckland

Above

*Northside Boxing Committee—David (the Prezz), Big Russ,*

*Stu, me (Rash), Adrian, Danny, Mick and Terry* 2008

synthetic polymer paint on billiard-table cloth

100.0 x 200.0 cm

Proclaim Collection, Melbourne

*Ivan Robert Marko Milat 2007*  
(from the series *It starts as an idle thought grows into an*  
*obsession*)  
graphite on museum rag board  
105.0 x 84.5 cm

Page 12-13  
Artist's studio, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne



Who Laughing Now  
Its Time to step up to the Mark  
He makes up these things in his Head  
Build ALL the time  
Dont Be a Lazy cunt  
The Kid is Like A ghost train  
I ASK YOU  
Return  
thanks a very much  
Into the night  
Teach me  
Before you open your Trap  
Feelings the two  
SOFT  
your side  
cruel  
Done Nothing  
wash Away  
Her Out of  
She  
I got A  
fucked up Little  
LIK  
SH  
Lord take me TIME  
to your HOUSE  
to your HOUSE  
Back to BACK  
I AM BACK  
Lustful  
This is your Way  
W



THEY were our neighbours  
have problems  
straight to my Head  
It's personal  
Leave Here  
Hush  
Burning thro  
He made you  
You got it  
DARK DESIRE  
I Dont smile to much  
Don't Forget to Enjoy yourself going  
sometimes Its great to Be Me  
THE RACE IS RUN  
Its all in your head I said  
Whos the MAN NOW  
I will make you hurt  
Four Ladies Having Lunch  
He cant Help it  
Yes Sydney was Nice for A While  
That Lucy Back had red hair  
Festering  
Grow up  
Cut Lunch  
You mean nothing to me  
I cut one of your Arms  
New shorts  
What a Fuckin Egg  
THE Protector  
Kick him in the  
I get work to do  
I am going to need some Land  
There Must Be people trying  
to contact Me  
NASTY  
Is Like Two people  
Spara Us  
NOBODY  
ES A  
NOW OFF  
artless  
ank girls  
Swollen Neck  
Be ON My side  
what the fuck do you want to  
Talk about now  
I have loved  
OK I will Be nice  
Take this where ever you go  
Dark passenger  
our Life  
Lost Inside  
Invisable powers  
Here's Where we part  
Backs  
Faithfully  
Drifting Apart  
Sleep ago  
Now Whos Laugh  
Big girls  
My chips  
are dow  
A cutting remark  
Do not Be decea  
Inside of you Wicked WA  
I Have to Calm Down Sorro  
Look for the accident  
Backs  
Big girls  
Drifting Apart  
Sleep ago  
Now Whos Laugh  
Kick him in the  
I get work to do  
I am going to need some Land  
There Must Be people trying  
to contact Me  
NASTY  
Is Like Two people  
Spara Us



## Richard Lewer's Questions of Faith Peter Simpson

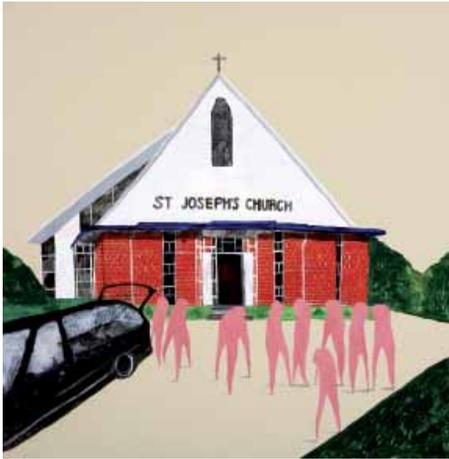
Between 2006 and 2008 a concatenation of personal and professional circumstances brought increasing attention in Richard Lewer's work to aspects of the Roman Catholic religion of his childhood and upbringing. One was a residency at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne in 2006; another was the death in 2007 of his grandmother in Hamilton, New Zealand, which brought him back to his home town and the embrace of family for her funeral in his childhood church. A third was the Colin McCahon Residency in Titirangi, Auckland in 2008,<sup>1</sup> involving renewed engagement with the artist whose name the residency carries – much admired by Lewer in his student days – and who, while not formally a Catholic, was nonetheless preoccupied throughout his career with 'a question of faith' and the iconography of Catholicism.<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that religion had not appeared before or since as a subject for Lewer, for instance in the series *Impending doom (God is everywhere)* 2004 and *Pegboard confessions* 2009, nor that in this period it is at all an exclusive preoccupation, but the events of these years, resulting in the series *Get well* 2006, *As I stepped out into the bright sunshine* 2007 and the fourteen *Stations of the Cross* 2008, made engaging with his childhood religion inescapable.

St Vincent's Hospital, founded in 1893 as a Catholic hospital owned and operated by the Sisters of Charity, is now a major teaching, research and tertiary referral centre situated in Fitzroy close to Melbourne's central business district. Among the works Lewer made during his residency were large portraits in graphite on white museum rag board of several of the Sisters of Charity, who were the original nurses and managers of the hospital when it was founded over a century ago. Basing his drawings on black and white photographs held in the hospital archives, Lewer depicts these Catholic women as both formidable and reassuring. All are clothed in religious habits with crucifixes around their necks. *Mother Berchmans Daly*, a remarkable Irish-born organiser, initially set up St Vincent's and later oversaw the construction of a new hospital and clinical school associated with the University of Melbourne; she eventually

became superior general of the Sisters of Mercy in 1920, dying in 1924. Her strength of character is clearly conveyed in Lewer's skilful portrait. She is enveloped in voluminous black robes against which her chunky white crucifix shows out vividly. The tight smile on her pale, strong-jawed, determined face is a horizontal slit like the opening of a letter box. *Mother Dorothea Devine*, by contrast, depicts an older, more comforting type, wearing glasses, a smile creasing her cheeks, her piety emphasised by the crucified figure hanging round her neck, which shows up strongly against the expanse of her snowy white habit, and echoed by another crucifix on the wall behind her. *Mother Sato Peardon* is youthful, her slight smile in a round face lighting up her dark eyes. Her gaze is calm, straight and confident. She would be a reassuring presence hovering over a sick child, like an angel of deliverance.

In these drawings – drawing always being a significant part of his practice – Lewer makes marvelous use of black on white or white on black contrasts, facilitated by the colours of the religious garments, the black graphite and unmarked white supports. There is nothing cynical or satirical about these portraits. Absent, for instance, is any skeptical contemporary attitude towards the church as an oppressive institution sometimes capable of abusing those in its care. They seem to preserve an awed sense of the church as authoritative, monumental, caring, truth possessing. In Lewer's own words: 'the nun portraits are as integral to the narrative drawings as the sisters themselves are to the history and function of the hospital: an omniscient presence, both benevolent and forbidding'.<sup>3</sup>

Also included in *Get well* are narrative drawings of inhabitants of the contemporary hospital and the varieties of pain and suffering, physical and mental, that they are undergoing. In *Excuse me, visiting hours are now over* 2006 a dark bed-ridden figure, with staring eyes and hands stiffly clasped above a white counterpane, is surrounded by grotesques, like a weird combination of Munch and Casper the (unfriendly) ghost. It is an image of misery, anxiety and fear – a graphic projection of the shrinking patient in the bed. Even the bed itself takes on a nightmarish distortion and oppressiveness. In *Code Blue* 2006 the perspectives are disturbingly skewed;



From the series *As I stepped out into the bright sunlight*  
 Each: enamel on canvas, 66.0 x 66.0 cm  
 Clockwise, from top left:

*St Josephs Church, Hamilton* 2007  
 The Da Vinci Trust, Auckland

*My mother and father and sister and brother* 2007  
 Private Collection, Auckland, New Zealand

*Eternal rest grant unto her oh Lord and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen* 2007  
 Monash University Collection  
 Purchased 2007

*We lift up our hearts. We lift them up to the lord. It is right to give him thanks and praise* 2007  
 Monash University Collection  
 Purchased 2007

we seem to be looking down on scenes in a hospital ward as if from a spy hole in the ceiling. In *Good to see you back Mr Cruel* 2006, a female patient is surrounded by agitated and ambiguous shapes and lines which convey an impression of neurasthenic intensity and discomfort. Mr. Cruel, a hooded, bearded figure, may be as much a figment of fever and hallucination as any actual visitor. The memory of Goya haunts these powerful drawings.

A point of connection between *Get well* and *As I stepped out into the bright sunlight* is *Nana Mills*, a portrait of Lewer's grandmother, whose death and burial brought about the family reunion that occasioned the 2007 series. Nana Mills is a kind of spiritual sister to the nuns of St Vincent's. Smiling affectionately, she is dressed in her Sunday best, a bunch of white flowers pinned to her striped pink blouse. Her head and torso are enclosed in an oval reminiscent of the sort of cameo brooch she may well have worn. The circle may also suggest a kind of halo, a reflection of her piety and the love held for her by her family. A thick black border makes of the portrait an object of mourning.

In this series Lewer uses commercial hi-gloss enamel house paint on canvas. This is a difficult medium to control but its slippery indecisiveness adds both distance and emotional intensity to the presentation. In Emily Cormack's words: 'The figures ... seem to have been wrestled into form ... with the family groupings, and narrative scenes isolated on planes of common house paint cream. [Lewer] describes how painting these moments was an unpredictable, uncontrollable process – with the paint behaving willfully and Lewer unwilling to ebb this flow.'<sup>4</sup>

The series title derives from the opening lines of S.E. Hinton's teenage novel of small-town gang violence, *The Outsiders* (1967), possibly better known to Lewer in Francis Ford Coppola's 1983 film version, which coincided with Lewer's own teenage years and which opens with the same (slightly misquoted) line.<sup>5</sup> All the outdoor scenes in Lewer's series (as distinct from those inside the church) are bathed in bright sunshine, so that the figures all cast strong shadows; everything has a glossy patina lent by the house-paint medium. In *St Joseph's Church, Hamilton* 2007 an empty hearse sits outside the modest suburban church with its red-brick façade waiting

for the coffin. Standing around are humanoid figures representing mourners reduced to their most elemental humanity as forked pink shapes.<sup>6</sup> The vestigial rendering of the figures was in part imposed upon the painter by the recalcitrance of his medium, but their reductiveness is somehow simultaneously distancing and engaging. *We lift up our hearts* 2007 is a scene inside the church overwhelmingly dominated by a statue of the risen Christ – red-robed, pink-skinned, arms outstretched, towering over the plainly decorated building and the sparse congregation huddled in the pews like pink blobs. This is no doubt the vision of Jesus held by the dead woman, whose coffin is just visible in the foreground – Christ triumphant, saviour of the world, the guarantor of eternal life. *My mother and father and sister and brother* 2007 is one of several group portraits in the series, with family members brought together by the death of the matriarch, awkward in their best black clothes, standing shoulder to shoulder in front of bands of greenery and a simple black picket fence. They are more carefully differentiated by clothing and features than the pink homunculi in other pictures, though the wobbly indistinction of their features makes of them a generic family rather than anything more individualised – the rituals by which we handle death are universal and almost anonymous. In *Eternal rest grant her O Lord* 2007 the scene shifts to the graveside, offering a kind of God's eye perspective of the coffin sitting in the centrally situated grave, the surrounding pink, bare-forked mourners casting sharp black shadows in the blinding sunlight. Only the white-and-purple robed priest is afforded the dignity and individuality lent by clothing. The rest are, as it were, stripped naked by grief.

A year later Lewer was back in New Zealand again, this time in the flash new studio perched like a tree-house within the towering rain-forest of Titirangi, contemplating the falling rain (it was an unusually wet spring) and the daunting example of the great Colin McCahon who had painted some of his finest mid-career series nearby, such as *French Bay*, 1954-59, *Northland panels* 1958 and *Elias* 1959. Lewer had always aspired to paint a Stations of the Cross, familiar to him from childhood and renewed through his recent return. As he was well aware, the Stations became a major motif for McCahon

from the mid-1960s, stimulated by commissions from Catholic churches. McCahon had largely abandoned figurative imagery by this stage, so he never painted a *Stations* which treated the sequence narratively.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, it was the bare numerals 1 to 14, (or, more often, I to XIV), that he highlighted in *The shining cuckoo* 1975 or *Teaching aids, Clouds and Rocks in the sky* of 1975-76. Lewer, however, swerving away from McCahon in this respect, engaged directly with traditional iconography of the *Stations* in rendering the series as a figurative narrative.

As in *As I stepped out ...* Lewer again uses hi-gloss enamel paint, but instead of canvas he painted his *Stations* on framed reproductions (not originals) fossicked from junk shops or picked up for a song at suburban auctions. These came in assorted shapes and sizes, variously framed in styles redolent of 1970s and 80s domestic interiors. Perhaps it was the element of nostalgia which rendered these pictures interesting to Lewer, though he proceeded to cover the images entirely with a ground of cream paint, leaving only the frames visible. What green-faced Oriental model, sparkling marine panorama or autumnal rustic scene lies behind particular *Stations* we will never know. It was, I suspect, the desire to re-connect with the environment of childhood – in which the *Stations* first became familiar to him through the gaudy polychrome plaster versions in St Joesph's, Fairfield, where he weekly attended mass – that accounted for the unusual choice of support.

The figures in the familiar Christian narrative are painted according to the same conventions he had adopted earlier, that is to say, pink flesh-coloured figures in drastically simplified form. Onlookers of and participants in Christ's drama coalesce into a scarcely differentiated mass. The exceptions are Jesus himself, who, as in *We lift up our hearts*, is always robed in blood-red, the same colour that streams from his crown of thorns and marks his stigmata. Mary is identified by a white sash and veil (also used for the winding sheet in *Jesus is laid in the sepulchre*), while black is used for the judges in *Jesus is Condemned to Death*, for weapons and for the mysterious small architectural rectangles (spy holes?) that recur throughout. The only other colour in this simplified schema is the dark brown of the cross and crown

of thorns. Except for the first and last *Stations* the *Cross* recurs in every image, its stark geometry – varying according to whether it is carried on Christ's shoulders, lies across his fallen body, falls prone on the ground as he is nailed to it, or stands emphatically upright during the crucifixion itself – articulates the pictorial space and defines the role of the *dramatis personae* throughout all the permutations of the story. While respectfully conforming to a tradition validated by religious and art history, in their violence and immediacy, Lewer's *Stations* are not so remote in feeling from his other crime series of recent years; Jesus was a victim of execution, and crime statistic, too.

Catholicism, these three series suggest, provides Lewer less with a system of belief than with a cast of characters, a set of rituals, a slew of memories, a conduit to the matrix of family and childhood, and a visual language for registering a world of suffering, pain, violence, comfort, pity and belief. You don't need to share the faith to be moved and impressed by its sustaining efficacy for his art.

- 1 Richard Lewer's residency at St Vincent's Hospital took place from February-December 2006: and at the McCahon House from September-November 2008.
- 2 Colin McCahon's *A Question of Faith* 1970 (private collection, California) provided the title for a survey of his religious work first exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in 2002 and later shown in Wellington, Auckland, Melbourne and Sydney, 2002-04
- 3 Richard Lewer, quoted in Emma Bugden, 'It's getting better all the time', *Richard Lewer: Get Well*, Olexart, Auckland, 2006.
- 4 Emily Cormack, *Richard Lewer: As I stepped out into the bright sunshine*, Oedipus Rex Gallery, Auckland, 2007.
- 5 The novel (and film) actually begin: 'When I walked out...'
- 6 These figures make an interesting comparison with those of early paintings by Jeffrey Harris, another New Zealand painter with Melbourne connections.
- 7 In some early examples McCahon dispersed the fourteen stations across a figuratively represented landscape, as in *The fourteen stations of the Cross* 1966, Auckland Art Gallery, a sequence in acrylic on paper.

Peter Simpson is Director of The Holloway Press at The University of Auckland. Among the dozen or so books he has written or edited are *Answering Hark: McCahon/Caselberg: Painter/Poet* (2001), *Wood Engravings by Leo Bensemann* (2004), *Colin McCahon: The Titirangi Years 1953-1959* (2007) and *Peter Peryer Photographer* (2008). He is also a curator, having curated three Colin McCahon exhibitions; and is currently preparing a survey exhibition and monograph on Leo Bensemann (1912-86).





*Stations of the Cross* 2008  
enamel on found framed board, 14 panels, various dimensions  
Monash University Collection  
Purchased 2009





Richard Lewer: He Must Have Known  
Glenn Barkley

1.

Being an artist sometimes involves the ability to find spaces between worlds, and then walking, or working, in those gaps. This might entail giving the mind over to the potentiality of another life.

In the case of Richard Lewer we see an artist who for a long time has found a suitable crack between the role of art and life. A particular type of life anchored within the ritualistic. The worlds of sport and its rituals: skills, discipline, training. The church and its relevance to the contemporary condition, and a sort of default position, when the reality of death is borne home.

The combination of ritual and death is at the centre of Lewer's works that take true crime as their subject matter. There is the ritual of the studio, and its tropes of work, exploration and dialogue. And there are the far more sinister rituals of murder and crime scenes, with their combination of order and disorder. The world of true crime provides a dark mirror when held against that of the creative world.

Walking into Richard Lewer's studio whilst he was at work on the series that would become *True stories – Australian crime* 2008 was to walk into something resembling the clichéd, televisual version of a murderer's bedroom. The walls were covered in images taken from cheap pulpy murder books, crappy TV crime shows and paintings that transmogrified all this material into succinct images that mystified the subject – whilst also depicting it as something both malevolent and compelling.

The acoustic tiles taken from the ceilings of police stations, embedded with the stories and whispers of countless interrogations – Where were you? What did you do? – provide the palimpsest upon which the action takes place. Enamel paint sits on these surfaces, glossing in and over the facts, and seeping into the pores of the boards themselves, like blood oozing into a cheap tacky carpet. Figures become featureless, bodies turn into bloody spirits, and facts are summarised with a seeming lack of detail. But to those in the know, they are full of anecdote and clues.

We start to recognise images that despite, our best intentions, have penetrated into us. Here's

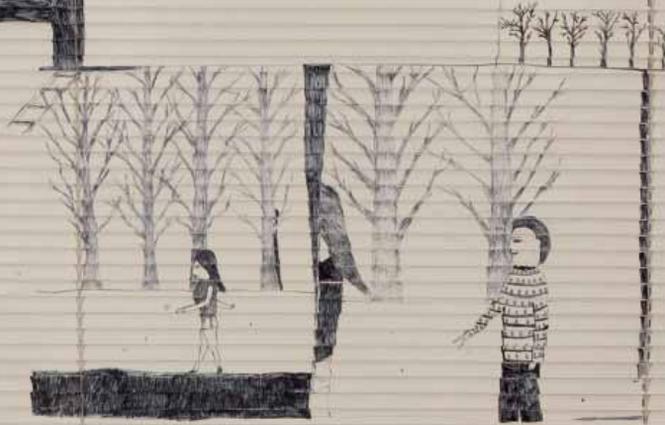
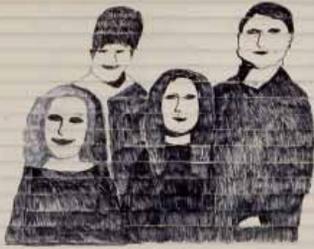
Martin – we always thought he was a bit weird ... Those boys – we knew they were strange but who would'a thought? ... That poor girl – but, you know maybe she dun it ... some people are just born bad.

2.

Lewer's work fits within a pattern of behavior, and cultural history, that isn't particularly radical – if you think these works are direct and to the point, try reading the sources from which they come. The paintings take a step back from the crimes themselves to somehow comment on the sensationalism of the true crime industry. Artists have a responsibility to deal with this material in a way that doesn't degrade and cheapen through mis-appropriation of culture or meaning (as opposed to the CI channels and shows such as *Serial Killer Sunday* for instance). They also have a responsibility to the victims themselves. This might be the difference between art and illustration. To deal with something in the abstract and transform it goes beyond simply rehashing the tale of woe itself. The true crime narrative in the wrong hands is wooden and dull, bordering on, or crossing into the inappropriate. Lewer's *True stories – Australian crime* succeeds in placing us back in the centre of the action, both materially and metaphorically, and its power lies in weaving these true stories and materials back into the narrative of the reader's or viewer's life.

What is it about true crime that draws us to it? Why it is that artists in particular see it as such a well-spring of ideas? To my way of thinking it has something to do with the normality of the whole thing – to use an oft-quoted phrase, the banality of evil. It's the collision of the most powerful of human emotions – hate, love, obsession – with the boring realities of day to day existence. Like someone trying to write an opera in their living room or knocking out the great Australian novel in the spare room – a lesson in 'how simple, bland beginnings might prologue a ludicrous end'<sup>1</sup>.

The true crime narratives create a situation where a photo of you (yes and it is you, the person who never thought anything would happen, you, the person just going about your business, living in a town where these things just don't happen) at a backyard BBQ starts to revert into something all the more sinister when you go missing or worse,



are slain, and this becomes the image, the cipher, with which we identify the crime or motivation. Or its stand in.

Here you are on a holiday, everything going so well, having the trip of your life. And then all of a sudden, this same image becomes a photo of a vicious murderer caught candidly standing hands in pockets, in a carpark, near the sea.

Let's not forget the heroics of normal people – this lady fought so hard she made the killer leave a footprint. This one didn't give up – here the clue is the killer's fingerprints, a boot mark in the hallway, near the phone table, DNA under the fingernails. These people didn't deserve to die, these things don't happen here. Funny though, they do all the time, and everyday.

3.

The paintings in *True stories – Australian crime* are like windows into the killers', victims' and most importantly, the artist's world. The creative act and its outcome. The ensemble is structured like a series of clues laying sprawled, first across the studio floor, and later spread out, 'Like a patient etherised upon a table'.<sup>2</sup> Now, on the gallery walls, the work reads like a poem, dedicated to those who have done and those who have been done to. Art is like a form of criminal profiling in that it offers pure speculation before truth. It wouldn't hold up in a court of law. In Lewer's work it's all sensation and the sensational – the unmistakable, the tawdry and things best left forgotten.

And yet, there's nothing to see here folks. Well maybe nothing or maybe everything. Just the raw material of the pedestrian and the everyday. Acts of violence and criminality breed their own democracy. It could be anywhere and anyone. That's the beauty and the terror of it.

1 Alan Wearne, 'Chatswood: Ruth Nash Speaks', *The Australian Popular Songbook*, Giramondo Poets, Artarmon, 2008, p. 6

2 T.S. Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', [1915], *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, Faber, London, 1974

Glenn Barkley is Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney. This text is a revised and expanded version of an earlier text, 'It's Startling to Get Very Creepy Around Here, Richard Lewer and the Art of Crime', Block Projects, Melbourne, 2008.



Page 19  
*Ponytail bandit* 2005  
(from the series *It used to be so good*)  
marker on Venetian blind, 118.0 x 158.0 cm

Above  
*True stories – Australian crime* 2008  
(detail: *You are a complete disappointment*)  
enamel on acoustic board  
Ken and Lisa Fehily Collection, Melbourne



*True stories – Australian crime 2008*  
(detail: *I must be better to my wife*)  
enamel on acoustic board  
Ken and Lisa Fehily Collection, Melbourne



*True stories – Australian crime 2008*  
(detail: *Walsh Street shootings*)  
enamel on acoustic board  
Ken and Lisa Fehily Collection, Melbourne

Stranger  
Danger

Fill  
ME With  
ALL your HATE

GET OUT  
OF THAT  
Fuckin Bed  
Cunt

Know Where  
We can get  
a good T-  
Bone from  
around here

FAT  
WHORE



MIDGETS

I  
MUST BE  
BETTER TO  
MY WIFE



BE  
Careful of  
Small towns

THEY  
Told ME  
I would BE  
OK



You never  
Seem To  
Notice Me  
AT ALL

You  
got No  
Friends

ITs Starting  
To Get Very  
CREEPY  
Around Here



MUMMY

I Like  
Your Hair  
ALOT

I COME  
FROM A  
NORMAL  
FAMILY

True stories – Australian crime 2008  
enamel on acoustic board  
Ken and Lisa Fehily Collection,  
Melbourne

CUNT

Please  
God MAKE  
Them go  
AWAY



You Never  
Answer MY  
Phone Calls



BLOODY  
AMATEURS



SHE'S  
A MOLE

JAILBAIT

ARE  
THE LIGHTS  
OFF

You are a  
complete  
Disapointment

WHO THE  
FUCK ARE  
YOU WHEN  
YOU ARE AT  
HOME

Theres  
NO place  
like home

THE  
DIRTIES



I  
MARRIED  
A MONSTER

I  
GOT  
DEPRESSION

Damp: A Hamilton Fiction  
Kyla McFarlane

You got really rotten weather it's so hard, I know ...  
Tell me where a weatherman should start,  
When he's miles from his sunshine ...  
Promise you the warmest winter fire,  
When outside its freezing cold ...  
Promise you the bluest summer sky,  
It'll shine just for you ...  
*The Outlook for Thursday*, DD Smash, 1983

They reckon that Hamilton gets way more hours of sun than Auckland, but I say that's bullshit, eh.

When I look out my bedroom window, all I see is this wet grass. Never dries out. Then there's all these bloody big slugs going up and down the side of the house. In the cracks between the bricks. Yeah, and I always get a cold, wet arse from the picnic tables at the lake on the other side of town.

You get the idea. It's bloody damp round here.

:::

Anyway, who cares? I'm out amongst it. Stepping up to the mark. Rugby practice two nights a week after school and the game on Saturdays. Second fifteen hooker.

I do pretty good. Could do better.

:::

Nothing ever happens here. Not really.

The only one time it did was when Stacey from down the road's little sister drowned in her swimming pool a couple of years back.

I saw this myself. It was full on, eh.

I was biking home from cricket practice. I always went past Stacey's place in those days even though it was a bit out of my way. I kind of thought she was pretty cool.

Thought I had a chance.

So I ended up riding past her front gate twice a week after practice, just in case.

Just in case what? Shit, I dunno ...

Stacey never even spoke to me or anything. But she was sort of nice. I made her this really choice mix tape once. Took me ages. One whole Saturday afternoon listening to the radio, waiting for the right songs to come on.

Waiting to press Play and Record.

Thought I might knock on the door one day and give it to her. Then I sort of lost my nerve or something, ended up chucking it in the bin.

Anyway.

That day, I turned the corner into her street and there was her little sister floating face down in the pool by the driveway.

She looked like some weird, giant doll. Her skin was all blue and sort of puffy ... yeah, and her dark hair was all thick and slimy looking. Kind of like drifting seaweed.

It was really creepy, eh.

I dumped my bike by the front gate and climbed over the slatted fence. I thought I could go drag her out, but she was stuffed. Way dead already.

Swear I didn't touch her. I just stood there at the edge of the pool feeling pretty weird. That was shock, I suppose.

But next minute her Mum's running down the drive screaming and stuff, really psycho. She caught my eye and I took off down the side of the house, ran all the way home through other people's back yards.

:::

There's nothing more to tell about that. Its ancient history.



*Alone and unattended* 2005  
(from the series *It used to be so good*)  
watercolour and PVA glue on canvas  
75.0 x 75.0 cm  
Private collection, New Zealand

But Mum won't stop going on about it. Gran comes round on Sunday nights for a roast after church and they talk about it with my Aunty over the dishes. It's always the same! Stuff like how God loved that little girl more than we did.

As if.

After the dishes, me and my brother flick our cousins' legs with the wet tea towels.

:::

I should try to be more prayerful.

Yeah. And think better of people. Tell the truth ... Love myself. But not too much ... Stop using the f-word. Stop being scared of the dark like I'm still some little kid, for God's sake.

What I should do is stop taking the Lord's name in vain, eh.

:::

My favourite All Black is Richard Loe.

Loey from Moolooland. He's this dirty bastard front rower. An enforcer. No doubt about it. Famous for eye gouging in the NPC final. Oh, and that king hit he dropped on that dumb Aussie Corrozza after the Bledisloe Cup try ... that was all over the telly. Yeah, he was Australia's Most Wanted for a while after that. Me and my cousin pissed ourselves laughing over that one ...

Not that I'd do that, eh. That shit gets you straight to the sin bin.

Or worse.

I tackle hard though. Once coach got hold of Dad after one of our games. 'Your son's a weedy little bugger', he said. 'But he's got some grit, eh'.

Dad said, 'Oh yeah'.

:::

I saw something in the river once.

We were driving back home from up north. It was grey and misty. I was sitting in the back seat with my sister and my brother. Mum and Dad were in the front.

I looked out the car window and there was this massive eel coming half out of the Waikato. It was black and shiny and thrashing around, like it was trying to get away from something in that shit-brown water.

I punched my brother in the arm. I told him to look. I rolled down the window to see better and the rain started drifting in on my face. But the road had bent away from the river and I couldn't see it any more through the bushes. My stupid dick of a brother didn't believe I'd seen it at all.

Game on!

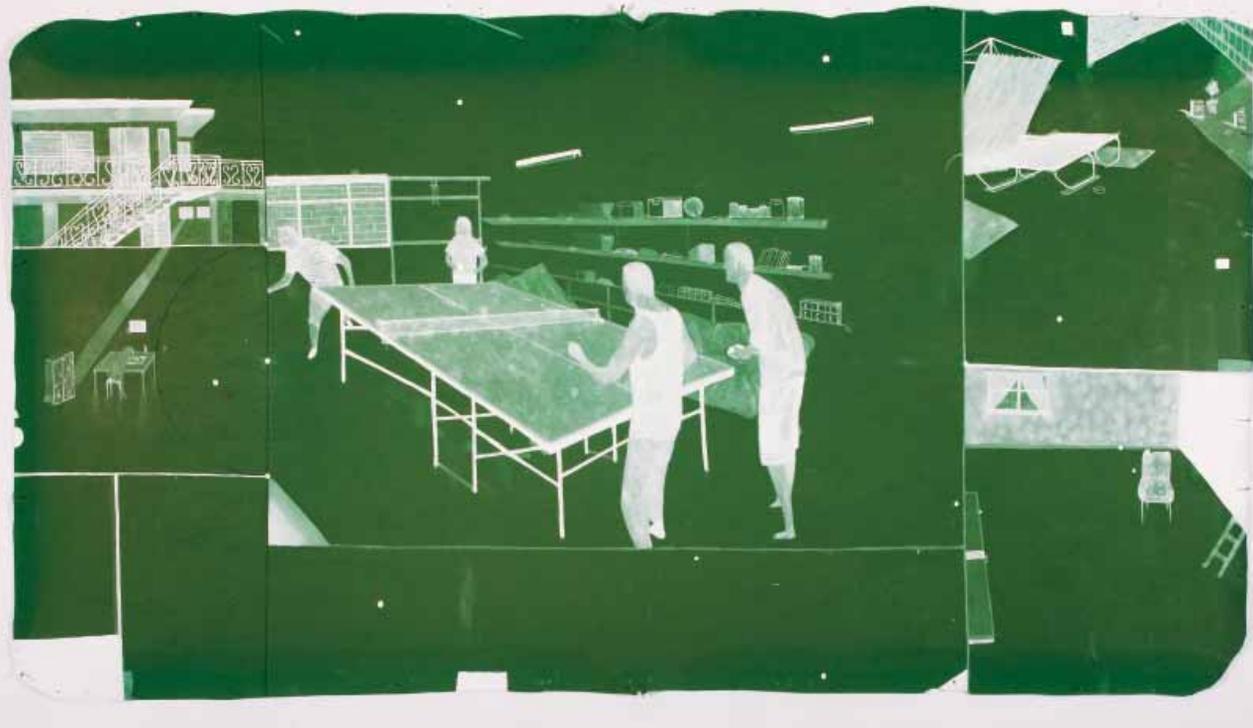
We reached over my sister and dead legged each other until Dad turned around from the front seat and gave us a glare. Then Mum said, 'put your seatbelts back on, you two', without turning around to see if they were undone or not.

The drive home smelt like wet jersey.

:::

I should probably try to be a better person, in future.

Dr Kyla McFarlane is Assistant Curator – Exhibitions at Monash University Museum of Art.

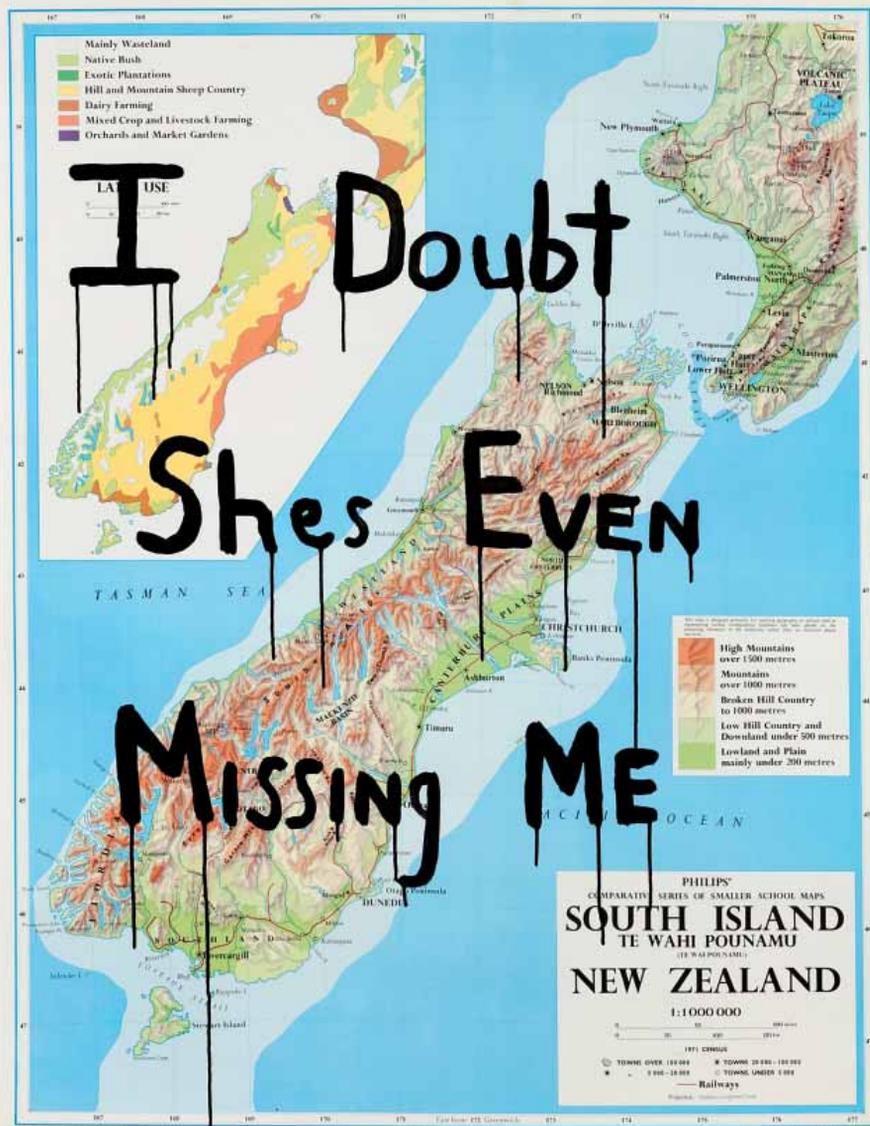


*Mike, Jeremy, Pat, Max and me playing table-tennis in Mike's shed 2008*  
synthetic polymer paint on billiard-table cloth  
100.0 x 200.0 cm  
Artbank Collection



Above  
*Final school map 2004*  
acrylic on map  
116.0 x 183.0 cm

Opposite  
*I doubt shes even missing me 2008*  
acrylic on map  
117.5 x 91.7 cm



I Doubt

Shes Even

Missing ME

- Mainly Wasteland
- Native Bush
- Exotic Plantations
- Hill and Mountain Sheep Country
- Dairy Farming
- Mixed Crop and Livestock Farming
- Orchards and Market Gardens

- High Mountains over 1500 metres
- Mountains over 1000 metres
- Broken Hill Country to 1000 metres
- Low Hill Country and Downland under 500 metres
- Lowland and Plain mainly under 200 metres

PHILIPS' COMPASSIBLE SERIES OF SMALLER SCHOOL MAPS  
**SOUTH ISLAND**  
 TE WAHI POUNAMU  
 (THE WAIPOUNAMU)  
**NEW ZEALAND**

1:1,000,000

0 100 200 Kilometres  
 0 100 200 Miles

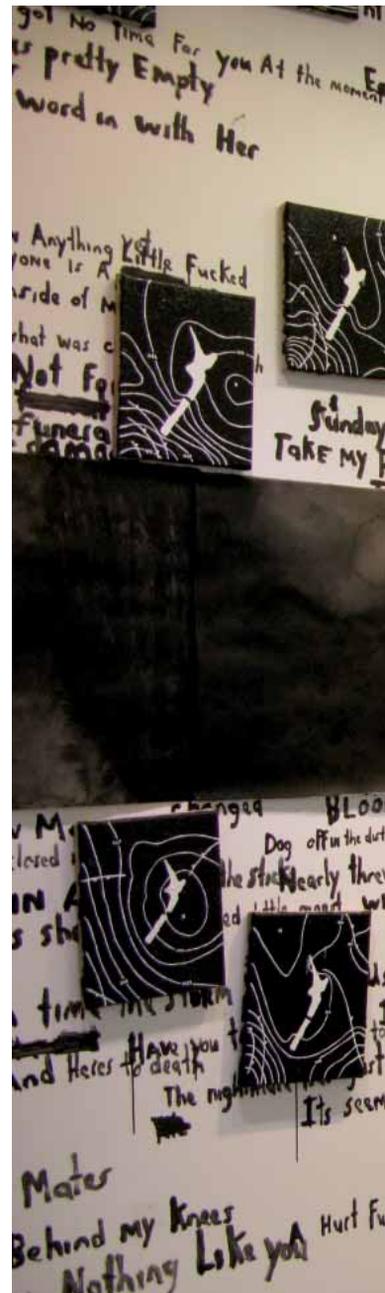
1771 CHURCHES  
 TOWNS OVER 10,000    TOWNS 2,500 - 10,000  
 TOWNS 1,000 - 2,500    TOWNS UNDER 1,000

Railways

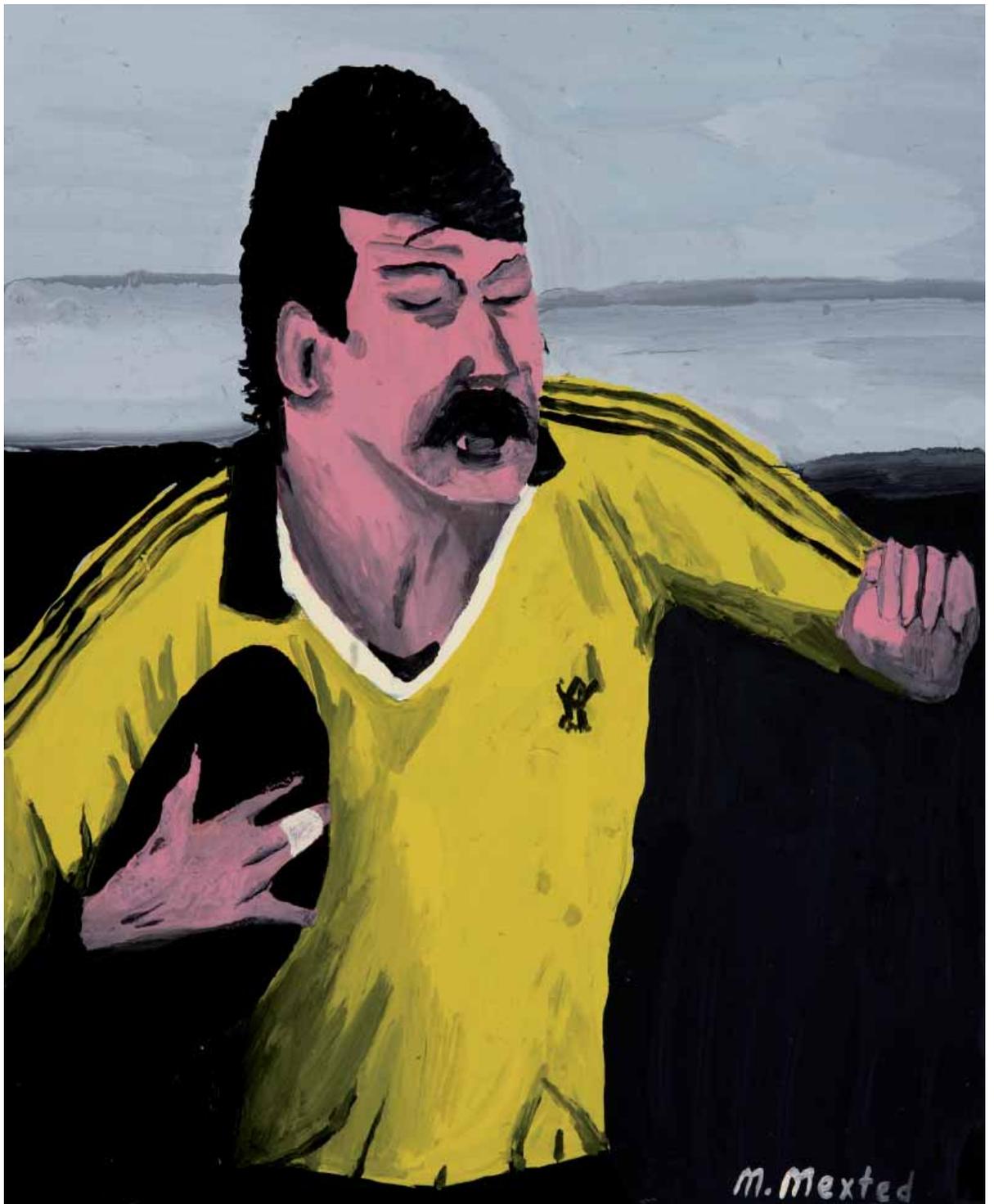
Opposite  
Studio image, Colin McCahon House Residency, French  
Bay, Tiritangi, New Zealand, 2008

Page 36  
*M. Mexted* 2007  
(from the series *As I stepped out into the bright sunlight*)  
enamel on canvas  
30.7 x 25.6 cm

Page 37  
*A. Dalton* 2007  
(from the series *As I stepped out into the bright sunlight*)  
enamel on canvas  
30.7 x 25.6 cm







m. Mexted



A DALTON

## Your lucky day

David 'The Prez' Richards

Up three concrete steps you enter the training area. There are two rings at either end of the hall, with fifteen bags in between. The energy hits you straight away. Nights like this make your guts churn because you know what to expect – pain and plenty of it.

No time to waste getting ready. Wraps on, then gloves. A few quick stretches then onto the bags. George, one of the trainers, bellows out his demands: push ups ... triceps ... squats – in between punching drills.

If you thought it couldn't get worse, it just did: 'Time to spar'. Vaseline is applied to the face. Headgear on. Mouthguard in. Climbing through the ropes the adrenalin rush is incredible. Your whole body is getting hotter. The sweat is seeping from your pores. Your hands have a slight tremble and your legs are getting weaker.

Bell rings ... Both men approach each other from opposite sides of the ring. Arms outstretched, gloves touch as a sign of respect.

Rash moves back. This is the distance he must maintain to survive the next three minutes. His opponent is known as the Tank – for good reason.

Rash jabs out his left hand with speed and accuracy. When there is an opening the right hand connects as well. Dodging, weaving and using his foot speed he evades the punches of the heavier combatant. Tank cannot land a punch but it won't stay that way for long. Suddenly, finding himself in a corner with Tank closing in, panic starts to set in.

Gloves up to protect his face, elbows tucked in to prevent rib damage, but the punches still get through. Tank is at his most brutal. 'Rash move' yells Maurice the trainer. Sweat running into eyes. Strength leaving his body. Struggling to breathe. He knows he is in trouble.

30 seconds to go he hears a voice from somewhere in the distance. Instinct takes over. Somehow he spins out of the corner. He's in the clear. He must stay out of range. His body cannot withstand another onslaught.

Bell goes. Training finished. Shoulders slumped with fatigue. 'Your lucky day Rash'. Rash grins. Just another day at Northside.

David Richards is President of the Northside Boxing Gym, Melbourne

*Fist a' cuffs* 2001  
DVD, 3:30 mins  
directed and produced by Mike Metzner,  
Snapper Screen Productions

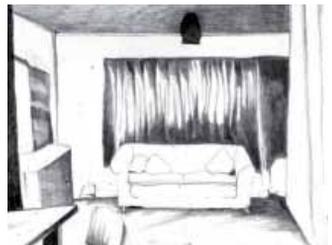
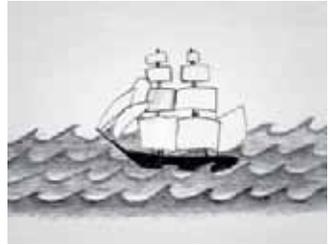
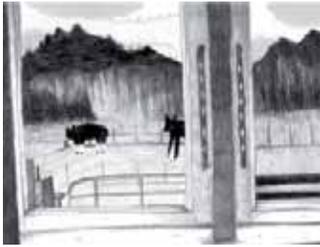




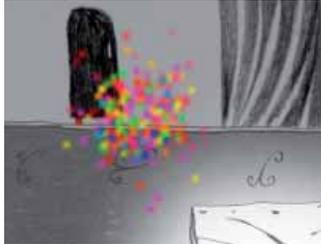


*Amen* 2004  
(from the series *Impending doom (God is everywhere)*)  
ink on Formica table top, 91.0 cm diameter  
Collection of Kate & Tim Martin, Auckland

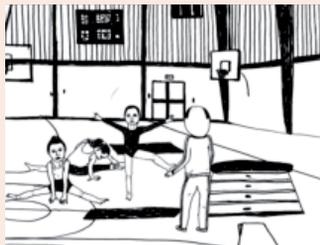
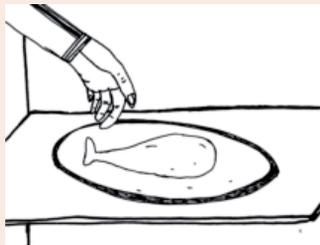
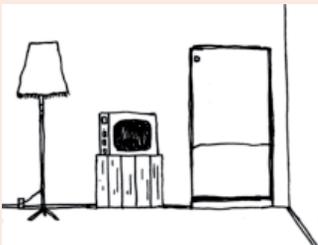
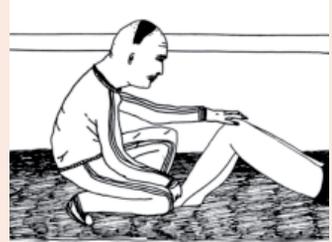
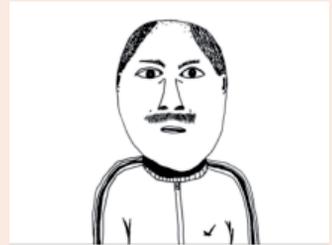




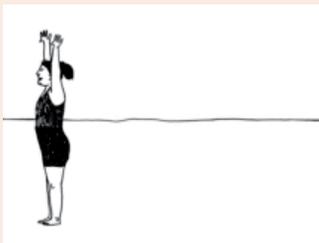
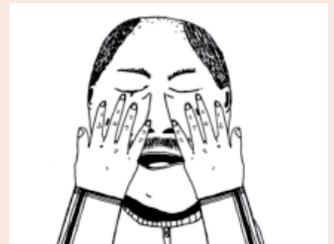
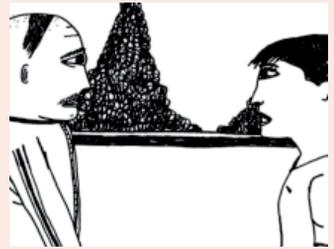
*In-between* 2005 (stills)  
animation on DVD, 3:00 mins  
Animated by Jonathan Nicol

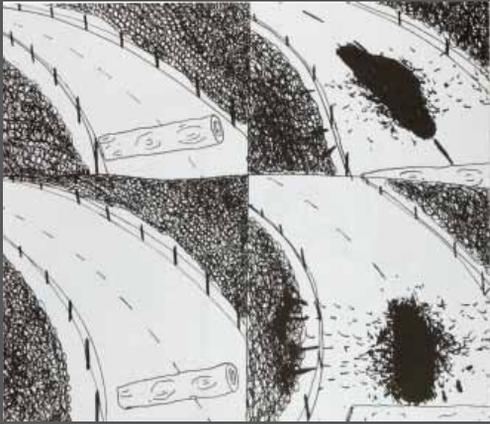


SKILL  
DISCIPLINE  
TRAINING



*Skill, discipline, training* 2006 (stills)  
animation on DVD, 2:01 min  
Animated by Jonathan Nicol











Opposite and above  
*Don't look at me bitch* 2007  
charcoal wall drawing, VCA, Melbourne

Pages 52-53  
03/03/09 2009  
charcoal wall drawing, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney



2033E3





*Pact 2009*  
graphite on museum board  
60.0 x 40.0 cm



*The Confession* 2009  
graphite on museum board  
60.0 x 40.0 cm

List of works

- Woodchop* 2000  
DVD  
8:00 mins  
filmed by Dave Simpkin
- Fist a' cuffs* 2001  
DVD  
3:30 mins  
directed and produced by Mike Metzner, Snapper Screen Productions
- Amen* 2004  
(from the series *Impending Doom (God is Everywhere)*)  
ink on Formica table top  
91.0 cm diameter  
Collection of Kate & Tim Martin, Auckland
- Our Father who art in heaven* 2004  
(from the series *Impending doom (God is everywhere)*)  
ink on Formica table top  
100.0 x 175.0 cm  
Private collection, Auckland
- Final school map* 2004  
acrylic on found map  
116.0 x 183.0 cm
- At the break of day* 2005  
(from the series *It used to be so good*)  
marker on Venetian blind  
162.0 x 140.0 cm  
Collection of Sue Naylor, Auckland
- Best tackler* 2005  
(from the series *It used to be so good*)  
watercolour and PVA glue on canvas  
75.0 x 75.0 cm  
Collection of Philip Vela Family Trust, Hamilton
- Ponytail bandit* 2005  
(from the series *It used to be so good*)  
marker on Venetian blind  
118.0 x 158.0 cm
- We are praying for you brother* 2005  
(from the series *It used to be so good*)  
watercolour and PVA glue on canvas  
75.0 x 75.0 cm  
Collection of Chandra Family Trust, Auckland
- Helen* 2005  
charcoal on board  
150.0 x 100.0 cm  
Buckley Collection, Auckland
- In-between* 2005  
animation on DVD  
3:00 mins  
animated by Jonathan Nicol
- Skill, discipline, training* 2006  
animation on DVD  
2:01 min  
animated by Jonathan Nicol, voices of Vin Ryan and Kerryn Wilson
- Code blue* 2006  
(from the series *Get well*)  
graphite on museum rag board  
105.0 x 84.5 cm
- Excuse me, visiting hours are now over* 2006  
(from the series *Get well*)  
graphite on museum rag board  
105.0 x 84.5 cm
- Good to see you back Mr Cruel* 2006  
(from the series *Get well*)  
graphite on museum rag board  
105.0 x 84.5 cm
- Mother Berchmans Daly* 2006  
(from the series *Get well*)  
graphite on museum rag board  
105.0 x 82.0 cm  
The Da Vinci Trust, Auckland
- Mother Dorothea Devine* 2006  
(from the series *Get well*)  
graphite on museum rag board  
105.0 x 84.5 cm  
Collection of Chandra Family Trust, Auckland
- Mother Sato Peardon* 2006  
(from the series *Get well*)  
graphite on museum rag board  
101.5 x 82.0 cm  
Otmar Collection, Auckland
- Committee* 2007  
DVD  
9:24 mins  
filmed by Mike Metzner and Ben Milbason

<i>Ivan Robert Marko Milat</i> 2007 (from the series <i>It starts as an idle thought grows into an obsession</i> ) graphite on museum rag board 105.0 x 84.5 cm	<i>We lift up our hearts. We lift them up to the lord. It is right to give him thanks and praise</i> 2007 (from the series <i>As I stepped out into the bright sunlight</i> ) enamel on canvas 66.0 x 66.0 cm Monash University Collection Purchased 2007	<i>Veronica wipes the face of Jesus</i> 2008 80.1 x 62.0 cm (framed)  <i>Jesus falls the second time</i> 2008 46.5 x 36.2 cm (framed)  <i>The woman of Jerusalem mourn for our lord</i> 2008 68.5 x 58.4 cm (framed)  <i>Jesus falls for the third time</i> 2008 67.2 x 53.4 cm (framed)  <i>Jesus is stripped of his garments</i> 2008 70.0 x 49.0 cm (framed)  <i>Jesus is nailed to the Cross</i> 2008 130.4 x 70.0 cm (framed)  <i>Jesus dies on the Cross</i> 2008 72.0 x 66.2 cm (framed)  <i>Jesus is taken down from the Cross</i> 2008 59.2 x 47.4 cm (framed)  <i>Jesus is laid in the sepulchre</i> 2008 88.5 x 43.5 cm (framed)	<i>Queen Street massacre</i> Russell 'Mad Dog' Cox and his escape from Katingal Prison <i>The disappearance of Peter Falconio</i> <i>Walsh Street shootings (Constables Damian Eyre and Steven Tyman)</i> 3 panels of text, each 60.0 x 60.0 cm, as follows: <i>Fill me with all your hate</i> <i>I married a monster</i> <i>Its starting to get very creepy around here</i> 29 panels of text, each 40.0 x 40.0 cm, as follows: <i>Are the lights off</i> <i>Be careful of small towns</i> <i>Bloody amateurs</i> <i>Cunt</i> <i>Fat whore</i> <i>Get out of that fuckin bed cunt</i> <i>I can't live if living is without you</i> <i>How did you get so fucked up</i> <i>I come from a normal family</i> <i>I got depression</i> <i>I like your hair alot</i> <i>I must be better to my wife</i> <i>Jailbait</i> <i>Know where we can get a good t-bone from around here</i> <i>Midgets</i> <i>Mummy</i> <i>Please god make them go away</i> <i>I must learn to like myself</i> <i>Shes a mole</i> <i>The rash is back</i> <i>Stranger danger</i> <i>The dirties</i> <i>Theres no place like home</i> <i>They told me I would be ok</i> <i>You are a complete disapointment</i> <i>You got no friends</i>
<i>Poor little Jaidyn Leskie</i> 2007 (from the series <i>It starts as an idle thought grows into an obsession</i> ) graphite on museum rag board 105.0 x 84.5 cm	<i>Mike, Jeremy, Pat, Max and me playing table-tennis in Mike's shed</i> 2008 synthetic polymer paint on billiard-table cloth 100.0 x 200.0 cm Artbank Collection	<i>Northside Boxing Committee – David (the Prezz), Big Russ, Stu, me (Rash), Adrian, Danny, Mick and Terry</i> 2008 synthetic polymer paint on billiard-table cloth 100.0 x 200.0 cm Proclaim Collection, Melbourne	
<i>Eternal rest grant unto her oh Lord and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen</i> 2007 (from the series <i>As I stepped out into the bright sunlight</i> ) enamel on canvas 66.0 x 66.0 cm Monash University Collection Purchased 2007	<i>Stations of the Cross</i> 2008 enamel on found framed board 14 panels, as outlined below Monash University Collection Purchased 2009		
<i>My mother and father and sister and brother</i> 2007 (from the series <i>As I stepped out into the bright sunlight</i> ) enamel on canvas 66.0 x 66.0 cm Private Collection, Auckland			
<i>Nana Mills</i> 2007 (from the series <i>As I stepped out into the bright sunlight</i> ) enamel on canvas 66.0 x 66.0 cm Collection of Off the Hook, Auckland	<i>Jesus is condemned to death</i> 2008 57.1 x 44.2 cm (framed)  <i>Jesus receives the Cross</i> 2008 38.1 x 31.0 cm (framed) <i>Jesus falls for the first time</i> 2008 44.0 x 31.4 cm (framed)	<i>True stories – Australian crime</i> 2008 enamel on acoustic board 44 panels, as outlined below Ken and Lisa Fehily Collection, Melbourne 12 panels of images, each 60.0 x 60.0 cm, as follows: <i>A message from Paul Denyer</i> <i>Brendon Abbott on the run from Sir David Longland Prison</i> <i>John Wayne Glover the granny killer</i> <i>Kathy Pettingill with her son Dennis and friends</i> <i>Lenny Lawson</i> <i>Mr Baldy</i> <i>Martin Bryant days before the Port Arthur Massacre</i> <i>Peter Norris Dupas</i>	
<i>St Joseph's Church, Hamilton</i> 2007 (from the series <i>As I stepped out into the bright sunlight</i> ) enamel on canvas 66.0 x 66.0 cm The Da Vinci Trust, Auckland	<i>Jesus is met by his blessed mother</i> 2008 54.0 x 43.8 cm (framed)  <i>The Cross is laid upon Simon of Cyrene</i> 2008 43.9 x 35.0 cm (framed)		

*You never answer my phone calls*  
*You never seem to notice me at all*  
*Who the fuck are you when you are at home*

*I doubt shes even missing me* 2008  
 acrylic on found map  
 117.5 x 91.7 cm

*I have doubts too* 2008  
 enamel on board with found frame  
 22.1 x 27.3 cm

*I have to be a better person as well* 2008  
 enamel on board with found frame  
 29.0 x 23.9 cm

*Keep your loved ones close* 2008  
 enamel on board with found frame  
 24.8 x 17.6 cm

*Thinking of you* 2008  
 enamel on board with found frame  
 27.2 x 32.8 cm

*Pegboard confessions (Bad tempered)* 2009  
 acrylic on pegboard  
 dimensions variable  
 Collection of James Parkinson, Auckland

*Pegboard confessions (I am not content)* 2009  
 acrylic on pegboard  
 dimensions variable  
 Collection of Bonfire Art, Melbourne

*Pegboard confessions (I day dream)* 2009  
 acrylic on pegboard  
 dimensions variable  
 The Collectors, Melbourne

*Pegboard confessions (I can't stop swearing)* 2009  
 acrylic on pegboard  
 dimensions variable  
 Ken and Lisa Fehily  
 Collection, Melbourne

*Pegboard confessions (I have sinned)* 2009  
 acrylic on pegboard  
 dimensions variable  
 Collection of Candy Bennett, Adelaide

*Pegboard confessions (I have many impure thoughts)* 2009  
 acrylic on pegboard  
 dimensions variable  
 The Da Vinci Trust, Auckland

*Pegboard confessions (When my wife starts talking)* 2009  
 acrylic on pegboard  
 dimensions variable  
 Private Collection, Auckland

*Father Duggan* 2009  
 graphite on museum board  
 150.0 x 100 cm  
 Private collection, Melbourne

*Pact* 2009  
 graphite on museum board  
 60.0 x 40.0 cm

*The confession* 2009  
 graphite on museum board  
 60.0 x 40.0 cm

*Nobody likes a show off* 2009  
 enamel on pegboard  
 61.0 x 91.0 cm

All works courtesy of the artist and Orexart, Auckland, unless otherwise stated.

Dimensions are height x width, in centimetres.



*St Plus X* 2009  
charcoal on museum board  
100.0 x 150.0 cm

## Biography

Richard Lewer was born in Hamilton, New Zealand in 1970, and relocated to Melbourne in 1996, where he lives and works. His practice encompasses a broad range of media including painting, drawing, animation and performance. He has exhibited regularly in Australia and New Zealand since 2001, and was recently awarded the Colin McCahon House Residency, French Bay, Titirangi, New Zealand in 2008, and the prestigious Wallace Art Award, which provides the artist with a six month residency in New York in 2010.

Lewer holds a Bachelor of Fine Art from Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland University, and a Master of Fine Arts from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. He was a finalist in the 2008 Basil Sellers Art Prize, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, and has been a finalist in the Waikato Contemporary Art Awards, New Zealand.

Lewer has held artist's residencies at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne 2007; the Department of Drawing, Victoria College of the Arts, Melbourne 2007; St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne 2006, and the Victoria Institute of Sports, Melbourne 2005. Lewer has recently returned to Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, where he holds a studio until 2010.

Recent individual exhibitions include *True Stories – Australian Crime*, Block Projects, Melbourne 2008; *As I Stepped out into the Bright Sunlight*, Orexart, Auckland 2007; *Richard Lewer: Get Well*, Damian Minton Gallery, Sydney, 2007; *It's Starts as an Idle Thought and Grows into an Obsession*, National Art School Gallery, Sydney, 2007; *Get Well*, Orexart, Auckland, 2006; *Richard Lewer: It Used to be so Good*, Mark Hutchins Gallery, Wellington, 2005; *Impending Doom*, Orexart, Auckland, 2004; and *Richard Lewer: Hits and Memories*, Orexart, Auckland, 2003.

Group exhibitions include *I Walk the Line: New Australian Drawing*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney 2009; *True Crime – Murder and Misdemeanour in Australian Art*; Geelong Gallery 2008 – 2009; *Basil Sellers Art Prize*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 2008; *Bon Scott Project*, Fremantle Arts Centre, Perth 2008; *Crime Lines*, Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne 2007; *Bracket Creep – A Projected Committee*, Conical Gallery, Melbourne, 2007; *Zonal Marx*, VCA Gallery, Melbourne 2007; *Game on! Sport and contemporary art*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 2006; *Commodity and Delight – Views of Home*, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, 2006; *Untitled Situation*, Ocular Lab, Melbourne, 2005; *Break*, Govett Brewster Public Art Gallery, New Plymouth 2001; and *Adrift – Nomadic New Zealand Art*, Conical Gallery, Melbourne, 2001.

Lewer's work is held in the Monash University Collection, as well as the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa

Tongarewa, Waikato Museum Collection, University of Auckland, University of Waikato, Victoria University, Waikato Art Society, The James Wallace Trust, Art Bank Collection, and private collections in Australia and internationally.

Richard Lewer is represented by Orexart, Auckland: <http://www.orexgallery.co.nz>

## Selected Bibliography

Glenn Barkley, 'It's starting to get very creepy around here: Richard Lewer and the art of crime', *True Stories: Australian Crime*, Block Projects, Melbourne, 2008.

Vanessa Berry, *Otherworlds*, King St Gallery, Sydney, 2007.

Emma Bugden, 'It's getting better all the time', *Richard Lewer: Get Well*, Orexart, Auckland, 2006.

Emily Cormack, 'Introduction', *Richard Lewer: As I Stepped Out into the Bright Sunlight*, Orexart, Auckland, 2007.

Katie Dyer, *Richard Lewer: It Starts as an Idle Thought and Grows into an Obsession*, National Art School Gallery, Sydney, 2007.

Rosemary Forde, *Richard Lewer: It Used to be so Good*, Mark Hutchins Gallery, Wellington, 2005.

Paul M Guest QC, 'True Stories: Paintings of Australian Crime by Richard Lewer', (unpublished), February 2009.

Kirilly Hammond (ed.), *Richard Lewer: Nobody Likes a Show Off*, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne 2009.

Sam Leach, 'Richard Lewer', *ArtistProfile*, Summer, 2007.

Chris McCauliffe, 'Art is what we do, sport is what we do with each other', *Game on! Sport and Contemporary Art*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 2006.

Robert Nelson, 'Adrift: Nomadic New Zealand Art', *The Age*, 11 August 2001.

Patrick Pound, 'Surface scratches', *It Used to be so Good: Richard Lewer*, Orexart, Auckland, 2003.

Dylan Rainforth, 'Resident Evil', *Art New Zealand*, no. 113, November 2004, pp.66-69.

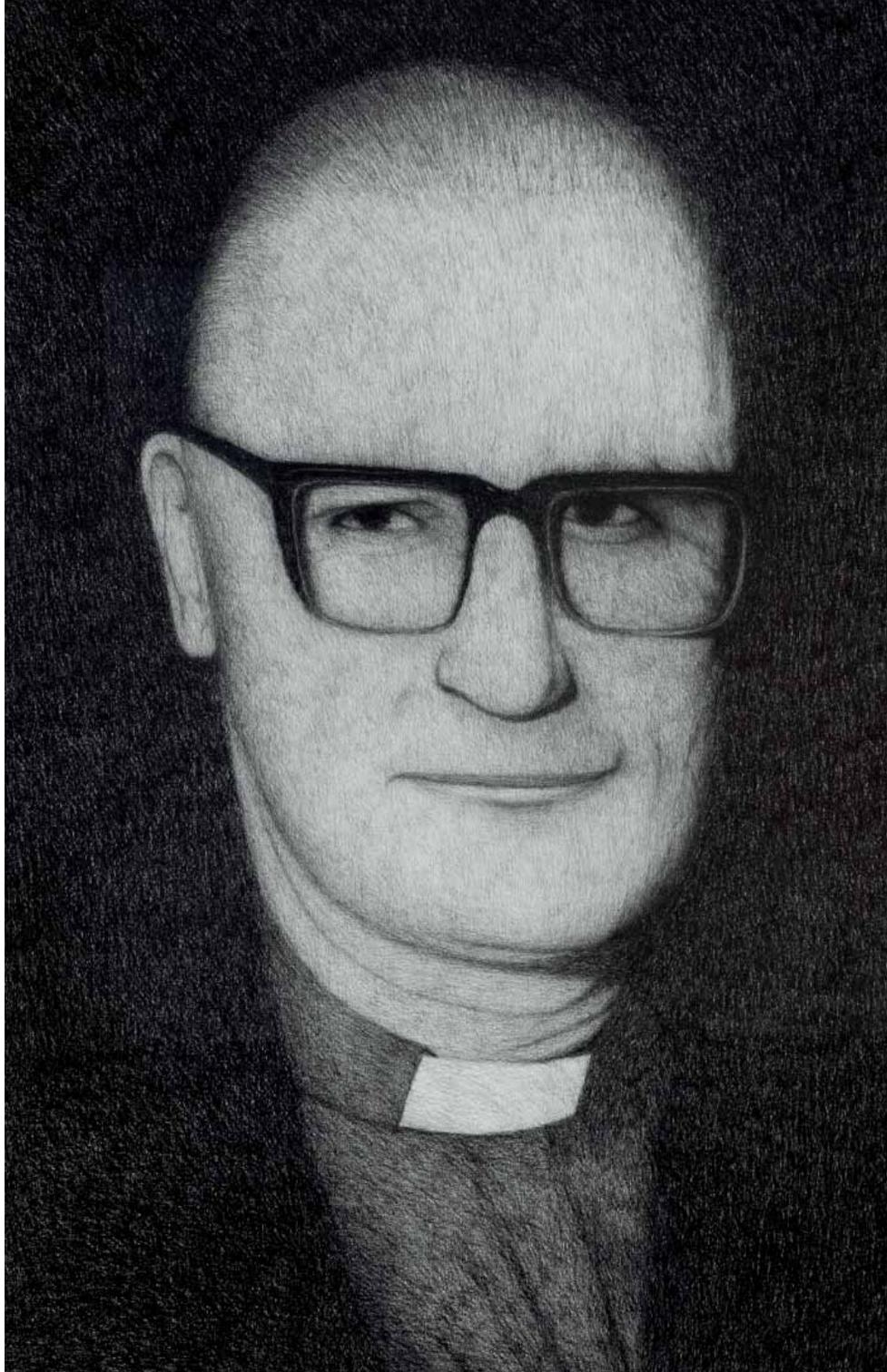
Peter Simpson, 'Chaos Contained: The Art of Richard Lewer', *Art New Zealand*, no. 88, 1997.

Peter Simpson, *Unaccommodated Man: Richard Lewer's Stations of the Cross*, Orexart, Auckland, 2008.

Peter Simpson, 'Richard Lewer: Ninety Days in Titirangi', *Art New Zealand*, no. 130, Autumn 2009.

Lisa Sullivan, *True Crime: Murder and Misdemeanour in Australian Art*, Geelong Gallery, Geelong, 2008, pp.5-35.

*Father Duggan* 2009  
graphite on museum rag board  
150.0 x 100.0 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne



**Richard Lewer: Nobody Likes a Show Off**

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**Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA**  
Ground Floor, Building 55, Clayton Campus  
Monash University, Wellington Road, Clayton  
Postal: MUMA, Building 55, Clayton campus,  
Monash University, Melbourne VIC 3800 Australia  
T: 61 3 9905 4217  
E: [muma@adm.monash.edu.au](mailto:muma@adm.monash.edu.au)  
[www.monash.edu.au/muma](http://www.monash.edu.au/muma)  
Tuesday to Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday 2-5pm

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**Professor Claudia Terstappen**, Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Art & Design

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