

# SIMON LEWTY

The SIGNificance of Writing

## 29 April - 10 July 2016

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum Royal Pump Rooms, The Parade, Royal Leamington Spa, CV32 4AA Tel: 01926 742700 www.warwickdc.gov.uk/royalpumprooms

The Men Who Lie In The Road (detail), 1991, ink and acrylic on paper, 220 x 107 cm

1291100112 - the common speak of light in mys-dependent and y and the point and the light in the point of the second statements of the second statements of the second statement of the second stateme - planes - us they willow part on the studened side of the building - someone - has by manuface - share was a picture in my mind - of how die stapped and fall - upon a model with - and over lost within the grant field - as the bount are list within me indices day. What is shirt? 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Down as I was - my intuition was of air - and of the voices within that sin... Then I first heard the fragmentary face - addening in part terministence only-confiding yet definest - so you not through the deception around, half heard again as you turned at the plattening based, langering as you left the building, and stepped aste the high plan air, IOA FAUA TAESE LUSSES CHARCE VILL BIFER THERE THE DAINT RELEGEABLES OF A PASSING CAROUSE. - PREAMBLE TO A AUPPRENTER AARRATING - LOARAN TOR DIPARTURE AND RETURNA WRITING - FOT OF ANECESSITY - SCRIPTS TOR A THOREES & FLAT. 222011-3 Los the improvement that the bound was in a validage in the country yet wet for from the line 2 without arrang a small line and landed in at one of the workers 2 which 2 may remove enough dense inside. These was a transfull of things for sole - most of then pash - I nettered a shalf covered with hele-a-hear and ting pictures. 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Why do you shoul as allost then?" Next of the bouter in the old quarter of the down are pulled down firsty years ago. For shall 3 hour, as 3 with by the set, which of those may bound is the one 3 we looking for 7. For 3 hour 3 hours or enter at one of these deeps. I thought that the clothes I was avoing night only then think I was some built of in. Jane of these human and second an argin strongs high. This is the human where I must care. These are the words I may not speak - WHY? A large stable has been taid for air people. Some of the houses have believing alone it is placed to ait and look out over the water. The sund is preved at the side with expresses alabe of sime. They I willing down the attacet to the horizon, midlant in the evening sum 2 consider that specks of dust derived in the basis of sectors there is in the basis above 2 and to have -LLSEWRERC-FARANSS-BON beyond the entryfull and the modul contains of the bridge -3 foll. The broads from the south means the memory field time had follow density the right - over the fields 7% K there was a small countered - leading to the street - and a wordin possibled clamber show a store purch. The ship mores extently out of the harbour, heating for the open sea Korn air rines over the northest's house, dated saidles of this stain the plastes wills finite leaved plants have taken need in the constant message. The constants of these disc builts the edge have a shall be constant of the constant of t TAID-DULACHAID FAIR-L MAINCHAME FA REITIN-1208381 PEICH TOCELLAIL S. CALDRENALAL ANTY S. TLATESKE SPALBARO A. ALSAL TRAFICALLA RELADER ZOLLAR TERETRI PRALIE. DALTA-R-CALTTER BRALKAN, ITAUBITING, ICILI, P. KENINCUCSA-12- (NAICHA-1-X2) PILIT STATE PRINTS STOLE X-PAREFT. The mellule of the genus is yold against a sky of class, pale place. He say beans low in the cost. Here you my ness a local scate of fields, trans and houses as an approach the team ' In the samely allower of these hills, a weathers mind degive to him at sensing. Remain from these plane to should a sup of most two on a maturing of theory waters in  $f \neq k$  is  $A \neq b$ . Bound with  $F \neq k$  is the basis and galler hills, of all is the form rathing, results under a pule, high mosts. We have barries thatband down the based and disapproval sets a inners. In this start, among many others that nor through the contro of the ridy, share wind the crisis that through at non-us frond our way to a flight of steps land ing to a high, such house above, or love hand, a norm is highed about with pictures of accurate lands. "I'd left als my clother back there, annulane is the house." I was will to look far a hours with a saved pentice funding the street, but although J without for knows through the during mode, I would find no vertice of such a place they undering I have a SHRILE, SIRE THAT OF A SREAT BIRD.

- adult has been found, what have a well this short summer. Now a grant best serves to a set of a set mail man and all was all destroy of the all as he print press - forthe the and many age of some states of some the 1 5 - y CE PESSON TIL VIA CALL at the case of the second second second The second second of the state of the second partillace garage Stage ゆえき ねとういうしん しょう しょうちょうちょう LARD - LEW - COMPERATION CALLS 15 

TATIC THEATRE OF THE WOODS. ACT I They took unspeaking ALERINGETON and laughing and the pale, sniggering boy peer at the vaporous surge; while the LEAH's simple song drifts in the may-suffused air, the woice from her open mouth rings around the stuffied plinth and echoes from the sand LEAH's simple song drifts in the may-suffused air, the woice from her open mouth rings around the stuffied plinth and echoes from the sand mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song-rising' - now' DESOLATA' is safe, as dork waves roll to the he mand watch at 'song from the hot ditches towards the blank sky. Every day at the stone he saw the same dry man sucking at his lips, and the same woman among ' urmuring of tides that flow unseen throughout the day. Here is an unspeakable recapitulation. The next day he asked where he might sloep, as he w of the wall; blowing of drass left in high and low paths; and whispering throughout that night. "Do you wish to know of their rising at day? For the referselves are like a liquescent tar. CAUGHT IN ERROR! These words spill from the one who holds stained hands raised to surprise in comert, reassure, even perhaps reconcile you, as summer ends and the waiting force of the year presses in your life. I have seen some of those who is winter passage. Yet at this quic

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### NAND THE WOMAN MUST FEEL THEIR TENTATIVE WAY PAST THE GREA

To Unexplained Day, 2002, (Detail), Ink on paper, 100 x 143 cm

THEN FALL TO WATTING MOTIONLESS

## The SIGNificance of Writing IAN HUNT

'The dream is an intelligence of form that holds, moves, stimulates and shapes us. When I enter the world of dreams I am deconstructed, as I am transformed from the one who holds the internal world in my mind to the one who is experientially inside the dramaturgy of the other. Gathered and processed by the dream events, I live in a place where I seem to have been held before . . .

#### Christopher Bollas, Being a Character, 1993, p.13

The drawings by Simon Lewty assembled for this exhibition give viewers a chance to see the consistencies that run through his work over a period of almost five decades.

These include the significance of dreamwork, which has been both a direct source material for the artist

and also a deep formal analogy for his work. These drawings. manuscripts, images, graffiti and narrative fragments are exceptional in the way they convey the unexpected shifts of view in dream experience, and the complex dramaturgy of dreams - where we are held within a narrative that an inaccessible part of our minds is telling. Lewty's long-term commitment is not so much to dream-pictures on the surrealist model, but to complex modes of self-experiencing, of being both in and outside a represented event, story, place or time.

The Men Who Lie in the Road (1991, Learnington Spa Art Gallery & Museum) shows this clearly, and is also an example of a period of Lewty's work that remains best known. The peculiar tall format comprises a number of separate panels, and at the bottom right is a view of a field and what seem to be pine trees, traditionally planted as boundary markers. The view of the field is quite different in character to the other images. But we cannot be sure it is the end or conclusion of the story, or whether it comes 'before' or 'after' the other images showing built structures, roads, walls and a mandrake root.

The movement of the eye around the other panels follows the running legs (with no body on top, just a face) in a counter-clockwise movement, up to the horse and rider, a notional beginning point. Graffiti between and over the images adds additional complexities, suggesting that more than one author may be writing the story we still hope to find. Later works, from which image as such is no longer to be found, can work very similar effects simply from coloured script on a surface. The eye follows the strong habit of left to right consecutive reading, but circles back to the beginning, encountering disjunctions and repeated sequences, losing place and finding it again. It is a complex sense of relation to something inside and outside of oneself.

Lewty made an intriguing public statement in 1994, when he introduced a separate publication of his writings from Peter Larkin's Prest Roots Press: *'Cradles of the New* has the feeling of a tale, but the telling has been intruded upon, disrupted and overlaid. The characters echo the *dramatis personae* of my pictures: the mocker and the mocked, the staunch pilgrim, the old man, certain animals, "he" and "she". The

the field, the barn, the suburb, the shop. The incidents belong to a time which is antique, yet modern too. Not "once upon a time" but simply "the day before vesterday" - gone, yet strangely present.' Lewty's work has developed considerably since the 1990s, and the role of depictions and images as such has diminished, but the statement holds good as an account of his strategies of telling, overlaying and disrupting, and of the peculiar optic on the modern and the new provided by his various ruses of antiquity - from italic typewriter fonts to 16th-century 'secretary hand'.

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Crucially, Lewty is not motivated by a simple literary ambition. He has remained a visual artist while having a deep interest in, and understanding of, the modes and complexities of writing, script and inscription. He has developed a highly consistent approach to making works on paper, which he has always treated as a pre-existing surface rather than a simple carrier for his ideas, and he has an intense awareness of the significance of the surface on which the marks and words are inscribed or traced, as well as that of the marks and words themselves. A favourite method is to work in ink on tissue paper that is then laid down over stronger and thicker paper that has been flooded with acrylic and wiped back: the allegiance is to an element of unpredictability in the process, as the layers are combined. Works from different periods show signs of being carefully worked, treated with transparent acrylic and restored from the attack or alteration which drawing and writing at some level represent. Lewty's long-term commitment to a complex remaking of a surface, one that possesses colour in a rather mysterious way, has a vital relationship to whatever we might call the 'content'

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of his work. His understanding of surface is of something delicate that is at the same time capable of healing itself from wounds, as skin does: 'To alter it while letting it remain the same,' he writes in his essay 'The Self as a Stranger'.

the day

Lewty's invitation to us as viewers, readers and interpreters of his work (this interpretation including the totality of its coloured surfaces and the quality of the marks as well as the words) creates a very special bond. The intense experience of concentrating, and of our attention drifting and then again recovering - or is it that the work forgets us and then rouses itself to attention again? - turns out to be unexpectedly open in its mental effects. It stimulates collective as well as personal reflection: what is most personal opens out to what is most public. This is work that makes demands on us, and at the same time opens up an intimate inter-subjective

space of encounter. It may resemble a notary's agreement, summons, legal title or claim, written in a language we do not speak or read. It can be bluff and forbidding in its block-like arrangements of script, which our mind, seeking for points of contact, have to break into. It may be coded into historic forms of shorthand or handwriting styles that only palaeographers can read. But look again: Lewty's words can equally open out with almost complete limpidity, and the effect is like looking into a pool. The words frequently tell of everyday experiences, that are being related to us in as straightforward a way as possible. It is precisely in the shifts between obscurity and directness in his work that such unexpected power can be found. The knowing use of a language of VISION has the urgency of John Bunyan and other literature of revelation, but the experiences being processed are secular and familiar enough.

Looking at this work, it becomes apparent just how singular and remarkable Lewty's enterprise as an artist is. We are entitled to ask, what connection does it have to the wider currents of both art and culture in the period in which it has been made? Lewty's education and influences, and the complex ways in which his work was received in the 1980s as part of the figurative revival can only be hinted at here. (The testimonies, conversations and essays that can be found in the retrospective volume The Self as a Stranger, Black Dog Publishing, 2010, set out Lewty's development in more detail.) It can be stated, however, that the artist has both ploughed his own furrow and been strongly aware of contemporary developments of diverse kinds, from an

early enthusiasm for Dubuffet and Tàpies to land art and Joseph Beuys, through to discussions of the most innovative contemporary poetry and writing.

In some recent works, Shelton's 17th-century shorthand (or tachygraphy as it was first known – Lewty enjoys the connection here with the word tache, mark) is used to record the sound of waves. Can the sound of the sea be magically coded into script? Perhaps there is a hint here of the doctrine of signatures, which survives into our common era as a familiar childhood fantasy: that for each thing or phenomenon, there is, somewhere, a secret name.

When we describe someone as singular it is not always understood as

a term of praise, and it may be a polite way of saying that someone is rather odd. I mean it strongly as a term of praise, and suggest that Lewty's way of working and of involving us in his thinking and what we might call his 'world' - it is also ours - is an expert and original way of making us aware of what is unknown in ourselves. The singularity of Lewty's aesthetic thinking is as prominent in the work of the last twenty years, which is rightly emphasized by this selection, as it was in the first works by him that came to be widely exhibited in the 1980s. This is work that is not simply humming to itself but which also, without warning, SINGS. Recuell se sources Dine 38es : Summarka Clair

**Opening Times** 

Tuesday to Saturday 10.45am - 5pm Sunday 11am - 4pm Monday closed (except Bank Holidays) Admission Free









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