

MOSTLY SUNNY



Richard Lewer



Slow
oil on epoxy
coated steel
75 x 75 cm
2014

Front Cover
Pistol Pete (detail)
oil on epoxy
coated steel
100 x 100 cm
2014

MOSTLY SUNNY: NEW WORK BY RICHARD LEWER

Text: Ted Snell

We become accustomed to our surroundings. Driven by routine we often fail to see what's there, how it's changing and how it is transforming our lives. Richard Lewer makes us see, he introduces us to what we thought we knew and reveals the extraordinary in our own backyard. He also has an uncanny ability to encapsulate what we're thinking and to give it a cogent visual form. Uncanny indeed!

I've been to Bindoon but never to a rodeo. I had no idea those cowboys tossed around by bulls, bucked and battered by stallions, stoic men in big hats and boots, men like Pistol Pete and the Bareback Champion, were right on my doorstep! In his paintings he focuses our attention on activities that exist on the margins, activities that reflect and refract who we are. "My practice often explores the relationship between studio activity and life outside the studio," he says, "it involves playing with differing notions of the artist's role as a documenter of the world around, I research subcultures and often look at extremes in behaviour, these things hold my interest and involve looking in depth at the human condition, resilience and relationships." It is that compassion at the heart of his practice that makes Lewer's work so immediate, so compelling and so revealing.

He is also witty, in that laconic, ironic and irreverent manner of the bush. *I'm not made of Money*, writ large and aggressively over a map of Australia is a very apposite response to the miasma generated by the Abbott/Hockey budget. How succinct and how chilling! And the exhibition's title *Mostly sunny*, created by a reluctant optimist who can transform skyrockets exploding over a Fibro house into an image of impending doom, *Happy Australia Day*, and sunbathing into corpuscular degeneration.

But it's mostly sunny, at least where people interact, where relationships are built in the community, where you belong and can share the camaraderie of likeminded others; whether on the tennis court every Thursday, or up at Bindoon or on the beach, or fighting for the rights of the Great White Sharks. When the Government installed baited drum-lines a few hundred meters off the Perth coastline to catch and kill them the balance shifted, it was no longer fair, weighted now against the sharks, heavily so, and we didn't like it, so the community found its voice and massed onto local beaches to protest. Lewer was there; he's always there, capturing our sense of outrage. "Slow," says the FIFO's sign. Yes, slow indeed as the mining boom sputters to a halt and people's lives are morphed and mutated.

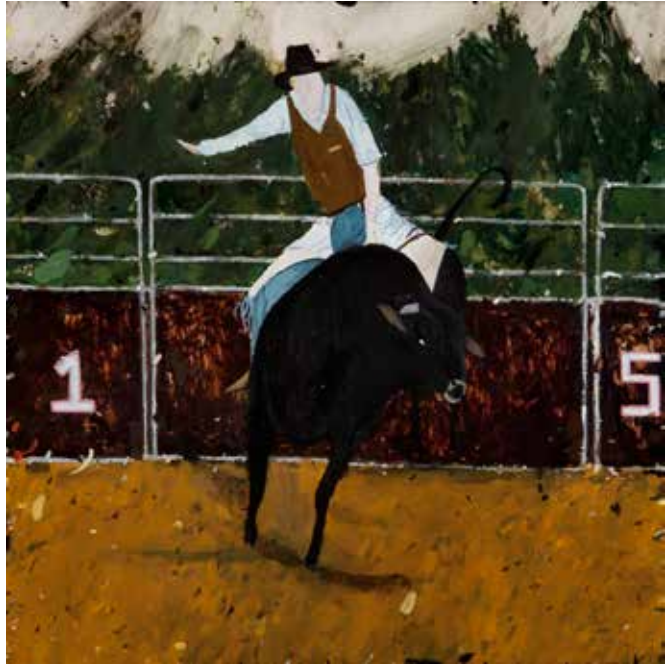
It's tough. It was tough for Bernie the quiet hero of his animated film who battled the odds and finally found dignity in death. Tough for Lewer himself who came to Western Australia to heal! *Make me better* documents his engagement with the incredibly beautiful landscape, the key to his cure according to a Nungkari, an Aboriginal healer. And Lewer's paintings are tough too; the surfaces document the struggle of their making, but from the toughness comes resilience, understanding and even a little sunshine.

Ted Snell AM, Cit WA is Winthrop Professor and Director of the Cultural Precinct at the University of Western Australia



Saddle Bronc
oil on epoxy coated steel
75 x 75 cm
2014

Bindoon Rodeo
oil on epoxy
coated steel
100 x 100 cm
2014



Make me better
oil on epoxy
coated steel
100 x 100 cm
2014





Bareback Champion
Oil on epoxy coated steel
50 x 50 cm
2014

I'm not made of money
Enamel
on found map
80 x 100 cm
2014



*Thursday night
training before
the finals*
oil on epoxy
coated steel
75 x 75 cm
2014



The Sunbather
Oil on epoxy
coated steel
75 x 75 cm
2014



Rights for great whites
oil on epoxy
coated steel
50 x 50 cm
2014



Happy Australia Day
oil on epoxy
coated steel
50 x 50 cm
2014





Worse Luck
I am Still Here
Blu-ray, video stills
4min 47sec
Edition of five
2014



Melbourne Art Fair

13 – 17 August 2014

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