

Richard Lewer

# Don't Fade Away

Kyla McFarlane

Richard Lewer's artistic output over the years reveals that he has always been attracted to extremes of behaviour, beliefs and experience in the context of our everyday lives. Ghosts, stalkers, criminals, nuns and those who have simply failed, doubted, or triumphed over life's moral struggles have all resided there, as has the abiding truth of our mortality—and our attempts to come to terms with it. Recently, he painted an entire deck of tarot cards, a game that plays out such existential dilemmas and offers believers a pathway into the great unknown that is their future.

In *God Created Me in His Own Image*, Lewer has documented subjects that reside at the edges of explanation, whose practices or experience rely on systems of belief. An exorcist. A mystic. A Nungkare (healer) and rainmaker. The certified miracle of the weeping Madonna at the Holy Family House of Prayer in Rockingham. These paintings are a series of portraits, but also a kind of portrait of the artist. Facing recent serious health problems, his own mortality thrown into sharp focus, Richard Lewer sought solace and respite wherever he could find it.

The artist's encounters with these subjects were both astonishing and prosaic. Father Barry May, busy with exorcism appointments, worked from a makeshift office in his garage. The music on Carol Weave-Lane's CD kept skipping whilst she read the artist's aura. His experience of the Weeping Madonna was in the back room of a modest home in a small WA town. This was life, in all its banality and wonder.

These encounters led Lewer to other stories, the mystic realms of ordinary people experiencing extraordinary things. To the story of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina and the pain and anguish of his visible stigmata. To Catholic Father John Rea's faith healing services. To the strange story of David Bain's trance-like proclamations, a bizarre moment in the murky saga of his conviction and later acquittal of the murder of his family in Dunedin.

Standing in the central Australian desert in Frank Ansell's ceremonial circle of rocks, Lewer asked himself, 'what am I meant to feel?' It's a question at the heart of these paintings, articulating the ineffable quality that leads us to believe or not believe, to have faith in things unseen. To place, or deny, trust in another human being.

Like the text works on pegboard he has been making for years now, Lewer's works on coloured squares of foam are riddled with holes, pockmarks drilled by the artist into these domestic cushions, some up to 35-40 years old. They are also without covers, their puce, turquoise and apricot foam darkening at the edges and becoming more brittle with each encounter with light. These domestic relics are endowed with statements—accusations, assertions and doubts:

I bruise like a peach.  
Phoney.  
It's not always about you.  
It's back to therapy for me.

The texts, and the foam's insidious, gradual decay, speak of failure and mortality. Alongside the portraits they remind us that, ultimately, we all suffer the same indignity of being human.

I  
bruise  
Like A Peach





Don't  
Fade  
AWAY

Depression  
Runs In  
the Family

You  
Try Being  
A Redhead

I Got  
the Devil  
Inside of Me



I  
JUST  
SNAPPED



Trouble  
Follows ME  
everywhere I  
go

Welcome  
HOME

Sending  
You ALL  
MY GOOD  
VIBES

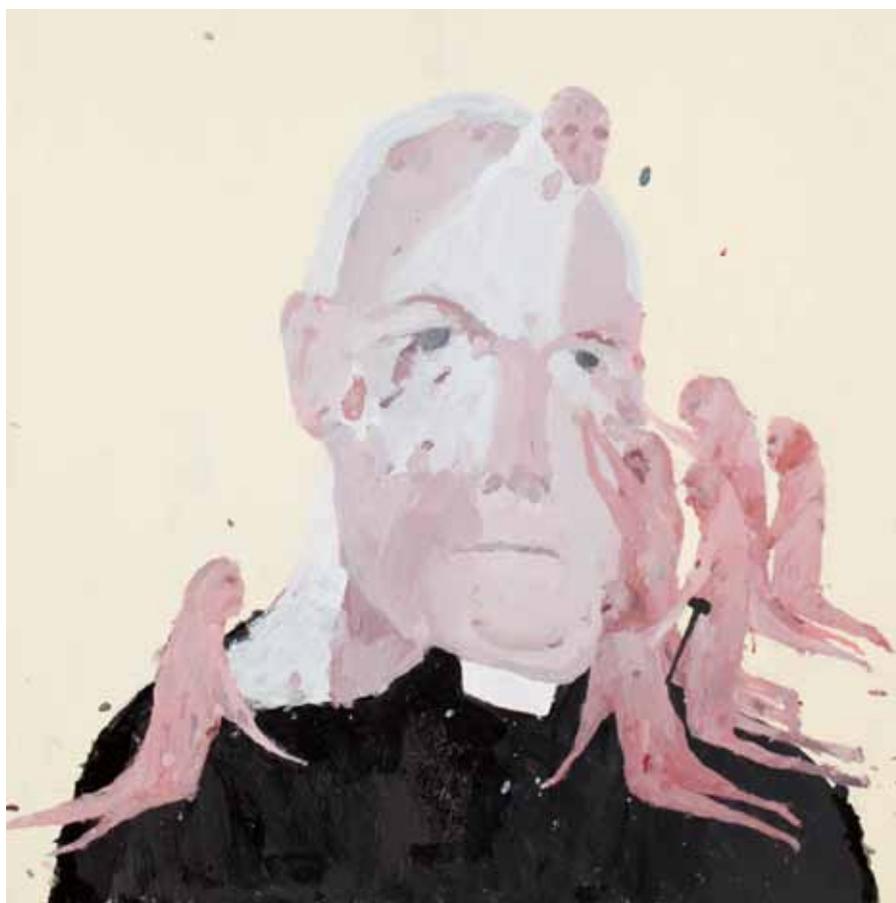
I hear  
Your Voice  
in Everything  
I Do

Faith  
Less

Phony



SOME DAYS  
ARE  
Worse than  
Others.



## Image Titles



*God created me  
in his own image*  
1120mm x 870mm  
Acrylic on found  
school map, 2013



*Frank Ansell -  
Nungkari and  
rain maker*  
1120mm x 1120mm  
Oil on canvas,  
2013



*Father Barry  
May - exorcist*  
1120mm x 1120mm  
Oil on canvas,  
2013



*Weeping  
Madonna of  
Rockingham*  
770mm x 770mm  
Oil on canvas,  
2013



*Padre Pio - healer*  
1120mm x 1120mm  
Oil on canvas,  
2013



*Father John  
Rea - healer*  
770mm x 770mm  
Oil on canvas,  
2013



*David Bain in  
trance like state  
talking about  
black hands*  
1120mm x 1120mm  
Oil on canvas,  
2013



*Carole Weave  
Lane - Mystic,  
tarot card reader  
and Reiki master*  
770mm x 770mm  
Oil on canvas,  
2013

Image Titles



*It's not meant to be Richard*  
400mm x 400mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



*Welcome home*  
500mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



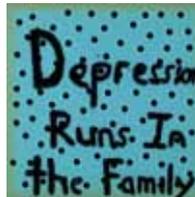
*Hope less*  
400mm x 400mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



*Phony*  
500mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



*Sending you all my good vibes*  
400mm x 400mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



*Depression runs in the family*  
500mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



*Somedays are worse than others*  
400mm x 400mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



*I bruise like a peach*  
600mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



*It's not always about you*  
610mm x 560mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



*I hear your voice in everything I do*  
500mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam, 2013



*I just snapped*  
610mm x 560mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



*The end*  
600mm x  
600mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



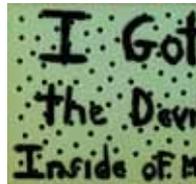
*It's back to  
therapy for me*  
600mm x  
600mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



*Don't fade away*  
600mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



*Trouble follows  
me everywhere  
I go*  
600mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



*I got the devil in  
me*  
500mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



*Faith less*  
500mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



*I am the black  
sheep*  
500mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



*Do one good  
deed today*  
600mm x  
600mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



*You try being  
a redhead*  
600mm x 500mm  
Acrylic on foam,  
2013



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