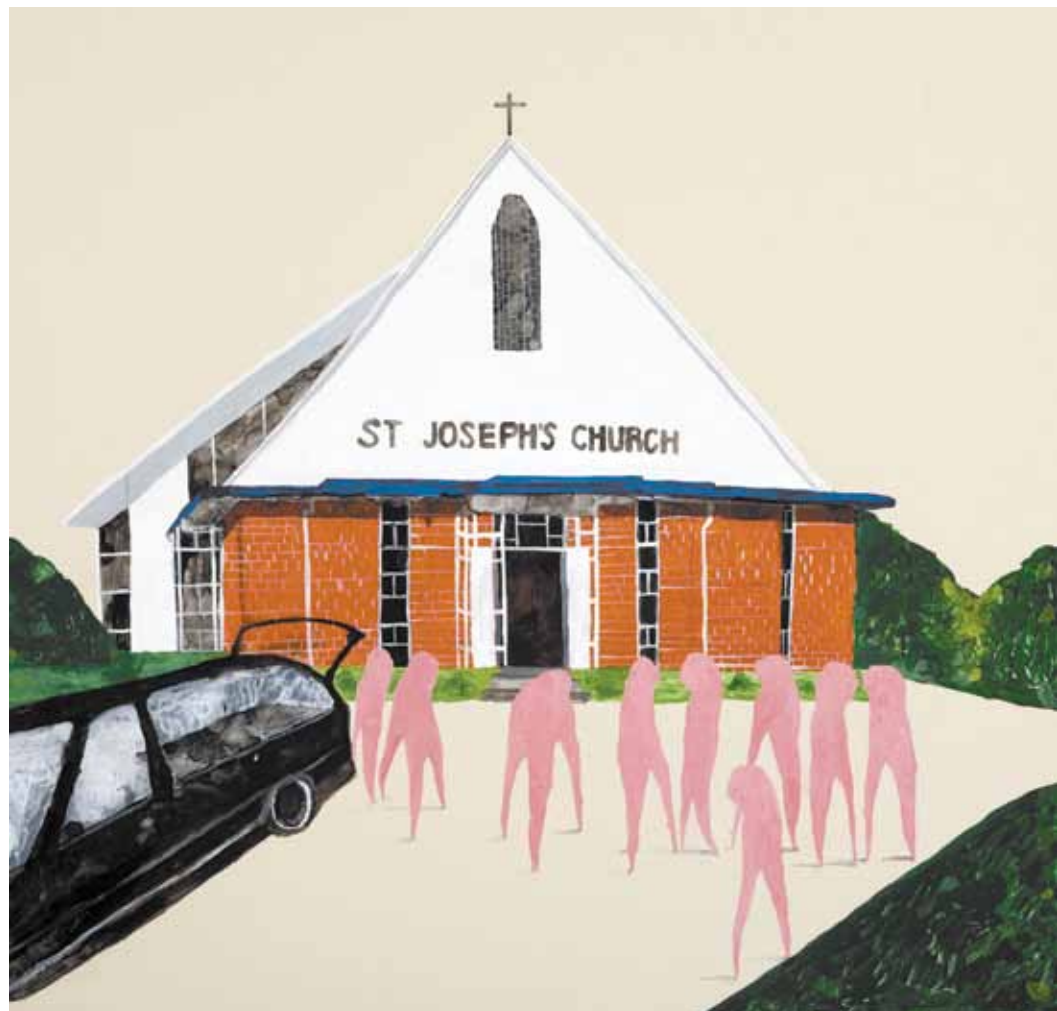


**AS I STEPPED  
OUT INTO  
THE BRIGHT  
SUNLIGHT**

**RICHARD LEWER**



**Right:** *Nana Mills*

26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007

**Cover:** *St Joseph's*

*Church, Hamilton*

26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007

**Design:**

Famous Visual Services  
[www.famousvs.com](http://www.famousvs.com)

**Photography:**

Andrew Curtis

**AS I STEPPED  
OUT INTO  
THE BRIGHT  
SUNLIGHT**

**RICHARD LEWER**





*My mother and father and sister  
and brother*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*M. Mexted*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007

## INTRODUCTION

EMILY CORMACK

In August of 2007 Lewer's beloved grandmother Nellie Mills, the family matriarch, passed away. There were 300 people at the funeral. It was Lewer's first funeral in his adult life and the intensity of this, combined with coming 'home' to the green grassy heart that is Hamilton, profoundly affected him.

Whilst in Hamilton for the funeral Lewer re-discovered his collection of rugby annuals, stored away in a box at his parent's house. As a child Lewer would dwell on these magazines, collaging his 'dream team' from their pages. Of particular fascination to young-man-Lewer were the tough guys – the forwards, or what he refers to as the 'engine room'. They were also 'The Enforcers' of provincial rugby – men of 'strength' - Buck Shelford, Andy Dalton, Richard Loe, Michael Jones and Andy Haden.

Nellie Mills lived 100 metres down the road from St Josephs Catholic Church, where as a child Lewer spent many hours enmeshed in the patterns of church – the kneeling, the blessing, the ritual. Family he had not seen for many years came to the funeral – making polite family sub-clusters, eating sausage rolls, dredging up old stories and diplomatically avoiding others. And quite unexpectedly Lewer was faced with his story, his very own personal mythology, complete with a playing field, a matriarch and his strength-giving totems.

R. Loe  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



Upon returning to Melbourne and taking a studio at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces Loe began painting what would become *As I stepped out into the bright sunlight*. He painted the forwards from his dream team scrum in their provincial colours, along with scenes from his grandmother's funeral. Drawing on his tough guys for comfort and familiarity, Loe sought to extend and live within the experiences he had just had in Hamilton – to understand them.

It is not unusual for Loe to use sport as a vehicle for ideas in his practice. He has passed through wood-chopping, fly-fishing, boxing, table tennis and pool in his work, but these rugby players were there first. It was these forwards who first enlightened Loe to the secrets of discipline and commitment that have been at the guts of his attitude to life, art and sport.

It is therefore curious that Loe chose slippery, clumsy materials to paint these men and this moment in time. But then Loe has depicted other mnemonic narratives with equally impossible materials like watercolor on PVA. This time it was thick, glistening enamel paint. Perhaps not so surprising are the associations that this material has with men 'tinkering' in their sheds. Enamel paint is, after all, the smell and texture of the passage to suburban manhood.

Employing this unwieldy domestic material Loe's depiction of his grandmother's funeral are confrontingly brusque – giving the viewer unrestricted access to the sadness and intensity of this event. He pauses the moment that the hearse pulls away from the church and gives us a gods-eye view of the last goodbye as the coffin is cranked into the soil. Impasto pinks signify humans who have been reduced to bare impulse and intensity. Loe says these marks are like sadnesses.

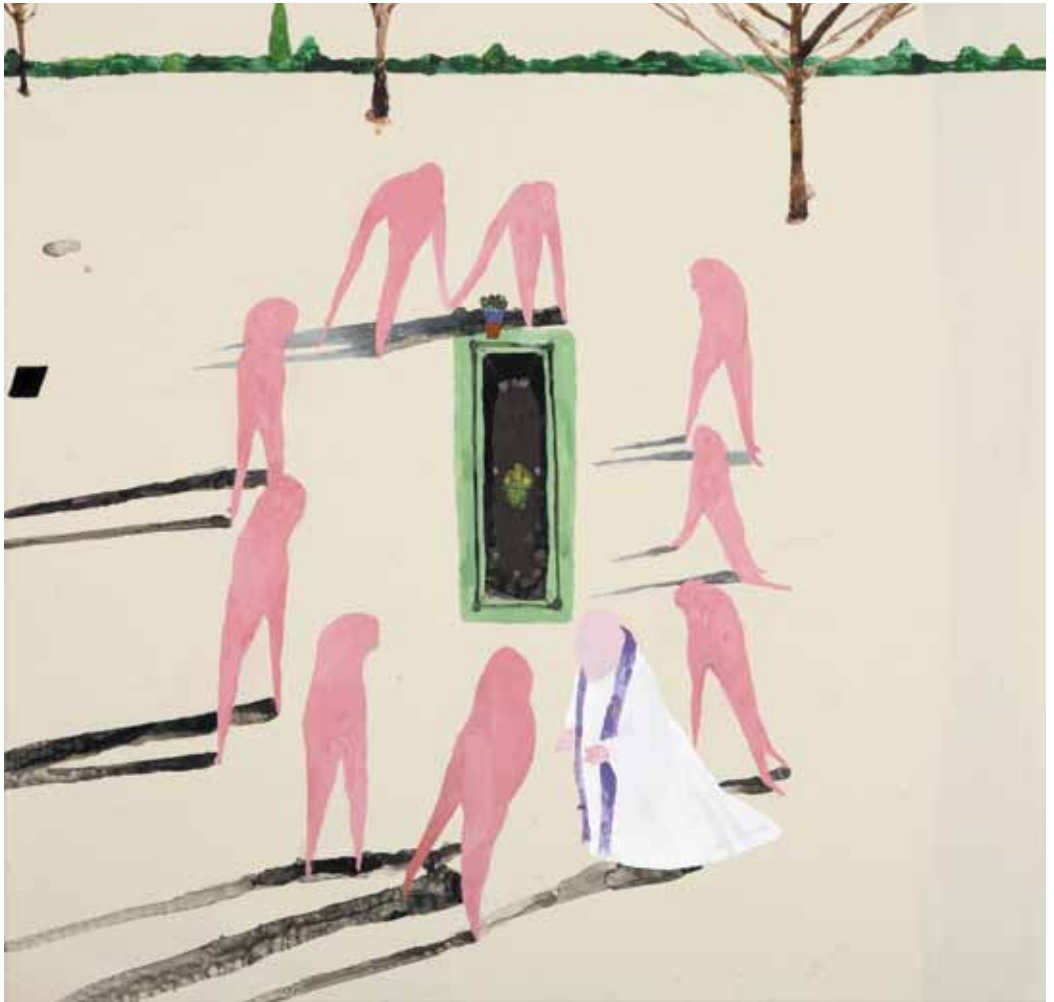
The figures in both the funeral scenes and the rugby player portraits seem to have been wrestled into form. They are slippery and combatant, with the family groupings, and narrative scenes isolated on planes of common house paint cream. Loe was not certain how these materials might take to their subjects, and he describes how painting these moments was an unpredictable, uncontrollable process – with the paint behaving wilfully and Loe unwilling to ebb this flow.

The resulting blistered and wrinkled surface of Loe's enamel paintings both mocks and affirms the futility of any attempt to capture these momentary intensities of self and place. Making what is probably the saddest and most wonderful work in this series – Loe's tender portrait of his grandmother – a loving talisman to faith and optimism in the face of perpetuity and growing up..



Left: *All of my family,  
my uncles, aunts and cousins  
on my mothers side*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007

Below: *Eternal rest grant  
unto her Oh Lord and let  
perpetual light shine upon her.  
May she rest in peace. Amen*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*A. Haden*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007





Right: *My Uncle, my aunty  
and cousins*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



Below: *We lift up our hearts.  
We lift them up to the lord.  
It is right to give him thanks  
and praise*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007





*A. Dalton*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



*St Joseph's Church, Hamilton*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*Nana Mills*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*My mother and father and sister  
and brother*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*M. Mexted*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



*R. Loe*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



*All of my family, my uncles,  
aunties and cousins on my  
mothers side*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*Eternal rest grant unto her Oh  
Lord and let perpetual light  
shine upon her. May she rest in  
peace. Amen*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*A. Haden*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



*My Uncle, my aunty and cousins*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*We lift up our hearts. We lift  
them up to the lord. It is right to  
give him thanks and praise*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*A. Dalton*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



*We ask you to welcome Nell  
into her new home*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*M. Jones*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



*Buck*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



*My brother and sister*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*G. Whetton*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



*My Sister and her husband  
and my two nieces*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*M. Shaw*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007



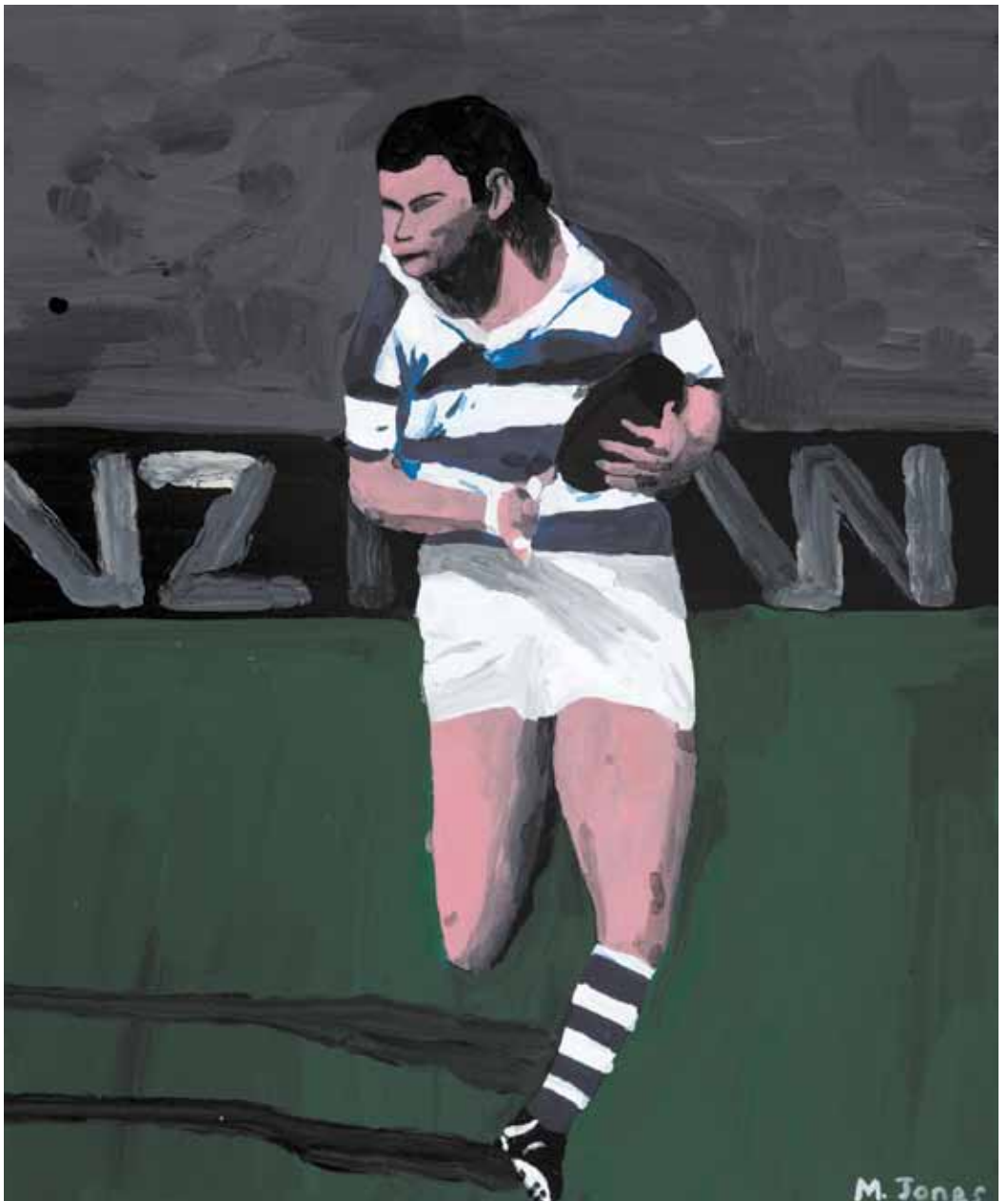
*Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*R. Lewer*  
Gertrude Street Studio  
2007



*We ask you to welcome Nell  
into her new home*  
26" x 26", enamel on canvas  
2007



*M. Jones*  
12" x 10", enamel on canvas  
2007

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