

ANIMA MUNDI



Andrew Litten, in front of 'Liminal State', 2023

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PRESS RELEASE

Andrew Litten

The Human Shadow (The Animal Smile)

EXHIBITION DATES: 15 July - 28 August 2023

PREVIEW EVENING: Friday 14 July, 6.30 - 8.30 PM

WHERE: Anima Mundi, Street-an-Pol, St Ives, Cornwall, TR26 2DS

WEBSITE: www.animamundigallery.com

'The Human Shadow (The Animal Smile)', Andrew Litten's latest solo exhibition at Anima Mundi, has been created over the last three years, bringing together multi-scale paintings with works on paper and original sculptures including a life size bronze.

The raw, gestural, often visceral figuration that Litten is known for, is heightened and further nuanced by the expressive potential of working across various media. The art critic Laura Gasgoigne recently said "emotions are not just difficult to articulate in words; they are also impatient of the rules of art. To facilitate expression, rules must be bent and it is often the self-taught artists – Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Francis Bacon - who dare to bend them. Litten ranks among the rule-benders. His paintings are unapologetically figurative but refuse to follow figurative convention. They sit on the fence between individual consciousness and objective reality: to borrow the title of one of his paintings, on a 'liminal stage'."

"Invisible threads are the strongest ties."

Friedrich Nietzsche

Building upon his last exhibition 'Concerning The Fragile' which was created prior to lockdown with particular focus towards the theme of human vulnerability; this exhibition arguably embodies wider ranging subject matter, further tonality and encourages broader complex and often contradictory emotive readings of human identity, hope, loss, disturbance and transience.

This selection of works, continues the artists exploration of existential human solitude through our innate capacity and desire to connect with, and also disconnect from, others and the world that we inhabit. As the exhibition title alludes, 'The Human Shadow' reflects upon territory that Litten is unafraid to explore; of a hidden or suppressed, perhaps darker or troubled element of human nature. However, notably 'The Animal Smile' refers to a deep rooted desire or absolute need to connect with nature in order to bring peace and balance to the psyche and healing through connection with the wider world, extending beyond the human. However, even this clear and relatively simple notion or objective becomes emotionally ambiguous as the anthropomorphic suggestion of an 'animal smile', suggests potential of a discordant empathetic reading that may speak more of continued disconnect than of union. Yet this is not the point - without whitewashing a modicum of pessimism, the exuding hope radiating within this body of work is sited in the recognition of a real desire to entwine with something 'other' beyond 'self', no matter how difficult the achievement may be, it is this 'desire' that offers a bridge to something fuller. Litten addresses such contradictions without giving much away when he says "I think the art in this show has lots of little narratives to interpret." As ever, with Andrew Litten, it is not about clearing up the confusion, but learning to live with it. The wider message, I think one of love, becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

"We are like islands in the sea, separate on the surface but connected in the deep."

William James

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Andrew Litten's dynamic and gestural figurative artworks express a strong interest in the universal complexity of everyday existence. Dealing with humanistic themes such as love, sensuality, fear, anger, loss, nostalgia, mundanity, personal growth and perceived identity normality or disturbance. Works are created with an unguarded, empathetic attitude, like so many expressionistic artists, a rawness of approach combined with an often viscous application of paint is also key to the extreme experience felt from the work. Gesture and nuance inspire extreme emotive reading, perhaps subversive, tender, passionate, ambivalent, malevolent or compassionate, our response becomes one of allure or repulsion.

Andrew Litten is a British artist, born in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire in 1970. He currently works from his studio in Fowey, Cornwall. He is a self-taught artist leaving art college as a teenager having found it to be too restrictive to his aspired method of working. For a decade he created mostly small-scale works using humble domestic or found materials (including envelopes and assembled furniture parts). The work made at this time deliberately challenged ideas of art elitism and art as commodity. He then moved to Cornwall in 2001 and chose to begin exhibiting. Early success came when his work was included in an exhibition titled 'Nudes' in New York City, (along with Jacob Epstein and Pierre-Auguste Renoir), where his work was highlighted and reviewed by the New York Times. Shortly after he had four consecutive solo exhibitions each of which included publications at Goldfish Fine Arts in Penzance, Cornwall.

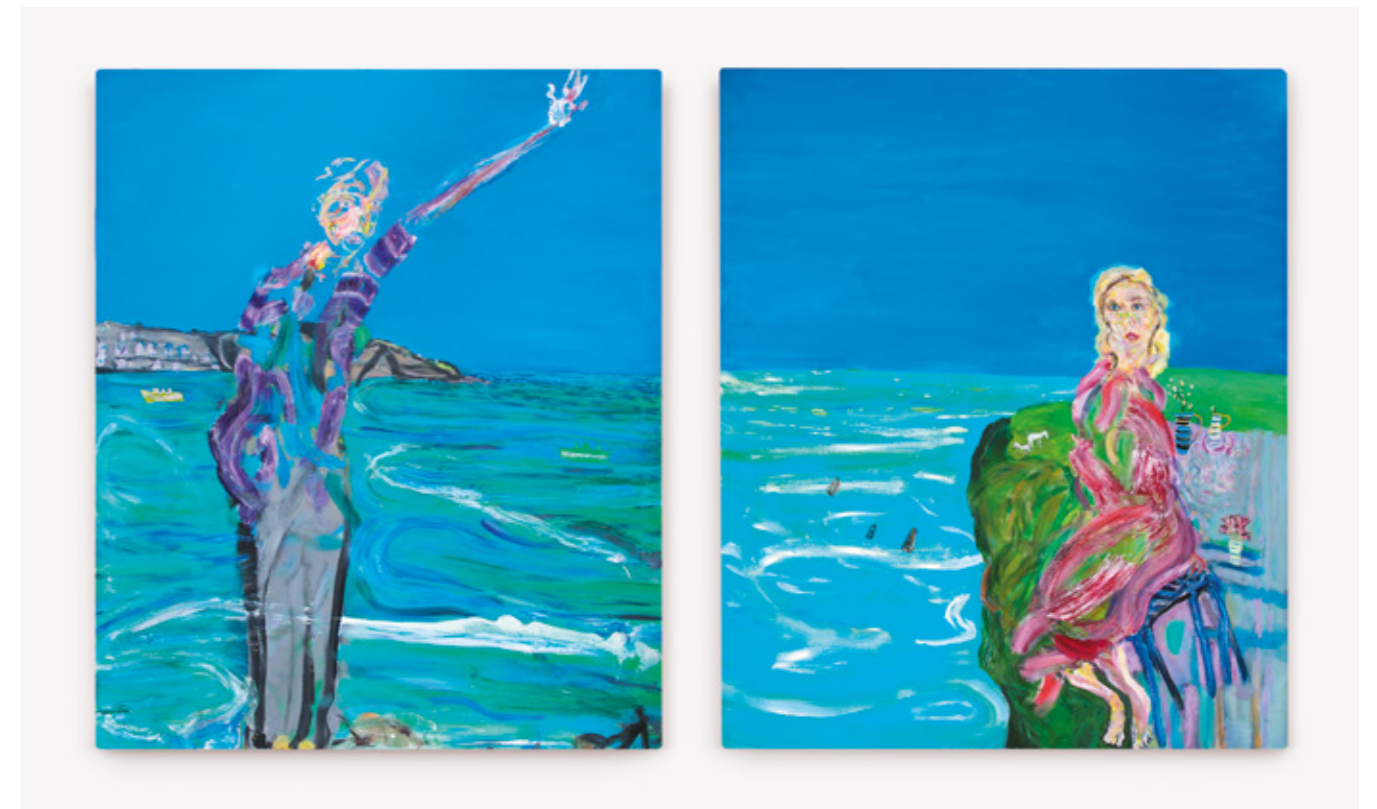
Other notable exhibitions included 'Move' at Vyner Street, London, during Frieze Art Week 2007, where his work 'Dog Breeder', created as a twisted and emphatic anti-art statement, was exhibited. He was also included in 'No Soul For Sale' at Tate Modern Turbine Hall, London in 2010. In 2012 he held a major solo exhibition at Millennium in St Ives, Cornwall and that year was given a guest solo exhibition at L13 Light Industrial Workshop, London. He has also held large-scale solo exhibitions at Spike Island and Motorcade FlashParade in Bristol. Ordinary Bodies, Ordinary Bones was conceived with support from The Arts Council, UK and was exhibited at Anima Mundi in 2018. Works have been included in numerous international curated mixed exhibitions in Berlin, Dublin, Siena, Milwaukee and New York City and in Venice during the 54th Biennale. Most recently paintings have been exhibited in four major museums in China. Andrew Litten paintings feature in numerous international private and public collections. He is represented by Anima Mundi.

ABOUT ANIMA MUNDI

Anima Mundi was founded by Joseph Clarke, who has curated in excess of 100 exhibitions over a twenty year period, working with international artists in all media. The gallery is based in a former Christian Science reading rooms in St Ives, Cornwall which was converted in to a significant gallery space. The space is one of the largest outside of London which has helped to secure Anima Mundi's international reputation for representing the very best in Contemporary art. Since its creation, Anima Mundi has strived to offer its international collectors unique access to a diverse offering of contemporary art whilst supporting its artists through collaborations with museums and art centres around the world.

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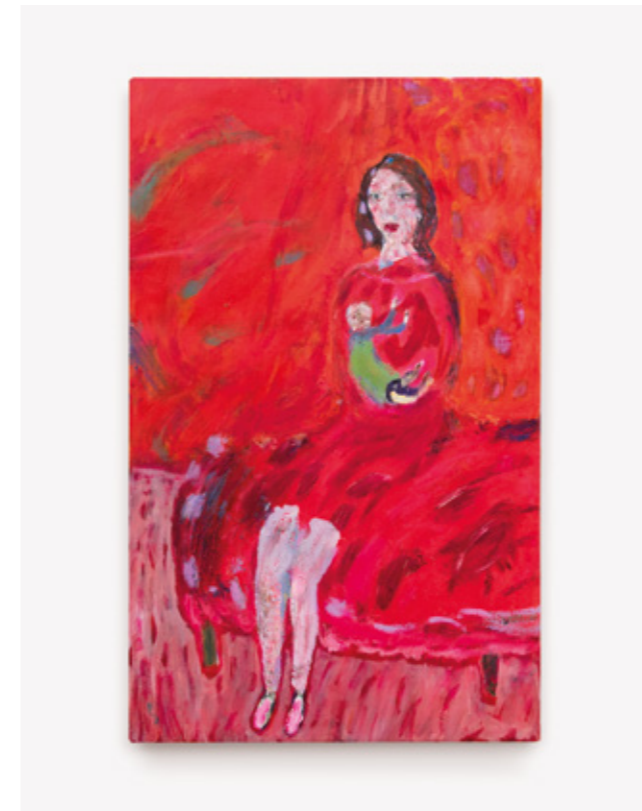


Returned

oil on canvas, 200 x 170 cm each (diptych)



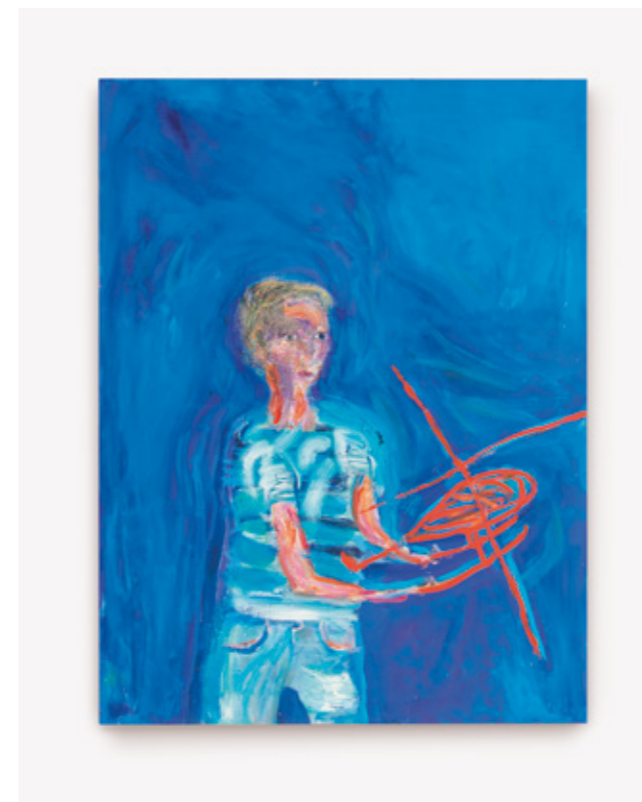
Footprints
oil on canvas, 180 x 120 cm / 160 x 120 cm (diptych)



Mother With First Child
oil on canvas, 80 x 50 cm



Listening
bronze (edition of 3), 145 x 63 x 80 cm



Thinking of Flight
oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm



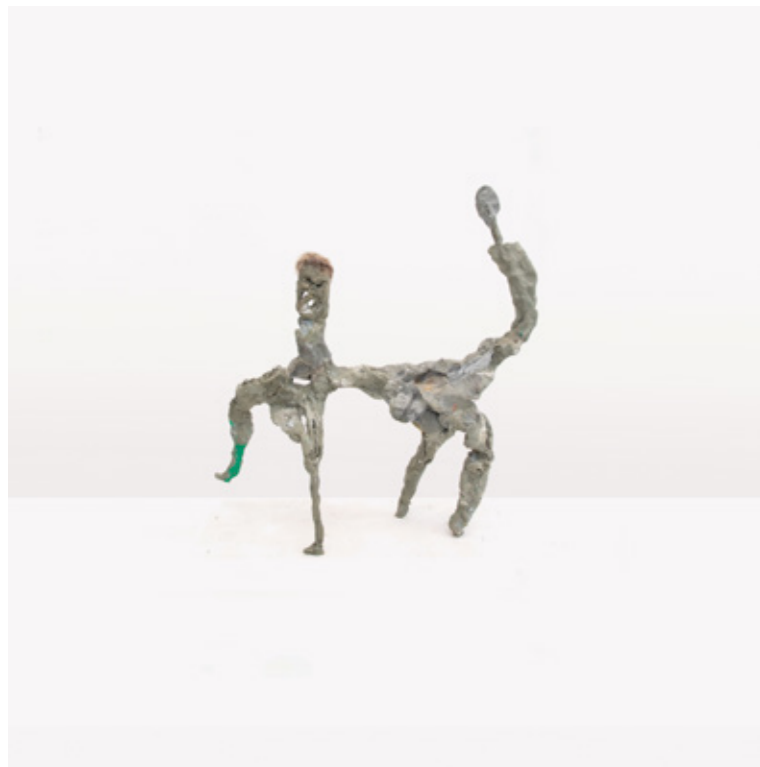
Thinking of Flight

epoxy clay, wood, paint, 39 x 16 x 13 cm



Liminal Stage

oil on canvas, 190 x 280 cm



Frightened Cat

epoxy clay, wire, paint on wood base, 38 x 32 x 17 cm



Waving

epoxy clay, wood, paint, 50 x 24 x 17 cm