



## Ben Edge/Ben Westley Clarke Contemporary Folklore

9 – 25 April 2015

Private view 9 April 18.30 – 21.00 RSVP [info@leydengallery.com](mailto:info@leydengallery.com)

Ben Edge and Ben Clarke are both London-based figurative painters. Edge moved to London to study fine art whilst also developing a career as a musician and songwriter playing in the punk band *Thee Spivs* and his recently started group, *The Electric Pencils*. Before moving to London to study art at the Byam Shaw School of Art and the Slade, Clarke was a singer in the punk band *The Hat Brothers*.

Both artists have an enduring interest in Folk Art and 'primitive' art forms. For this exhibition Ben Edge is showing a recent series of paintings of outsider figures, many of whom are artists. Edge is interested in the fact that the work of folk and outsider artists operates beyond the generally accepted cultural norms. Ben Clarke presents paintings which reinvestigate the influence of outsider and folk art on modernist painting. Both artists aim to blur the distinctions between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' art.

Whilst creating their paintings with everyday surroundings in mind, both artists feel that their work also exists on two different levels: they can be considered formally, for the qualities of paint, but also thematically, for the content and the subject matter.

The varying scale of their work is highlighted in this exhibition, with a range of large-scale works by Clarke, upon which his style of a more loose application of paint is able to be expressed. Edge, alternatively arranges his paintings on a far more intimate scale, which is suited to his tighter style of painting.

Both artists' work is powerfully figurative and at first glance rooted in traditional portraiture. Although there is a strong connection, both painters also use personalised vernaculars, which have developed through time and practise. Ben Clarke often paints people that he knows in an attempt to register them as part of a real story, invoking the notion of a contemporary folklore.

Ben Edge makes paintings, which commemorate, and celebrate the extraordinary lives of those he considers as unsung heroes. Within each of his portraits he intends to present the viewer with a critical and psychological insight into a unique human story, through recurring themes such as masculinity and the artistic impulse.

Both artists, with their idiosyncratic painterly languages, make icons and create folklore out of contemporary culture and recent histories whilst transforming the conventional portrait into a poetic metaphor for the fragility of existence.