

CHRISTIE'S

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Dylan Lewis: Shapeshifting



Sitting Cheetah Pair, Edition AP3,
Estimate: £40,000-60,000 © Kent Andreason



Dylan Lewis working on a clay prototype
©Kent Andreassen

London – Christie's will present *Dylan Lewis: Shapeshifting* on 10 September, a sale comprising sixty outstanding animal and figurative bronze sculptures by the renowned South African sculptor. Over the past decade, Dylan Lewis has been creating a unique seven-hectare sculpture garden in South Africa located in the foothills of the Stellenbosch mountains situated outside Cape Town. To facilitate further expansion of the garden he has decided to release works from his personal collection to be auctioned. Created by the artist over the past two decades, these sculptures are the last remaining commercially available examples of each edition. Acquired by both collectors and royalty, many of Dylan Lewis' sculptures are also in public collections. The top lots of the sale are *Running Cheetah Pair II* (estimate: £60,000-100,000) and *Leopard Lying on Rocks* (estimate: £60,000-100,000). Estimates range from £2,000 to £100,000.

Andy Waters, Curatorial Director and Nathaniel Nicholson, Christie's Head of Sale note: "*Christie's is pleased to be collaborating with Dylan Lewis for the auction 'Shapeshifting'. Sixty sculptures from Dylan's private collection have been specially selected to showcase the transition of Dylan's work from animal to human figure. The striking sculptures encapsulate his unique oeuvre in bronze emulating his love for the African landscape and what it represents to him metaphorically. The sale offers the last opportunity for buyers to acquire these editions, appealing to new and discerning collectors alike. This sale follows successful sales of Dylan Lewis's work at Christie's in 2007 and 2011.*"

Dylan Lewis explains: "*All my sculpture in one way or the other has been inspired by the natural wild places of Southern Africa from my early bird forms to my current shamanic human figures. Humans have largely tamed the wilderness, we've fenced out the wild lands, cut down the forests and exterminated the lions and tigers. I believe we have so rapidly disconnected ourselves from the wild natural places in which we evolved over millennia that we are struggling to make sense of that separation. We're disturbed, we're*

in transition. My sculpture is an attempt to find the image in the emotion exploring wild untamed aspects of the human psyche."

Born in Johannesburg, South Africa in the 1960s, Dylan Lewis was surrounded by art from an early age. Both his mother and grandmother were painters while his father was a sculptor. Beginning his career as a painter it was his father's death that shifted Lewis' focus to sculpture, where he has continued the family's artistic legacy within which he has established his own voice and meaning.

Inspired by the wild animals roaming around the landscape to the north of his homeland, Lewis has sought - through form and texture - to convey the essence of the African veld and the primeval struggle for survival, of predators and prey, with the surface of the sculpture often taking on the landscape's textural qualities. After making hundreds of drawings, each sculpture is then modelled in clay maquettes before being cast in bronze employing the ancient *cire perdue* ('lost wax') technique.



Like generations of artists before him, Lewis has been captivated by the lissomness and beauty of the cat, as reflected in the different BIG CAT sculptures offered for sale. From early pre-historic carvings to ancient Chinese, Persian and Egyptian dynasties, the cat has been viewed as a venerated animal, even elevated to the ranks of deity. To Lewis, the cat has acted as both a muse and a *métier*, with different cats reflecting different aspects of his work. Whilst his cats are anatomically accurate, they go far beyond the merely representational, whether hunting, sitting or playing. Each sculpture has an elemental quality about them, the lines and textures not only recreating the vividness of the creature but also defining its habitat. The lion represents power, the cheetah, speed and the leopard, elegance.

Dylan Lewis explains: *"The big cats for me are archetypally symbolic of wilderness but they also hold that place for me within the human imagination. I've spent a lot of time in wilderness space tracking them, watching them, sketching them, trying to capture what it felt like to be in their presence, what it is like to be in their environments."*



In *Grooming Leopard* (estimate: £15,000-25,000) the viewer is able to observe the animal's elegance and physical strength; *Sitting Leopard* captures the animal's commanding majesty (estimate: £20,000-30,000). Maquettes include *Leopard Bust Maquette* (estimate: £2,500-4,000) and *Standing Leopard III Maquette* (estimate: £7,000-10,000). *Running Cheetah Pair I*, (estimate: £40,000-60,000) and *Running Cheetah III Maquette I* (estimate £8,000-12,000, *illustrated above right*) captures speed and agility, whilst *Cheetah Head I* reminds the viewer of the animal's beauty (estimate: £7,000-10,000, *illustrated above left*, ©Kent Andreason). Bird sculptures such as *Cape Wagtail III* (estimate: £2,000-3,000, *detail illustrated left*) and *Glossy Starling* (estimate: £2,000-3,000) capture quiet moments of calm. The HUMAN FIGURE is explored in an array of powerful works ranging from *Male Torso I Maquette* (estimate: £4,000-6,000), *Male Trans-Figure III* (estimate: £20,000-40,000) and *Male Trans-Figure VII* (estimate: £15,000-25,000, *illustrated right*, ©Kent Andreason), to *Male Trans-Figure XIII Maquette* (estimate: £5,000-8,000).



Discussing his creative process Dylan Lewis explains: *"With both forms, human and animal, I work directly from life. The tactility of clay is important, it is a highly expressive material. Clay allows me a freedom. It allows me to express emotion in an immediate way. For me, part of a journey towards authenticity has*

been to re-wild the psyche in some way. My creative process is an attempt to concretise a kind of felt emotion into physical form in order to understand and endure, and, somehow, survive and make sense of the human condition.”

The catalogue for the sale will be available in August. To find out more in the meantime, please see Christie’s content feature: http://www.christies.com/features/Dylan-Lewis-studio-visit-9982-3.aspx?sc_lang=en

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Notes to Editors

About [Dylan Lewis](#) and Christie’s

Dylan Lewis has a strong relationship with Christie’s London starting with his first highly successful auction of animalier bronzes created during the early years of his career which was held at Christie’s South Kensington in June 2007. Another auction entitled “Predators and Prey II” was held at Christie’s South Kensington in June 2011. This latest collection entitled Shapeshifting encompasses the artists transition from the Big Cat bronzes to the Shamanic human figures which were exhibited at Christie’s South Kensington in August 2009 and in Berkley Square, London in September 2013.

About Christie’s

Christie’s, the world’s leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in 2018 that totalled £5.3 billion / \$7 billion. Christie’s is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and international expertise. Christie’s offers around 350 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie’s also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

Alongside regular sales online, Christie’s has a global presence in 46 countries, with 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

**Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue.*

**Estimates do not include buyer’s premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer’s premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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