

**MODERN ART  
OXFORD**

**SHIFTING SANDS:  
HYBRID RITUALS AND SYMBOLS IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE**

23 May - 12 July 2015

Project Space

An exhibition of works by Serena Korda and Dr. Lakra

Folkloric rituals, from harvest festivals in Sussex to Day of the Dead celebrations in Mexico, continue to be shaped by the rites and activities which traditionally bound communities together. The symbols, images and materials produced as part of these rituals are often appropriated, developed and repurposed over time to retain relevance beyond their pagan ritual origins. They are the visual representations of myth and familiarity, fear and hope, and of community identity in a specific place and time.

*Shifting Sands* brings together the work of two artists who continue these traditions in a contemporary context, working with images and ideas that resonate across time and cultures. The sculptures, collages and drawings presented in this exhibition reach into the past and mix traditional folklore with symbols of contemporary culture. They illustrate the evolution in how we think about community, culture, and history, and how this has altered over time.

Serena Korda (b. 1979) is an artist working with the traditions and symbols of folklore, magic and superstition to create performance, films and sculptures, taking this rich material and remaking it in a contemporary mould. The ceramic works in *Shifting Sands* each bear the face of a bearded man, referencing Bellermino Jugs of the 16th century used as common household objects. During the witch hunts of the 17th century, these jugs were transformed into 'Witches Bottles', a form of sympathetic magic used to ward off evil. A kind of voodoo ensued as the body of the male vessel was filled with urine, bent nails and votive cloth hearts, hoping to cause pain to any witch who posed a threat. They are both sculptures and functioning instruments, objects of use in a contemporary performance of ancient traditions.

Dr. Lakra (b. 1979) is an artist and tattooist based in Oaxaca, Mexico. Dr. Lakra works with drawings, found objects and the visual language of anthropology - totems and ritual symbols alongside the functional paraphernalia of contemporary life. The drawings and imagery he uses to embellish his objects and images are taken from the traditions of tattoo culture; sex, death, family and religion. Dr. Lakra's work is a fusion of the celebratory and the macabre, the superstitious and the monumental, combining the traditions of ancient and contemporary folklore, he creates rich and mysterious images.

**THE CLIMPING DRAGON EXTRACT FROM SPRING AND SUMMER  
CUSTOMS IN SUSSEX, KENT AND SURREY, BY FRAN AND GEOFF DOEL  
AND TONY DEANE.**

The Climping Dragon festival was one of the strangest Whitsun events in the south-east. The village of Littlehampton in Sussex, was quite remote until the early 1970s. Its pub, the Black Horse, then managed by an elderly couple and basic in the extreme, was home to an extraordinary spectacle. A group of folksong enthusiasts from the Kent/London borders, notably Dave Watts and Robin Gray, regularly camped on the beach at Climping during the Whitsun weekend. In 1964, they set up the Climping Dragon festival based very closely on the Obby Oss ceremony of Padstow, Cornwall.

The police closed the road to the Black Horse, allowing the colourful dragon, built on to a frame carried by one of the group, to approach the pub, accompanied by musicians playing accordions and fiddles. The tune written by fiddle-player Mike Hutchinson, was based on a popular surfing song of the time, with elements of the Padstow May Song played in reverse.

Despite being a total invention, the Climping festival was accepted as a 'revival' and notes were kept in the headquarters of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. The Dragon was even invited by the late Bill Rutter to attend the Sidmouth International Folk Festival, where it danced side by side with the Padstow Old Oss. Strangely, years after the festival folded, the organisers discovered that Climping is, in fact, in an area noted for its dragon legends.

Fran and Geoff Doel and Tony Deane, *Spring and Summer Customs in Sussex, Kent and Surrey*, Meresborough Books 1995

## EVENTS

All events are free unless specified otherwise

### Tours:

#### Thursday 11 June, 6.30pm

Ben Roberts, Curator of Education and Public Programmes, leads a tour of *Shifting Sands: Hybrid Rituals and Symbols in Contemporary Culture*

### Performance:

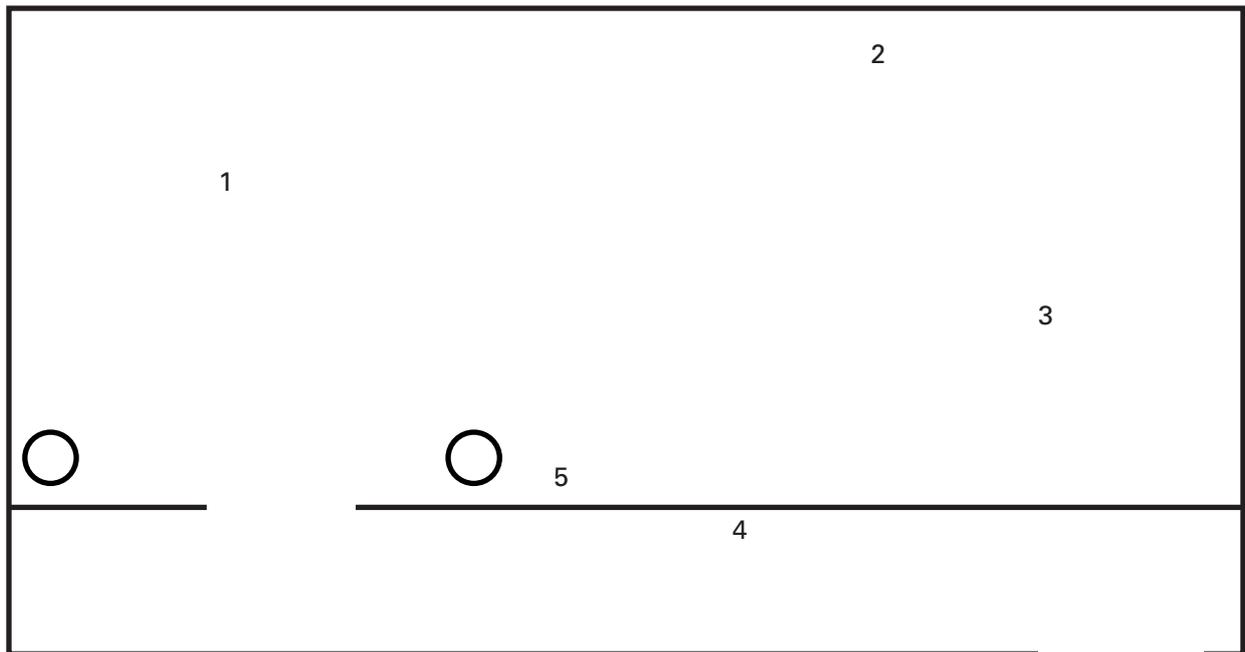
Serena Korda – *The Jug Choir*

#### Thursday 9 July, 7.00pm

#### Saturday 11 July, 3.00pm

As part of *Shifting Sands: Hybrid Rituals and Symbols in Contemporary Culture*, Serena Korda works with local singers to create a performance incorporating the ceramic sculptures in *Shifting Sands*.

## MAP AND LIST OF WORKS



**1. Serena Korda**  
*The Hosts: Ectoplasmic Variations*, 2015

19 glazed stoneware jugs  
Dimensions variable,  
Made with the support of Rhubaba,  
Rhubaba Choir, Smiths Row, Camden  
Arts Centre and King's College London  
With special thanks to Kat Buchanan.

**2. Dr Lakra**  
*Untitled (Mosquito Book)*,  
1992-2012,

Found book, paper collage,  
14 x 8 x 7 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Kate MacGarry, London

**3. Dr Lakra**  
*Dr Lakra Lexicon*, 2010

Hand etched found objects and  
mould-made plastic,  
27 x 33.6 x 9.4 cm,  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Kate MacGarry, London

**4. Dr Lakra**  
*Untitled (Arcimboldo I)*, 2008  
Vintage book clippings on paper  
29 x 21 cm

**Dr. Lakra**  
*Untitled (Arcimboldo II)*, 2008  
Vintage book clippings on paper,  
29 x 21 cm

**Dr Lakra**  
*Untitled (Arcimboldo III)*, 2008  
Vintage book clippings on paper  
29 x 21.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Kate MacGarry, London

**5. Dr Lakra,**  
*Untitled*, 2009  
Ink and paint on vintage postcard  
14 x 8.5cm  
Courtesy Private Collection

**Dr Lakra**  
*Untitled*, 2009  
Ink and paint on vintage postcard  
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