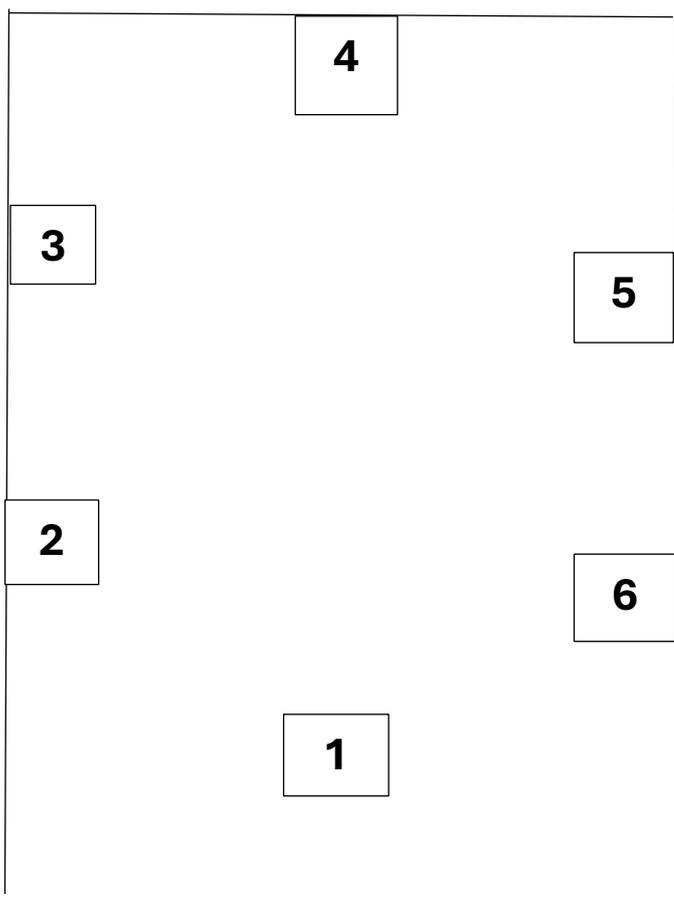


JAYNE SIMPSON: LION

A Turning Point Exhibition

24 Jan – 7 March 2026

GALLERY PLAN



LIST OF WORKS

1. *Cloth House*, 2025, repurposed bed sheet, screen print, inks, acrylic, emulsion and watercolour
2. *Departure*, 2025, Oil on linen.
3. *Bigfoot*, 2025, Oil on linen
4. *The Map of Was / Is*, 2025. Monogrammed antique bedsheet, watercolour, emulsion, charcoal.
5. *Arrival*, 2025, Oil on linen
6. *Bunny*, 2025, Oil on canvas



Kitty, 2025, limited edition screen print. Edition of 25 + 10 AP's

£50 each

Available in the Grundy shop.

IN CONVERSATION

Jayne Simpson (artist) and Paulette Brien (curator, Grundy)

Produced on the occasion of Jayne Simpson's solo exhibition *Lion* at Grundy Art Gallery, 2026

PB. I'm really delighted to be here talking to Jayne today about your exhibition *Lion*, which is at Grundy Art Gallery from the 24th of January through to the 7th March 2026 and I wanted to spend a bit of time capturing some of our thoughts. We have been meeting on and off over the last 18 months, but talking together about your work for even longer, maybe 5 years?

As I was coming here today, I was thinking how because I've seen the work periodically as it has developed over the last 18 months, I've been able to see the layering that has been happening; not just layering of paint on the canvas but also in terms of the layering of our conversations, the layering of your thoughts and feelings towards the work. I was thinking of how lucky I've been as a Curator and a human being to see the emergence of the work over a period of time. I thought this recorded Q&A would be a good opportunity to try and capture some of that and share it with other people.

I think the obvious place for me to start, because it is so distinctive, is the title of the exhibition and you've called it *Lion*; do you want to talk a little bit about why?

JS. Thank you coming today and I'm delighted that you are here in my home because the studio visits have always been really beneficial to me in the same way that mentoring is. I think that spacing out of the visits was really important too. I think it was about 18 months ago that you asked me if I would make a show. Having that time, which has gone so fast, was important.

I was also thinking about the *Push and the Pull* exhibition that I had a Hanover projects [in Preston] which was 2023 and Maeve Rendle [lecturer at University of Central Lancashire] kindly got you to come and do an in conversation with me then. That was a difficult time, and the work in *Lion* has evolved from those paintings. They have become more confident and progressed and so it was kind of like in real-time that I was working through the layers of what was happening to me.

To have the opportunity to really scale up for this show was just amazing and really timely because it was about investing in the time and dedication to my practice and being taken seriously. Also to have those beautiful crafted linen canvasses made for me which is a real culture change. I think as an artist quite often you make do with whatever. To be given something like that really changes the dynamic of my approach.

The paintings were there inside me; I think I took delivery of the linens in October last year, primed them and the first painting;

Departure was probably done in 2 weeks. *Arrival* took a little bit longer because I think I was working out where I'd arrived to.

In terms of my references for these two paintings, of course there is my whole study of Art History and critical thinking that comes with my practice, but I wanted to be quite specific in my references for these paintings.

PB. Do you want to just say a little bit about what those references were?

JS. Yeah so, I was particularly thinking about the Walker Art Gallery and my visit there to see a specific burial painting. There's a drawing here in my sketchbook, it was the funeral of Shelley, and then there is what's going on these days, people gathering, what has been in the media and has been food for thought as well. And so, it was both personal and I think more global. It's also my position in the world as a woman getting older, a person getting older and also what that means in a global sense, and I think also being a mother and my changing personal archive has always influenced my work – so, feeling as if I wasn't a daughter anymore because my parents had passed - who was I in the world ? I'll always be mother first I guess, but then after that, is artist. I've realised this recently that when things happen that you can't do anything about with people who you've grown up with, or who you are close to in life, the one thing that I can always kind of rely upon is my practice, or that conversation within yourself and how that

comes out. And that's why I think I have talked about it [my practice] being a medicine or a therapy, it's something that's a comfort even though it's a challenge.

PB. You've started to talk there a little bit about them [the paintings] being inside you and how the practice is about evolving them out of you. My experience being in the room with your paintings it's very powerful and even though I am not a mother, but I have been a daughter, and I have like you, lost both my parents - so there are some connections to the specifics you talk about. For me your work is communicating a deep humanity – a sense of all of the things that are universally important to us a human being. It's been a very profound experience for me, visiting you in the studio, very moving. If we talk about the origins of the paintings, the inspiration, the rationale, the reason, the drive – I keep thinking about this work compel / compulsion – not as in being something that you are not in control of – I don't mean that, but it does feel like there is an urgency in your work, a need for these paintings to exist.

JS. I was thinking about lockdown – how this was such a divisive time – but for me, it was an opportunity to stay in. I worked on this kitchen table, and I found that it was like when you take everything away – what is left – and it was like the biggest gift to me. I think that's when I took permission and decided to go forward decisively with my practice. I'd been teaching for so long, and the ground was changing in my employment as a fine art lecturer. I started to focus on my

practice, and it became it became soothing. I guess I've not always necessarily felt like I fit in - I won't say neurodivergent - but I guess a lot of creatives probably feel that way - but being creative is the soothing remedy for me for whatever that feeling is.

My husband bought me the book on Rita Ackermann, and I absolutely loved that and her series of works called mama just edging in between figurative and abstract. and I loved that vibration between these two things. Making work in that vibration is where I now feel I am, and there are hundreds of paintings existing ready to come out.

PB. Vibration – that’s such a beautiful way to describe it – I’ve got goosebumps thinking about that.

JS. I just feel so bloody lucky because there have been horrible things that have happened to me which happen to everybody, but thankfully, I have found something, and also people are starting to take it seriously. Not that I've ever needed the acknowledgement because I would have always done it, but I wanted to share it. I'm quite empathic and so rather than just having those conversations with people, I was now making work that resonated - where people could feel the things that I was feeling. For my master’s degree I made a secular shrine, which was a space of contemplation, and I wanted to make paintings for that.

And I think women's experiences, women have started to talk about things happening to them, women talking to each other, a sisterhood – and I love that because when you have lost

family and you may, or not be understood by your children or your partner and to be able to come together with women seems a very kind of spiritual thing.

PB. Women being able to be open with each other and say I'm going through that too – I suppose in the language of today – to be seen. It's very powerful to be in a place that doesn't make you second-guess your value, where there is reassurance and recognition.

JS. And coming back to your first question - that is where the name *Lion* came from. I am a Leo and even though I'm not a big astrology type person I have kind of running joke with girlfriends that are also Leos who are kind of outgoing but have this shyness at the same time. And we talked a bit about this previously, about thinking of the verb of lion rather than the noun – this is really important to me - and I know that the lioness is a word that is being used currently and I didn't want to use that - I do feel as if I've had to be strong, being able to practice and make work in the way that have done in the last 5 years - that has made me feel quite fierce, but really gentle at the same time - so I wanted a word that would be a perfect combination of I guess being able to cope and feeling strong, but also having still the tenderness and not losing that.

PB. I just want to go back to this the beautiful use of the word vibration because that really feels so apt and when I think about the specific paintings in this specific exhibition *Bunny* stands out. When I am looking at the paintings in *Lion* as a group, there is a spectrum between abstraction and figuration. When I look around the room, it's like a dream-like state before and after *Bunny*. When you get to *Bunny* it's like your eyes

come in to focus for a second. Is that a valid reading of that work?

JS. Yes, it is. *Bunny* is a funny painting because I think the other paintings are very much about me and that painting [Bunny] is about my daughter - realising that she is a woman, she's her own person. In the painting she is holding on to a mannequin that I made in the last show and there's lots of things in that painting to do with her being an only child and her holding on to that - even so recently she wanted to have a sibling. It was if [Bunny] was almost like a gift to her. She's wearing a striped skirt - which has connotations with historic bathing suits. I use stripes in my work as a way of describing a barrier or a threshold. It's a bit of dynamic formalism and mark making. *Bunny* was the final painting I made - before the other two larger paintings, which are very much about me. *Bunny* was about her [my daughter] and realising day-by-day she's getting older and you start to reflect on yourself at that age.

PB. When I saw all of the paintings up on the wall yesterday - I realised that *Bunny* acts as a punctuation mark - a breather, a pause. The lines are more definitive in that work, and the face has clear features, and the eyes hold you in the space, before letting you move on.

JS. I love that because maybe she is looking out saying Goodbye as you leave -

PB. I want to just talk now about the piece at threshold - the beautiful sculptural fabric 'Wendy House' at the entrance to the gallery.

JS. I was on the AA2A [Artists Access 2 Art Colleges] at Blackpool College of Art working with Angy Young. She was amazing and I had worked with her a long time ago when we both were teaching. She was teaching textiles and I was teaching Art at Blackpool School of Art, and I asked her if she would make this house piece with me from repurposed sheets and cloth. And I worked with a model Ruby, and she was post-partum having just had her baby Kitty. I asked her if she would come in for a photo shoot which was amazing, and then we used those as the screen prints. I felt as if I was reclaiming that image from the sexualization of women's bodies, how strong we are as women you know, the care givers, how we have to look after ourselves and each other because we're not set up to do that yet. And I don't want to say that is was a Venus de Milo, but you see these depictions of women painted by men that are supposedly lifting them and this was about me saying come on, women we can do this as well, we can celebrate the human form, we can take it away from that sexual gaze, we can say we're stronger when we love ourselves and we love each other and we can be there for each other. The house also includes one of the students Mary, who I drew around and I was thinking about that in the night, that I really want to make sure that Mary, knows that I've used the silhouette of her as the entrance to my exhibition because it's not about those ideas of preciousness, but lifting people up as much as you can. Hopefully people will go through the threshold of all ages and just feel comfort. I just think about how it can shelter us, disclose people, things or for discretion and humility - I just love all the connotations.

PB. We were talking a little bit about it yesterday, you know as a child having Wendy Houses in the centre of the front room,

private but in public at the same time. And yesterday when it was installed in the gallery, we suddenly all started gravitating towards it, standing in it having a chat. And then, let's talk about the final piece – the large hanging painting on the back wall.

JS. I was taking these bed sheets from Blackpool Hotels that were out of circulation. And this was allowing me to work at scale. And I had seen these beautiful sheets a bit like Annie Albers and I liked the idea of working with a cane so you've got this extension - so I was making these pieces – and I'd bought these more expensive sheets, heavier antique sheet with a monogram on from a collector who I think was from France and I was going to use that piece for something else, but then last January I just started to work on it. It feels a bit like a family portrait in a way. With my husband and our daughter and it was spontaneous - but it really needed to, and it kind of does, feel a bit shroud like. And it is a kind of journey through life. How we just need to navigate it the best we can don't we and that's what that is about. It's kind of flag for us, countering all the ways in which flags are used in a way that's not so human.

PB. I'd like to finish by recognising where we are in the process - you know we're a week away before the exhibition opening - it's all up on the wall, you've got a few things you might want to do to it but essentially, it's ready and waiting for its public. How do you feel?

JS. I'm really ready for it. I've invited everybody and yeah, I'm really excited to see what people think.

PB. Maybe what would be nice as we maybe do part 2 of this conversation either part way through, or at the end maybe to reflect on how people have received it and what you've received in terms of feedback - what you think the next stage might be? To finish, I want to say that I have been really moved by our past conversations and today and by the experience of being with you in your studio and being with your work. I've been making exhibitions with artists for a very long time, and this has been a really important moment for me because it's reminded me about all the good that art can be and all the good that artists can bring into the world so, thank you very much.

JS. Thank you.