

Foreword by Lee Durrell

Peter Le Vasseur is an eclectic artist; the gamut of his intellect and imagination is as varied and vivid as his artist's palette. He has used his talent to communicate a lifetime of reflections on human behaviour, as well as his disquiet over its consequences.

The diversity of topics in Peter's work is staggering, ranging from pop fantasy to politics, from superstars of the past to events of the present.

Many of his works contain amusing or prescient social comment. We see a wind-up toy president, credit cards at the end of the rainbow and 'devices' dominating their users in a beautiful natural setting. We see the grit and grime of daily living contrasted with glitz and glamour, and traditional ways of life doomed by the trappings of the modern world.

Peter offers up-to-the-minute commentary, as emotive and spirited as the works he created as a young man. There are Marsh Arabs losing their wetlands in Iraq, a tiger tracked by

drone in degraded forest, a koala marooned in an Australian firescape and a person metaphorically incarcerated by the 2019 pandemic.

He occasionally tells us what he thinks the future may hold. We may look for respite away from our planet, saving the animals two by two in a spaceship, or we may return to a simpler life where an oil pipeline lies broken in the desert or an aeroplane sprawls derelict in bucolic surroundings.



Below: Lee Durrell, widow of conservationist Gerald Durrell, with Peter Le Vasseur at the opening of the exhibition marking his forty years as an artist. The event was held at St James, Guernsey, in September 2003 and was opened by the Bailiff of Guernsey Sir de Vic Carey. Copyright The Guernsey Press.

Facing: *Treasure Trove* (2021). As a patch of Amazonian jungle is cleared by a logging team, one of the workers peers through a gap in the foliage. For the first time he sees the wonders of the rainforest and perhaps at last understands the importance of leaving the pristine jungle intact.

Above all it is his works themed around nature and the environment that lie at the core of his art and make Peter Le Vasseur one of the most important artists alive today. For me there is no situation that merits greater attention than the loss of the planet's biodiversity, the extraordinary variety of living beings and ecosystems that make the planet tick by renewing air, water, soil and other 'services' on which all life depends. The main drivers of this loss are habitat destruction, overconsumption and now climate change, all of which have been depicted by Peter since the 1970s, long before the value of biodiversity was appreciated by the general public; indeed the word wasn't coined until 1980!

These paintings show or imply the destruction of biodiversity and the death of myriad life forms at the hands of humans,

exposing the clear and growing danger to the natural world.

However, in the same paintings, juxtaposed with the gloom and doom, Peter displays the vitality and richness of biodiversity, be it on a coral reef or in a tropical rainforest or temperate woodland. He has meticulously researched the denizens of these ecosystems, capturing the form, colour and behaviour of each species in images reminiscent of the work of the famous biological illustrators of the nineteenth century. Thus, we can appreciate accurately and fully what we are about to lose.

Cold comfort, but these are things we need to know if we are ever to triumph in the struggle to save and protect life on earth, which, of course, includes ourselves.

Lee Durrell
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