Spanning twenty-eight years, this exhibition is the first museum survey of Vivienne Shark LeWitt's art. *Comedies & proverbs* brings together fifty paintings to provide an opportunity to examine what is at the heart of Shark LeWitt's practice: the way feelings work, the way nature works, how relationships exist.

Shark LeWitt captures the telling emotional moments of life. With a poetic sensibility and painterly methods that have remained open to experiment, her images address the everyday through literary allegory and acute observation. Shark LeWitt's work represents some of the key interests of artists of her generation, including the return to figuration, the development of personal symbols, the analysis of the impact of the mass media and popular culture on art, and the dissolution of boundaries between high and low culture.

The paintings in the exhibition have been selected in relation to four major thematic groupings that focus on the work's pictorial and conceptual development. The first of these includes the allegorical paintings of the 1980s, which are installed in the more intimate space of the upstairs gallery (level one). The second grouping comprises transactional/relational paintings where there is a psychological dynamic between two figures. Displayed throughout each of the ground floor galleries, this group includes works from the late 1980s through to the present day; from *Shall I bark for you master? Or shall I bite? Ha, ha, ha, ha* (1987) and *Frankly I am lost, Brian* (1988), showing people in companionship with animals, to paintings that speak of subtle gender politics and power plays such as *Prime movers* (1994).

The third thematic grouping in the ground floor galleries includes paintings such as *Refreshed* (1994), where a (usually) female figure negotiates the 'outside', and typewriter or out-tray becomes the intermediary between an internal world and the public realm. The fourth and final grouping comprises powerful and enigmatic paintings that depict lone female figures poised in reflection. These works are installed on the major wall of the larger ground floor gallery.