

frosch&portmann
DENNIS DAWSON
Murder Ballads

frosch&portmann is pleased to present *Murder Ballads*, the gallery's first solo exhibition by Dennis Dawson.

Fascinated by the murder ballad genre—the detailed recount of a true or mythic crime—Dawson paints “Darling Cora”, “Blue Eyed Ella”, “Poor Laurie Foster” or “Omie Wise”. His portraits of female murder victims emit an aura of sadness, thus not lacking humor, they witness past times. Scots-Irish settlers brought the ballads to the new world, mostly to the southern Appalachian Mountains. Often adapted to fit local stories and murder cases, the lyrics are reflective of the sometimes dark, misogynist, and patriarchal culture from which they sprang.

*I'll tell you the story of Little Omie Wise
How she became deluded by John Lewis' lies,
He told her to meet him down by Adam's Spring
Some money he would bring and some other fine things.*

*And fool like she met him at Adam's Spring
No money he brought her nor other fine things.
No money, no money to flatter the kings,
We'll go and get married they be no disgrace.*

*John Lewis, John Lewis, please tell me your mind,
Do you intend to marry me or leave me behind?
Little Omie, Little Omie, I'll tell you my mind,
My mind is to drown you and leave you behind.*

*Please pity our baby and spare me my life,
I'll go home a beggar and won't be your wife.*

*He hugged her, he kissed her, he turned her around,
He threw her in deep water where he knew she would drown.
He jumped on his pony and away he did ride,
And the screams of Little Omie went down by his side.*

*It was on last Wednesday mornin',
The rain was a-pourin' down, The people searched for Omie,
But she could not be found.*

*Two boys went a-fishin' on a fine summers day,
They saw Little Omie went a-floatin' away.
They threw their net around her and they pulled her to the shore.
The body of Little Omie was searched for no more.*

*They sent for John Lewis, John Lewis came by,
When confronted with her body, he broke down and cried.
You can shoot me, you can hang me for I am the man,
That drowned Little Omie in yonder ole mill dam.*

*My name is John Lewis, my name I'll ne'er deny,
I drowned Little Omie, and I'll never reach the sky.*

October 20—November 27, 2016
Wednesday—Sunday from 12 to 6

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