

CORPUS is pleased to announce Richard Walker's first solo show with the gallery. The exhibition will consist of a curated selection of paintings made over the last ten years with an accompanying text by Sean Steadman. Walker's solo show will be followed up by a second smaller solo presentation in January 2026 as part of CONDO hosted by Phillida Reid.

What would possess an artist to dedicate decades alone in the studio, attempting to capture the world's opaque variety in paint? Monitoring its motionlessness. There must be some deeper secret which galvanises them. More depth? More groundedness? To many, it would seem like some Sisyphean punishment! Doesn't the world denature, the harder the eye looks? Akin to repeating a mantra until its word becomes meaningless. Perhaps this is the point: for the environment to soften just enough to become fluid and evaporate, to release the artist from their prison of objects. Against the backdrop of our thoughts, things persist with a creeping jurisprudence; perhaps it is the artist's duty to confront them.

To the newborn child, the external world is inside of them – a gloopy yolk within the egg of their perception. There are no objects distinct from a self. Gradients of pleasure or discomfort form a cloud of pure valence. This is not to say that their experience is featureless, but that the oscillating patterns of light or sound are indistinguishable from the interiority of bodily sensation. This fusion of an imminent, sensual, and abstract world arises and falls without needing comprehension or logical consistency. Surely some trace or graph of the infant sensorium must linger in the artist's mind once the 'fall' into a world of artefacts occurs. It's no wonder, then, that the root word for 'material' is 'Mother'. She is necessarily the first instance of object permanence. For the helpless child, she is life or death; therefore, guessing patterns in her behaviour is paramount. This sets a deep precedent: prediction becomes the engine of all anxiety.

- 1
Richard Walker
Untitled, 2024
Oil on board
79 × 49 × 2 cm
- 2
Richard Walker
1d, 2021
Pigment and emulsion
binder on cut plywood
107 × 198 × 5.5 cm
- 3
Richard Walker
Untitled, 2024
Oil on board
61 × 90 × 5 cm
- 4
Richard Walker
Catastrophe, 2024
Oil on board
114 × 76 × 5 cm
- 5
Richard Walker
Sink, 2025
Pigment and emulsion
on board
53 × 71 × 2 cm
- 6
Richard Walker
To Make of That, 2024
Oil on board
84 × 61 × 5 cm
- 7
Richard Walker
Untitled, 2024
Pigment and emulsion
on board
27 × 30 × 2 cm
- 8
Richard Walker
Night, 2024
Oil on board
61 × 91.5 × 5 cm

Art is valued for its ability to integrate uncertainty and make it tolerable, even pleasurable! It must vaccinate its interlocutors with enough indeterminacy to deter a slide into equilibrium, to allow the autocatalysis of imagination to keep grasping onwards. The artist is abnormal in that they crave uncertainty more than most, venturing out into chaos and dragging some unseen and surprising correlation from the swamp of information which surrounds them, and making it legible. Groups like the European Avant Garde elevated 'chance' as their Faustian principle, imbibing the poison of uncertainty to become the master of its effects. In the British Isles, which moved slower, such sorcery was perhaps seen as a little silly. A quieter brew of rationality, neurosis, and empiricist discipline prevailed: the practice of drawing from life.

Academies like the Slade or Glasgow School of Art urged their inhabitants to look so intently at the external world that it was surveilled into Medusean solidity. Richard Walker studied in this atmosphere at Glasgow, subsequently rebelling against but also internalising its method. His arrival at the school was in the final waning years of the tradition; the professors favoured the Scottish colourists and French observational painting; life drawing was a heavily stressed practice. Walker recounts how Glasgow at that time was an isolated visual culture, there were no art magazines and few contemporaneous books from Europe or America. It was only later, through friends at Transmission Gallery, that he discovered the influences of Jasper Johns or Julian Schnabel.

Most of all, it was the streaming light of the cinema projectionist or the floodlights of the football pitch which electrified the artist. In illuminated venues, the primacy of the body is subdued, sensation unhooks into pure observation – not dissimilar to the infantile miasma. 'Suspension of disbelief' is an incomplete phrase; in these arenas of light, the scene believes itself in us! A phosphate extramission! These early influences have slowly arrested Walker's

studio; you sense his obsession with the effects. He stops the windows up; lamps and digital projectors flood the space with electrical light. In the darkness, he paints images from the glowing projector beam as if it were a bioluminescent life model in a nocturnal theatre. The artist describes the thrill of working from these projections as eliciting an “awe and glamour”. Artificial light is an intoxicant, possessing a base eroticism. As Walter Benjamin acknowledged, the content of illuminated pictures is secondary to the light itself — their “fiery pool”.

Much of Walker’s approach is to be secretive, even obscurantist, when it comes to the production of the work. He resists explaining the origins of each picture, preferring a private stagecraft. This is how theatre conjures its worlds: through illusion and suggestion — something the artist knows well; he worked as a scenery painter for many years. He has likened his studio to a singular piece of technology: a cyborg camera obscura, of which he is only a subcomponent. Walker has described the work as ‘anti-photographic’; for him, the brush registers like asymmetrical patterns on a cymatics plate or the arm of a polygraph mechanism. You sense he wants to instrumentalise himself — to become a conduit. Echo and reverb course across the surface, whilst oscillations usurp objects. The sonic scenography of Jun Miyake is a big influence; it is as if the paintings are a written score, notation for an unheard and tremulous music.

These are not paintings where the viewer is obliged to conduct an indexical reduction, traversing a line of breadcrumbs left by the artist. You need to feel them in their aggregation, to sit with them. They are slow. As a prolific and influential tutor at Glasgow School of Art, Walker always stressed to his students that “as soon as you choose a brush or prime the work in a certain way, the die was cast — the painting is heading in a certain direction.” This captures his approach: an improvisational determinism. Observational painting that must pull itself up by its own bootstraps

9
Richard Walker
Untitled (Pink), 2023
Pigment and emulsion
on cut plywood
197.5 × 113.5 × 5.5 cm

10
Richard Walker
Dark, 2022
Oil on board
51 × 74 × 2 cm

11
Richard Walker
Meeting, 2024
Oil on board
53.5 × 75 × 2 cm

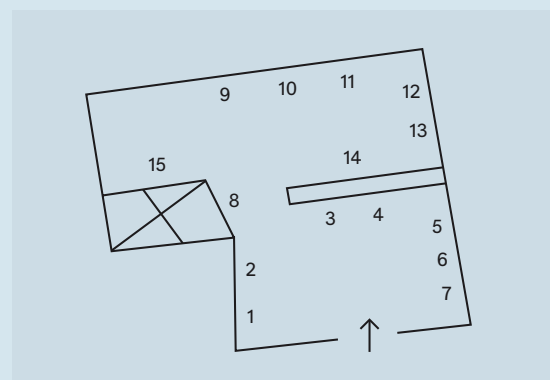
12
Richard Walker
Sort Of, 2014
Oil on board
53.5 × 71 × 2 cm

13
Richard Walker
Emperor, 2014
Oil on board
71 × 48.5 × 2 cm

14
Richard Walker
Lights, 2003
Pigment and emulsion
on cut plywood
122 × 203 × 5 cm

15
Richard Walker
Beast, 2024
Pigment and emulsion
on board
31 × 39 × 2 cm

and conjure geodesics — the optimal point between two impressions. It is a spartan way of working that is actively seeking restriction, avoiding the indulgence of excessive choice. All efforts are made to produce an optimal lure with which to catch the stubbornness of his attention and transmit the scene through a parallax into paint. Even the larger cut wooden works, which are painstakingly sliced, painted, and reassembled like intricate marquetry, contain a kernel of self-punishment. They are wrought into existence, in a similar way to printmaking (particularly Walker’s beloved Ukiyo-e woodblocks); they require the mental tessellation of a stack of procedures which eventually cohere in the final surface.



Walker is a key figure in the Glasgow painting scene. The circuitous and sibilant qualities of the work correlate with many of his peers: Merlin James, Carol Rhodes, or Cathy Wilkes. He shares with them, and his former students Gabriella Boyd or Amelia Barratt, that feeling of light from within — of silence, a quiet persistence. The Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Thomas Reid captures their shared sensibility. Reacting against Hume’s scepticism, he developed a common-sense theory of perception. He insisted the world we see puts us in direct contact with the world as it is in itself — a direct realism. This scepticism of the rhetorical in favour of the experiential seems to be a feature of Glaswegian sensibility, certainly of Walker’s painting. He is enthralled by what he sees and obsessed with the challenge of recording it.

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