

FELIX & SPEAR

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Press Release
February 19, 2024

James Faure Walker

Watercolours: Painting with Light

28 Feb – 24 Mar 2024

Preview reception: Wed 28th Feb, 6-8pm

London, February 19, 2024 – Felix & Spear are pleased to present '*Watercolours: Painting with Light*', an exhibition of watercolours and gouaches by James Faure Walker (b. 1948).

A painter friend remarked that watercolour was dead easy. This surprised me. I think of it as difficult.

Why? Because it means working with paint that is almost transparent. Oil, acrylic, gouache, are opaque, like paste, with body and covering power. With watercolour you are painting with light. In its pure form (without Chinese white) you have only the whiteness of the paper. Every tint is back-lit, and radiant. That is the beauty of it. You lay down some cobalt blue and watch as it radiates out from under a magenta wash. Colours blend or seep into each other, the edges soften. It is a 'live' form of painting. There is no script.

In my case I have only half an idea of what I want. I work it out as I go along. I hope I can improve on whatever I attempted yesterday. Bert Irvin used to speak of doing without 'carpentry' - the safety net of the grid. He was after the free-floating light of Turner.

During Lockdown I was away from my studio. I worked digitally, revisiting earlier work, enjoying the speed and freedom, the play of shape, line, and colour. I became fascinated with vintage radios. I produced a set of prints: 'The Wireless Set'. Art Deco was confidently 'modern': streamlined, hard-edged and technological. Today it serves as a good antidote to misty-eyed pastoral motifs – always a lure for the watercolourist. I began a sequence of gouaches, to feed into the digital collages. They soon went their own way.

I only think of a title after a picture is finished. Occasionally I spot something walking home after work – 'silver shoes' – and there is the title. I relish the translucent shadows on the wet pavement, like delicate glazes. I see bikes weaving in and out of traffic, dress patterns, rain clouds on the horizon.... It is one of the rewards of painting that your eyes tune into inconsequential details.

Wenhaston is famous for its medieval 'Doom' painting. This is a title I have borrowed. We walked to the church last September, following instructions from a fifty-year-old book of Suffolk walks. Landmarks? The oak tree, the

railway track, the shed, were all gone; the bridge on the stream was a pile of rubble; the sweetcorn was so tall you couldn't see the path. Of the two pubs for lunch, one had disappeared, and the other was closed on Mondays. It was a Monday.

I think of that walk as pleasantly doomed - a pilgrim's progress for the curious watercolourist. You hope for a pleasant stroll, but your guide is unreliable. You survive the snares, temptations, ordeals, the false prophets. And somehow you get to the painting in the end, but it's not the painting you expected.

James Faure Walker, 2024

About James Faure Walker

James Faure Walker (born 1948) studied at St Martins School of Art and the Royal College of Art. Solo exhibitions include the Whitworth, Manchester (1985); ARB, Cambridge (2015); Clifford Chance, Canary Wharf (2022); Class Room, Coventry (2017); and Felix & Spear (2018, 2020, 2022). Group shows include Hayward Annual (1979), John Moores (1982, 2002), Serpentine Summer Show (1983), and Digital Pioneers, Victoria and Albert Museum (2009). He was a co-founder of Artscribe magazine in 1976, and its editor for eight years. He has been using computers in painting since 1988. He exhibited eight times at SIGGRAPH, USA, and regularly at DAM, Berlin. He won the 'Golden Plotter' at Computerkunst, Germany in 1998. His 'Painting the Digital River' (Prentice Hall) was published in the USA in 2006. He has 28 works in the V&A Collection. He won the Royal Watercolour Society Award in 2013 and was RWS Honorary Curator for five years. b.1947 Roseau, Dominica

NOTES TO EDITORS

Gallery address: **Felix & Spear, 71 St. Mary's Road, London W5 5RG**

Exhibition Opening Hours: Wed – Fri 11.00 – 18.00, Sat - Sun 12.00 – 15.00

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