

# FELIX & SPEAR

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Press Release  
October 24, 2022

## JAMES FAURE WALKER

### *'HOW IT WORKS'*

**4 Nov – 4 Dec 2022**

London, October 24, 2022 – Felix & Spear Gallery is delighted to present the exhibition *How It Works* by James Faure Walker.

*'Paintings and Sightings'* is the title for the display of my paintings currently at Clifford Chance, Canary Wharf - six large paintings made between 1979 and 2019. For me, painting is essentially about looking. The coral reef, a bird of prey, even an Apache helicopter, can weave their way into a composition. I am not a signed-up abstract painter, and I am not a realist. I enjoy the in-between territory.

The painter, John McLean, insisted that when in Palermo you have to visit the puppet museum (Museo Internazionale delle Marrionette). He was not wrong. I found myself among grotesque faces, hilarious costumes, crazy colours. One room grabbed me, and I could not get enough photos: half-life-size circus clowns, part of Vittorio Podrecca's travelling troupe, the 'Theatre of the Little Ones', which performed internationally for some thirty years after 1923. I had incorporated a clown driving a car in a supposed 'self-portrait' of 2001. Back home I had several paintings awaiting the next step. I couldn't resist seeing what would happen if I threw these images into the mix. The first key was the moustache. I could never have invented that. Three more paintings followed, and luckily no-one has ever challenged me, and asked why clowns?

I have long collected how-to-draw books. They go back go back to the 1850s, most from junk shops, or discarded from art school libraries. They were written for the hobbyist, occasionally by disgruntled and opinionated art teachers. They carried on through the twentieth century as if 'modern art' had never happened, yet they didn't ignore the modern world of telephones, biplanes, and sportscars. I can't say my drawing has improved – despite studying the chapter 'other vases in difficult positions'. I do enjoy the illustrated lessons, and I transpose them into paintings. I called this picture 'Life Study'. It is a cut-away diagram of an air conditioning refrigeration unit, from 'See How it Works' of 1949.

Sometimes it pays to steal an image taken more or less at random. It creates tension as one layer interferes with another. At other times it is better to stick to what appears to be a predetermined path, keeping contrasts in check, and trust the colour to do the work. Do I begin with a plan? Just simple instructions - three colours, this particular brush. Once I am improvising, the plan falls away. I have studio rituals, such as a watercolour a day, and I play around with digital paint.

*'Still Life, Nocturne' and the digital print 'Unexpected' are thirty-four years apart. The 'Dazzle Draw' software I used in 1988 was basic, but it was enough to change my conception of how a painting could be made - and how it might work on the viewer. This 'still life' strikes me as nostalgic, despite being under the spell of a technique that was all about novelty. At the time 'computer art' tended to be geometric, futuristic and chrome plated. I was pulled in the opposite direction: the fluidity, the speed, the accidents, the backlit translucency, all that was closer to the way I used watercolour. I have come to think of them as spiritual cousins. In 'Unexpected', the background is an assemblage of gouache studies. Normally I would blend these into digital composites. Not this time. I met an old friend in a small town in Suffolk, and while chatting, I glimpsed these hats and trousers hanging in a shop doorway. I thought, I will nab those.*

James Faure Walker, 2022

### About James Faure Walker

James Faure Walker (b.1948) studied at St. Martins School of Art and Royal College of Art (1970-72). He was a co-founder of Artscribe magazine in 1976, going on to edit it for eight years. Exhibitions include the Hayward Annual (1979), John Moores Painting Prize (1982, 2002), Serpentine Summer Show (1983), a solo exhibition at the Whitworth, Manchester (1985). 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, winning a New England Book Show Award. He has 28 works in the V&A Collection, and his work was shown there in Digital Pioneers in 2009. Until 2014 he was Reader in Painting and the Computer at Chelsea College of Art. He has been a member of the London Group since 2000. He won the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS) Award in 2013. He is Honorary Curator of the RWS. Recent solo shows include ARB, Cambridge, Class Room, Coventry, and Felix & Spear, London. Six paintings dating from 1979 to 2019 are on display at Clifford Chance, Canary Wharf until May 2023.

This is James Faure Walker's third solo exhibition with the Felix & Spear Gallery.

### 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

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact 020 8566 1574 / [press@felixandspear.com](mailto:press@felixandspear.com)

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