

Richard Walker

Jones Underground.

Presented at Limited Ink Corporation, 77 Brunswick Street, Edinburgh EH7 5HS

27 and 28 April, 2019

This exhibition focuses on a new large scale work by Richard Walker entitled *Jones Underground*. Made from three plywood panels painted with pigment bound with co-polymer emulsion glaze it is a meditation on painting as a practice of seeing and making. Walker asks simple, but profound questions: have we ever really looked at what is in front of us? What do we see?

Walker makes observational paintings, concentrating on depicting what he sees in front of him in his studio. They are systematic encounters with reality addressing themes of consciousness and presence. For his subject Walker turns his studio into a stage set with draped props acting as grounds for projected images and theatrical spotlighting that creates sharp highlights and deep shadows. His work emphasises painting's traditional use of light and illusion by severely limiting the first and greatly complicating the second. Light emanates from lamps, the cracks in window blinds and most of all from projections from a number of different sources including a slide projector and a laptop computer. The projections include images of his own paintings and those taken using the camera on his mobile phone. Walker insists on painting his pictures, except for the very largest ones, in one sitting. Each painting is, therefore, also a precise record of the time it took to execute. The handling of paint is necessary, each brushstroke meaningful.

The interest in painting from life is about the specifics of observation, dealing with binocular vision, peripheral vision, specifics of colour and space and the degree of difficulty. Working from life feels like I need to discover or re-discover something. I don't want to just make another painting, it should be an investigation and a translation of something felt and seen into the material and formal elements that constitute the painted image.

[Richard Walker]

Jones Underground marks a significant development in Walker's work. The scale of the painting and the complexity of its fabrication are exceptional within his practice. The starting point of the work was a pre-existing painting of the interior of his studio. From this Walker made a drawing in charcoal, outlining as faithfully as possible all the details of the original composition. He then squared up the drawing, inked it with a marker and transferred it to single sheets of plywood. Each of the outlined details of the composition were then cut out with a jigsaw. Walker next reassembled the individual cut pieces to recreate the composition of the original painting, securing them with blu-tac to larger plywood sheets. Each segment of the composition was then removed in turn, painted - usually very quickly and intuitively, but with reference to the specific detail of the original painting - and then glued back into position on the large plywood boards.

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The idea of making large cut-out paintings first occurred to Walker twenty years ago while he was on a residency in Berwick-Upon-Tweed. He was interested in finding ways to make larger works that retained the energy of the smaller paintings that he was making from life. He wanted to avoid the problem that copying can often result in a reduction in vitality, with marks that in the original are full of meaning becoming empty gestures. He started by making small cut-outs with paper and card which he hoped would retain the particularities of shape, detail, colour and energy that he achieved when working from direct observation. He concluded that larger works had to function more as a designs and be assembled in sections like a tapestry, a mural or a fresco. Over the next few years he made four large works made from cut and reassembled sections and based on small landscape paintings. *Jones Underground* is the first time that Walker has employed this technique to re-imagine one of his studio paintings. It is the most significant and sophisticated large scale painting that he has made to date.

If, as it is now generally acknowledged, the eye does not present us with a high resolution photograph of the world before us, then our perception becomes a much more complicated interplay of active construction with the passive reception of light. We select and compose the objects of our attention. In Walker's paintings the space is fractured, like a jigsaw puzzle, and the parts both fit and don't fit together. Looking at them we have to keep refocusing. Walker's intriguing blend of active construction with more passive, retinal responses to light obliges us as viewers to seek out the constant structures we take for granted. His work thus engages not just with new visual technologies but also in an evolving understanding of our place in the world.

Richard Walker was born in 1955 in Cumbernauld.
He lives and works in Glasgow and is a tutor at The Glasgow School of Art.

Jones Underground is the first part of a collaboration between A-M-G5 and Limited Ink Corporation.