

ADVANCED INFORMATION

RICHARD WALKER

Cuckooland

22-30 September 2020 | Collectors Evening: 22 September 6-8pm



Transfiguration of Guy Montag mixed media on canvas, 46 x 46cm

- A new body of work inspired by Ray Bradbury's influential novel *FAHRENHEIT 451*, marking the author's centenary in August 2020
- The novel's disturbing vision of an alternative world is echoed in the on-going Coronavirus crisis, and in the culture of fake news and social isolation
- An exhibition incorporating painting, drawing, film, music and spoken word across all three floors at Bermondsey Project Space
- Richard Walker was born in Yorkshire in 1954
- He now lives and works at the Elephant and Castle in an Ernö Goldfinger building, formerly Alexander Fleming House, the Ministry of Health in the 60s
- Walker trained at Kingston, Camberwell and Chelsea art schools in the 1970s
- His first solo exhibition opened on Valentines Day 1978 at Minsky's Gallery in Primrose Hill
- Since then he has exhibited extensively with Jill George Gallery, Curwen Gallery, and throughout London, as well as in America and Germany
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In August this year we celebrate the centenary of writer Ray Bradbury. His best-known novel *FAHRENHEIT 451* was written in 1953 and to mark this occasion, artist Richard Walker has produced a new body of work inspired by this influential book.

As with the other classic novels of the time, *Brave New World* and *1984*, it deals with a dystopian future, predicting a totalitarian society where literature and education is banned, and books are destroyed by a fire brigade that starts fires rather than extinguishing them.

“Since working on this project there has been the Covid-19 pandemic, which uncannily echoes my theme. The current self-isolating, social distancing and culture of fake news has pushed my images into sharp focus, suggesting new interpretations and meanings. Ray Bradbury’s disturbing vision of an alternative world is now, sadly, all around us.

“In the story, Bradbury predicts interactive TV, drones, the rise of terrorism, surveillance, the banning of intellectual thought and the promotion of populism. Today’s general acceptance of the invasion of privacy, with apps such as ‘track and trace’, and algorithms being fuelled by the tyranny of social media, the characters in Bradbury’s novel would happily fit into today’s world

*“My title ‘Cuckooland’ is shorthand for this dumbed down society. Much of my work over 4 decades has focused on urban themes, often celebrating the dynamism of cities but also ambiguously revealing the dark side. I did work about both the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the London 7/7 bombings, being hailed as an ‘accidental war artist’ by *The Times*, alongside Henry Moore.*

*“Films with themes that have inspired me include *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Stepford Wives*, *Alphaville*, *High Rise* and the psychodramas of Hitchcock and Polanski. Also in visual art there are the empty cityscapes of *De Chirico*, the floating figures of *Chagall*, the postwar coded landscapes of *Anselm Kiefer* and the less known chunky modernist forms of the Italian painter *Mario Sironi*.*

“I try to absorb these influences, then forget them, and let a natural flow happen”

Richard Walker, August 2020

**Press images on request.
The artist is available for interview.**

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