

FRAENKEL

49 GEARY STREET SAN FRANCISCO 94108 415 981 2661

For immediate release:



Richard T. Walker

NEVER HERE / ALWAYS THERE

September 7 – October 21, 2023

Fraenkel Gallery is pleased to present *NEVER HERE / ALWAYS THERE*, an exhibition by artist Richard T. Walker. Incorporating photography, video, music, sculpture, and performance, the artist continues his exploration of the relationship between the individual and the changing natural world. In eleven new works, Walker reorders the elements of the environment, upending assumptions about humankind's place in nature by embracing futile connections to the vast landscape. This will be the Bay Area-based British artist's second solo show in the gallery's 49 Geary space, following exhibitions at FraenkelLAB in 2016 and 2017. A public reception with the artist will take place on Saturday, September 9, from 1:30–4 pm.

FRÆNKEL

49 GEARY STREET SAN FRANCISCO 94108 415 981 2661

what we were (as we are) comprises six photographs of trees made in California during the intense 2020 fire season, when smoke tinted the sky an eerie orange color. A speaker embedded in each photograph plays guitar recordings Walker made at the location, in an arrangement that draws inspiration from the towering banks of speakers in the sound systems of the UK's Notting Hill carnival celebrations. Together, the music builds into a fractured chorus. The piece acknowledges the feelings of anxiety and loss that the landscape evokes in the era of climate change. Walker notes that when photographing the work, "I had an undeniable sense that the California I felt so connected to and quite frankly in love with—the California that had seduced me with its mythical and mystical appeal, with its drama and undeniable beauty and with its perfect balance of invitation and rejection—was being put into question. It felt like it perhaps no longer existed."

In many of the works on view, Walker combines his photographs of the Western American landscape with 19th-century etchings, found rocks, or guitar recordings, in playful or melancholic arrangements of nature and the human response to it. In the series *eternally almost*, Walker's photographs of a lone tree at Crater Lake in Oregon are paired with images of drawings made by the artist's father showing branches collected at Mount Shasta, a few hundred miles away. Framed separately, the branches and trees align, suggesting a continuity between the forms that plays with different interpretations of the meaning of distance and connection. *this, as it isn't (mountain #2)*, a photographic diptych, presents two versions of a nearly identical view of a distant, ancient volcano. One features a large rock in the foreground; in the other, the rock is missing from the photograph but has transformed, appearing now as a stone that sits outside of the frame, standing in for the mountain top and toying with notions of distance, scale, and cause and effect.

In other works, Walker employs light or sound in his interaction with the landscape. In a single-channel video, *anywhere, somewhere (multiple)*, driftwood thrown by an unseen hand hits or misses a drum kit set on a beach, creating human-made noises that mix with the sound of the waves. Elsewhere, Walker continues his long-running use of neon, draping it over a wall-mounted rock and frame in *the infinity of an intimate distance*.

Richard T. Walker's artwork and performances have been included in solo and group exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; The Contemporary Austin; Times Museum, Guangzhou, China; Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art; and Witte De With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, among other venues. His work is held in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Kadist Foundation, San Francisco and Paris; and Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen (K21), Dusseldorf, Germany, among others. Walker has been an Irvine Fellow at the Montalvo Art

FRAENKEL

49 GEARY STREET SAN FRANCISCO 94108 415 981 2661

Center, and a resident at The Headlands Center for the Arts and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. He received an Artadia Award in 2009.

* * *

Image: Richard T. Walker, *this, as it isnt (mountain #2)*, 2022
For press inquiries and images, please contact Rebecca Robertson
at 415.981.2661 or rrobertson@fraenkelgallery.com