



FAMILIARS

VON WOLFE

RICHARD HELLER GALLERY, LOS ANGELES
2026

NIGHT VISITOR
OIL ON CANVAS, 2026

VON WOLFE

FAMILIARS

Richard Heller Gallery, Los Angeles · 12 September to 24 October 2026

Richard Heller Gallery is pleased to announce *Familiars*, an exhibition of new paintings by London based artist von Wolfe: twelve oil paintings in which the ordinary tips into the extraordinary and refuses to tip back.

The works range from intimate panels at 55 × 55 cm to monumental canvases at 180 × 180 cm, six foot squares that the viewer must physically navigate. All are executed in oil on canvas using a technique drawn from the Northern Renaissance of Jan van Eyck and Petrus Christus: a grisaille underpainting in monochrome, built up through successive layers of translucent glaze until the image achieves a luminosity that seems to generate its own light.

The source imagery emerges from a process that is itself unprecedented. Von Wolfe works with diffusion models, systems that assemble visual fragments from across the entire history of images, recombining them according to probabilities rather than compositional rules. From the thousands of images this process yields, he selects the outliers: those rare configurations that hum with a quiet charge the artist recognises immediately.

These images are then translated into paint. Not transferred. Translated. The act of translation is where the work happens. Each canvas passes through the grisaille stage, the black and white foundation in which form is fixed before colour is permitted to enter. Then the glazes are applied, layer upon layer, until the painting breathes.

The artist calls the results *latent realism*, a step beyond magical realism: a world identical to ours except that something imperceptible but fundamental has shifted. In that world the pressure is psychological. Sitters hold impossible equilibriums, balanced atop stacks of books, bent backward across chairs, striding against the wind on museum plinths, while mirrors return their backs to them and distant church steeples answer the verticals of their bodies. Their faces perform serenity; their bodies confess the strain. And no figure is ever alone. A white egret attends a seated woman with hieratic patience. A fierce cat rides its sitter's bouffant like a crown. A snowy owl grips a collar of oversized pearls; corvids lift pearls from still water. Nothing is explained. Everything is present.

VENUE

Richard Heller Gallery, 2525 Michigan Ave B5A, Santa Monica, CA 90404

ARTIST

von Wolfe

WORKS

12 oil paintings on canvas

DATES

12 September · 24 October 2026

TECHNIQUE

Grisaille underpainting with oil glazes (Northern Renaissance method)

ABOUT THE ARTIST

von Wolfe is a London based artist who studied philosophy at York University. His practice combines diffusion model image generation with selection and translation into oil paint, using grisaille and glaze techniques derived from the Northern Netherlandish tradition of the fifteenth century. His work has been exhibited internationally, including a solo retrospective at the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan, and exhibitions at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, the Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki, the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow, the Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille, and Richard Heller Gallery, Los Angeles.

RICHARD HELLER GALLERY

C O N T A C T U S

Richard Heller / Director, Owner

Barry Belkin / Associate Director

art@richardhellergallery.com

(310) 453-9191

2525 Michigan Ave. #B-5A, Santa Monica, CA 90404

Contents

TWELVE WORKS · PLATES AND TEXTS

- 01 Night Visitor
- 02 Reflected Inversion
- 03 Spilt Milk
- 04 Prey
- 05 The Listening Lake
- 06 The Vigil
- 07 She Leopard
- 08 Golden Crocodile
- 09 Tethered Light
- 10 The Balustrade
- 11 The Running Light
- 12 The Still Runner
- A1 As If To Speak
- A2 Held Where She Stands



01 Night Visitor

OIL ON CANVAS · 180 × 180 CM · 2026

WORK 01

Night Visitor

OIL ON CANVAS · 180 × 180 CM · 2026

A young woman with a dark, cropped bob sits in a wooden chair, her body elongated in a diagonal pose that suggests both relaxation and alertness. She wears a retro polka dot blouse and pristine white stockings, the palette of another era rendered with hypercontemporary precision. Beside her, perched on the chair's back rail, stands a large white egret: still, watchful, almost hieratic in its upright posture. Behind them, a curtained window admits a muted light, and a potted plant anchors the composition in domestic space. The painting operates in the register of latent realism: nothing is explained, everything is present. The egret functions simultaneously as pet, watcher, and double, a creature of silence that seems to know more than it says. The colour palette is restrained: warm browns, cool greys, the stark white of bird and stockings creating value accents against the middle tone ground. The mood is contemplative, slightly uncanny: a scene from a dream that refuses to announce itself as such.

PLATE 01 · DETAILS I TO IV · INSTALLATION SHOT



DETAIL I





DETAIL II



DETAIL III

WORK 01 · NIGHT VISITOR

IV

DETAIL IV





01 Night Visitor
INSTALLATION SHOT



02 Reflected Inversion

OIL ON CANVAS · 180 × 180 CM · 2026

Reflected Inversion

OIL ON CANVAS · 180 × 180 CM · 2026

At the centre of this monumental canvas, a young woman performs a perfect handstand, balanced on her palms atop two uneven stacks of antique leather bound books. Her body forms a rigid vertical column, inverted so that her head hangs near the floor and her feet, clad in black Mary Janes and starched white socks, point toward the ceiling. She wears an ivory garment reminiscent of early twentieth century athletic wear, its clean lines tracing the taut architecture of her abdomen and the extreme elongation of her limbs. Her face, turned toward the viewer, holds an expression that performs serenity while the body confesses the effort: wide eyed, composed, yet edged with a strain she refuses to acknowledge. The setting is a claustrophobic interior of saturated mustard yellow walls. To the left, a window draped with heavy charcoal curtain reveals a twilight sky and the steeple of a distant church, a second vertical that rhymes with her own: she becomes a living spire driven downward into the floor, the building a body petrified into stone, two inversions answering each other across the room and the night. To the right, a large mirror reflects her back, doubling her presence. The tension between physical exertion and supernatural ease creates an uncanny, meditative stillness, a surrealist vision executed with hyperrealistic precision.

PLATE 02 · DETAILS I TO III



DETAIL I



DETAIL II





DETAIL III





03 Spilt Milk

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 x 55 CM · 2026

Spilt Milk

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 × 55 CM · 2026

A nude figure study that extends the exhibition's preoccupations with sovereign female presence into the tradition of the academic nude. The figure is rendered with the same grisaille underpainted precision that characterises all works in the show, luminous skin built through layers of translucent oil glaze until the body seems to generate its own light. She is draped backward across a yellow chair in a pose of surrendered abandon, and the pose cannot help but summon Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare*: the woman flung across her bed, the incubus crouched upon her chest. Here the incubus has multiplied and softened into black cats circling a pool of spilt milk, and the psychological intensity has shifted from intruder to sleeper. What grips the viewer is not what may have entered the room but what is happening inside her: an interior drama of uncommon intensity, legible in the tension of the outflung arms and the exposed architecture of the body. The painting participates in a lineage that runs from Titian through Velázquez and Fuseli to the modernist nudes of the early twentieth century, yet arrives by a route unavailable to any predecessor: the image originated in algorithmic generation before being selected for its outlier intensity and translated through the slow discipline of Northern Renaissance technique. The result is neither traditional nor disruptive. It is simply, stubbornly, present: a body that holds space, a mind that withholds its secrets, a presence that fills its painterly field with the same quiet authority that characterises every figure in this exhibition.

PLATE 03 · DETAILS I TO IV



DETAIL I



DETAIL II



DETAIL III



IV

DETAIL IV





04 Prey

OIL ON CANVAS · 75 x 75 CM · 2026

Prey

OIL ON CANVAS · 75 × 75 CM · 2026

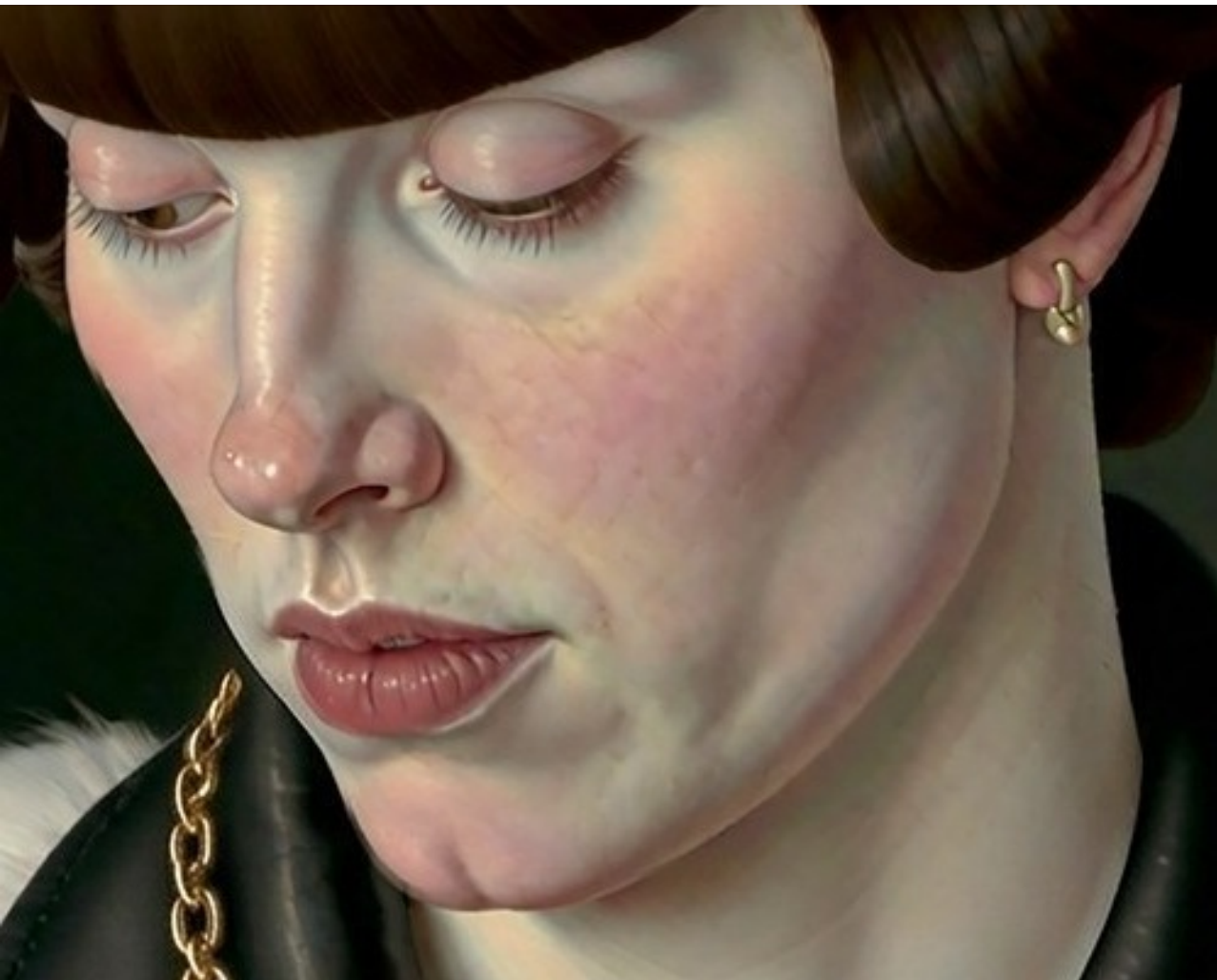
This arresting bust length portrait is dominated by the surreal and tender presence of a white cat perched atop the sitter's elaborately coiffured hair. The composition is centrally anchored in classical frontal orientation, lending the subject a monumental, icon like stillness against an abyssal near black background of deep forest green. The central figure possesses ethereal, doll like beauty: porcelain pale skin, heavy lidded eyes lowered in quiet introspection, and a towering confection of chestnut brown hair swept into a retro futuristic bouffant with severe blunt bangs. The attire blends contemporary streetwear with Old Master opulence: a sleek black leather bomber jacket layered beneath an extravagant cloud like stole of white fur, a thick gold chain with a pendant of two hands clasped in prayer, and a delicate pearl necklace peeking from beneath. The cat, fierce and utterly self possessed, drapes over the apex of the hairstyle, golden yellow eyes gazing beyond the canvas with detached authority. The palette is severely restricted yet richly modulated: carbon blacks, creamy ivories, warm ochres, burnished gold. The mood is one of uncanny serenity, a frozen moment hovering between the playful and the melancholic, questioning whether the cat is burden, crown, or guardian spirit.

PLATE 04 · DETAILS I TO III



DETAIL I





DETAIL II

WORK 04 · PREY



DETAIL III





05 The Listening Lake

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 x 55 CM · 2026

The Listening Lake

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 × 55 CM · 2026

A haunting bust length portrait of a woman emerging from liminal waters, attended by three avian familiars in a composition that collapses boundaries between Renaissance portraiture, Surrealist dream logic, and contemporary Magic Realism. The painting depicts a moment of suspended animation, a baptism or immersion that feels like translation into another element. The protagonist possesses ethereal, almost androgynous beauty: skin of porcelain translucency with delicate rose mottling, wide set cerulean eyes holding the viewer in steady unnerving gaze, lips parted in neutral repose. A mass of undulating golden hair frames a face of ancient, watchful wisdom. The figure is enveloped in a heavy dark umber turtleneck rising ghost like from the waterline at the chest. Three birds create a triangular crown: two perch atop the golden mane, one obsidian plumed, another bearing a russet cheek patch, while a third, larger corvid rests upon the left shoulder clutching a string of lustrous pearls whose terminus pierces the water's surface creating concentric ripples, the only movement in an otherwise frozen tableau. The lighting is profoundly diffuse and crepuscular, creating a sfumato effect where edges dissolve into moisture laden air. The painting emanates surreal tranquility tinged with melancholic isolation, suggesting willing submersion, a voluntary sinking into silence.

PLATE 05 · DETAILS I TO III



DETAIL I



DETAIL II





DETAIL III





06 The Vigil

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 x 55 CM · 2026

The Vigil

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 × 55 CM · 2026

At the heart of this hyperrealistic oil stands a regal woman, captured in a bust length portrait that exudes quiet authority and introspective grace. Her gaze is averted toward an unseen point beyond the frame, lending her contemplative detachment. Her skin is rendered with luminous velvety richness, capturing subtle play of light across high cheekbones and composed closed mouth. Her hair is swept back into an elegant sculptural arrangement, punctuated by a singular perfectly formed ringlet cascading near her temple. Perched intimately upon her right shoulder is a magnificent snowy owl, its plumage a study in textural contrasts from impossibly soft downy facial feathers to crisp layered wing quills. Its piercing amber eyes hold sharp intelligent focus mirroring the sitter's silent vigilance. A delicate green jess (falconry band) is visible on its taloned foot gripping the edge of her extraordinary collar, a monumental crescent encrusted with rows of lustrous oversized pearls, bizarrely bisected by a stark industrial zipper. This anachronistic detail, a fusion of Victorian opulence and utilitarian modernism, serves as powerful visual metaphor for the opening and closing of narratives, the construction of identity. The background dissolves into surreal pastoral landscape of rolling hills in atmospheric greys and muted ochres stretching toward a horizon marked by a solitary dark tree. The lighting is masterful chiaroscuro softened for contemporary sensibility, diffuse cool light from above modelling the face while warmer radiance seems to emanate from the pearls and the owl's breast. The result: serene enigma, stillness, suspended mutual understanding between woman and bird.

PLATE 06 · DETAILS I TO II



DETAIL I





DETAIL II





07 She Leopard

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 × 55 CM · 2026

WORK 07

She Leopard

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 x 55 CM · 2026

A young woman regards the viewer from beneath the brim of a leopard skin cloche, the same spotted pelage recurring at her collar and cuffs. Black spectacles lend her an air of studious severity, yet the double strand of pearls and the drop earrings restore the composition to the register of formal portraiture. The animal print, usually read as display, becomes here a second skin worn with academic calm: pattern as plumage, inherited rather than chosen. The mood is characteristic of the exhibition: poised, wry and quietly unreadable.

PLATE 07



08 Golden Crocodile

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 × 55 CM · 2026

WORK 08

Golden Crocodile

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 x 55 CM · 2026

A woman stands crowned with white lilies and a black silk bow, the upper half of her face concealed beneath the head of a golden crocodile. The mask's glass eye watches where hers cannot; its teeth frame her own. Upon the reptile's snout sits a small black kitten, utterly at ease, the familiar claiming the most unlikely perch in the room. Ropes of pearls gather at her throat like mooring lines. As elsewhere in these paintings, nothing is explained: disguise and adornment, menace and domesticity, are allowed to share a single, calm surface.

PLATE 08



09 Tethered Light

OIL ON CANVAS · 100 × 100 CM · 2026

Tethered Light

OIL ON CANVAS · 100 × 100 CM · 2026

A life sized young woman stands in formal contrapposto within a dimly lit interior, accompanied by a white domestic cat tethered to her right ankle by a coarse hemp rope. The painting subverts the conventions of European portraiture through a singular, uncanny detail: the leashed feline, rendered with the solemnity usually reserved for hunting hounds in aristocratic portraiture. She has pale luminous skin and auburn hair parted severely and plaited into two thick symmetrical braids that fall forward like ropes of copper wire, echoing the physical tether at her feet. She wears a virginal white shirtwaist dress of mid twentieth century cut: Peter Pan collar with pearl trim, cinched waist, crisp box pleats. Her gaze drifts laterally, avoiding both viewer and companion, with an expression of profound unreadable vacancy. The interior suggests a bourgeois domestic space stripped of ornamentation, dark wood paneling to the left, a tall casement window to the right framing soft focus Northern European topography and a Gothic Revival spire on the horizon. The rope creates a crucial diagonal vector, physically and symbolically binding the two subjects. The overall affect is deeply uncanny, the familiar made strange through precision pushed toward the edge of hallucination.

PLATE 04



10 The Balustrade

OIL ON CANVAS · 120 × 120 CM · 2026

The Balustrade

OIL ON CANVAS · 120 × 120 CM · 2026

A young woman sits in a moment of profound stillness within a shallow architectural space defined by saturated golden yellow walls and deep ochre planes that meet at a sharp corner, resting with casual grace against the back of a simple wooden chair. Her face, oval and porcelain pale, is framed by burnished auburn hair styled into sculptural waves that recall both Hollywood glamour and Renaissance portraiture. A single serpentine lock escapes to cascade over her shoulder. She wears a sleeveless floor length shift of rich terra cotta worn defiantly over a black long sleeved undergarment. Most striking are her asymmetrical earrings: from one ear hangs a delicate strand of pearls; from the other dangles a small, pristine white horse figurine, a quietly surreal intrusion that destabilises the painting's formal classicism. To the left, a rectangular opening reveals a balcony with classical balustrade and an enigmatic nocturnal landscape beyond. The mood is one of quietude verging on the uncanny, a suspended, breathless quality suggesting time halted in a memory or a dream.

PLATE 03



11 The Running Light

OIL ON CANVAS · 100 × 100 CM · 2026

The Running Light

OIL ON CANVAS · 100 × 100 CM · 2026

A solitary female figure caught in mid stride traverses a surreal, stage like landscape, her journey paralleled by a bizarre architectonic sculpture that stands beside her, a pale hybrid object combining turned wood geometry with the iconography of a winged bust. The woman moves with purposeful determination from left to right, dressed in the understated uniform of a cream long sleeved top, high waisted black skirt, white ankle socks, and black pumps. Her auburn hair, cut in a severe bob with blunt bangs, erupts into a high energetic ponytail that trails behind her, emphasising momentum. Beside her, the sculpture serves as silent, uncanny companion: crafted from cool whites and greys, crowned by a small serene female face framed by delicate white wings, it acts as a totemic presence that creates dialogue between living modernity and frozen symbolic weight. Both figure and object stand on a solid grey rectangular plinth beyond which undulating hills in muted earth tones give way to distant cerulean sea beneath a vast turbulent sky occupying more than half the picture plane. The lighting is diffuse and ethereal, casting soft elongated shadows that ground the figures while maintaining an atmosphere of quiet solitude, a meditative, slightly eerie stillness that pervades despite the implied motion.

PLATE 05



12 The Still Runner

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 x 55 CM · 2026

The Still Runner

OIL ON CANVAS · 55 × 55 CM · 2026

A life sized full length portrait of a young woman captured in intense forward striding motion, rendered with hyperrealistic precision. Pale luminous skin contrasts sharply against somber attire. Shoulder length auburn hair is caught in dynamic sweep curling backward as if buffeted by strong wind. She wears round dark rimmed spectacles framing eyes fixed with grim focused determination, neither fearful nor entirely at ease. Clothing is meticulous mid century layering: crisp white long sleeved shirt emerging at wrists from beneath charcoal turtleneck, topped by structured chocolate brown sleeveless vest, simple black knee length skirt with delicate scalloped hemline fluttering with movement. In striking surreal juxtaposition: pristine white ankle socks and glossy black pumps, footwear entirely ill suited for athletic vigor, grounding the image in psychological tension rather than literal reality. The figure balances precariously on a stark rectangular grey pedestal resembling a museum plinth, isolating her within a vast dreamlike expanse. Behind her, simplified landscape unfolds in horizontal bands of muted olive, umber, slate blue rolling hills receding into hazy distance beneath pale cerulean sky dominated by enormous sculptural cumulus clouds. The palette is one of faded elegance: cool greys, earthy browns, deep blacks punctuated by stark whites. Lighting is soft, diffuse, sourceless, bathing the scene in even clinical light that models form with subtle chiaroscuro. Prevailing mood: profound ambiguity and quiet urgency, suspended animation capturing frantic escape or inexorable advance frozen in time.

PLATE 09

As If To Speak

PENCIL ON PAPER · 45 x 42 CM · 2025



A young woman stands in a wide, unwavering stance beside a tall window, her legs planted in an exaggerated A-frame that anchors her to the bare floor. She wears a simple buttoned dress, her hands resting lightly at her hips, and meets the viewer with a direct, level gaze. The room is emptied of incident: a dark wall behind her, a muted landscape beyond the glass. Drawn in pencil with fine, patiently layered hatching, the figure seems to gather the stillness of the room into herself, the pose hovering between balance and strain, a body braced as if on the verge of speech. The drawing shares the world of the paintings: a figure alone, composed, withholding something, in a silence that feels deliberate rather than empty.

Held Where She Stands

PENCIL ON PAPER · 45 x 42 CM · 2025



Two young women stand pressed together at the edge of a bare room, one holding the other from behind, her hand resting on the standing figure's shoulder in a gesture somewhere between comfort and restraint. Both wear simple clothes and heavy boots; their expressions are turned aside, unreadable. Behind them rises a dark, billowing form, part shadow and part weather, which gathers the tenderness of the embrace into something more uncertain. The pencil work is soft and densely layered, the figures emerging from the grey ground as if remembered rather than observed. As in the paintings, nothing is explained: the hold sustains and confines at once, and the drawing rests in that doubleness.

Checklist

FAMILIARS · VON WOLFE · RICHARD HELLER GALLERY · 2026

NO.	TITLE	YEAR	MEDIUM	DIMENSIONS
01	Night Visitor	2026	Oil on canvas	180 × 180 cm
02	Reflected Inversion	2026	Oil on canvas	180 × 180 cm
03	Spilt Milk	2026	Oil on canvas	55 × 55 cm
04	Prey	2026	Oil on canvas	75 × 75 cm
05	The Listening Lake	2026	Oil on canvas	55 × 55 cm
06	The Vigil	2026	Oil on canvas	55 × 55 cm
07	She Leopard	2026	Oil on canvas	55 × 55 cm
08	Golden Crocodile	2026	Oil on canvas	55 × 55 cm
09	Tethered Light	2026	Oil on canvas	100 × 100 cm
10	The Balustrade	2026	Oil on canvas	120 × 120 cm
11	The Running Light	2026	Oil on canvas	100 × 100 cm
12	The Still Runner	2026	Oil on canvas	55 × 55 cm
A1	As If To Speak	2025	Pencil on paper	45 × 42 cm
A2	Held Where She Stands	2025	Pencil on paper	45 × 42 cm

RICHARD HELLER GALLERY

FAMILIARS · VON WOLFE

RICHARD HELLER GALLERY, 2525 MICHIGAN AVE B5A, SANTA MONICA, CA 90404

12 SEPTEMBER · 24 OCTOBER 2026

ALL WORKS OIL ON CANVAS · GRISAILLE UNDERPAINTING WITH OIL GLAZES