



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



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

The Process

GRISAILLE AND GLAZE

The image begins in monochrome. Before colour is permitted to enter, the entire composition is built in black, white and graduated greys: a grisaille, worked up slowly in the Northern Renaissance tradition of Jan van Eyck and Petrus Christus. Every form, every fall of light, must first become convincing as a structure of volume and shadow. Only when this grey architecture is complete does the artist return to the canvas with glazes: thin, translucent veils of colour laid patiently over the underpainting, layer upon layer, until the surface begins to glow from within. The photographs that follow record that passage, from the grisaille on the easel to the finished glaze.



GRISAILLE ON THE EASEL



THE FACE GLAZED



THE HAND



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



The Process

GRISAILLE AND GLAZE

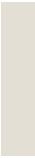
The discipline is the same for every painting in the exhibition. The composition is first resolved entirely in monochrome: the woman, the mirror, the curtain, the books and the distant architecture brought into a single tonal atmosphere. The grisaille determines where the body advances, where it recedes and how its weight occupies the air of the room. Colour then arrives slowly, not as a covering but as a transparent presence laid over the completed structure, the underlying greys remaining active beneath the surface. These photographs follow the painting through its construction: the first tonal statement, the completed grisaille, the modelling of the hands, the arrival of colour and the final glazes. It is the same discipline practised by Hans Memling and Jan van Eyck, whose monochrome panels were built by the same means: form established in grey, colour admitted only as glaze.



JAN VAN EYCK

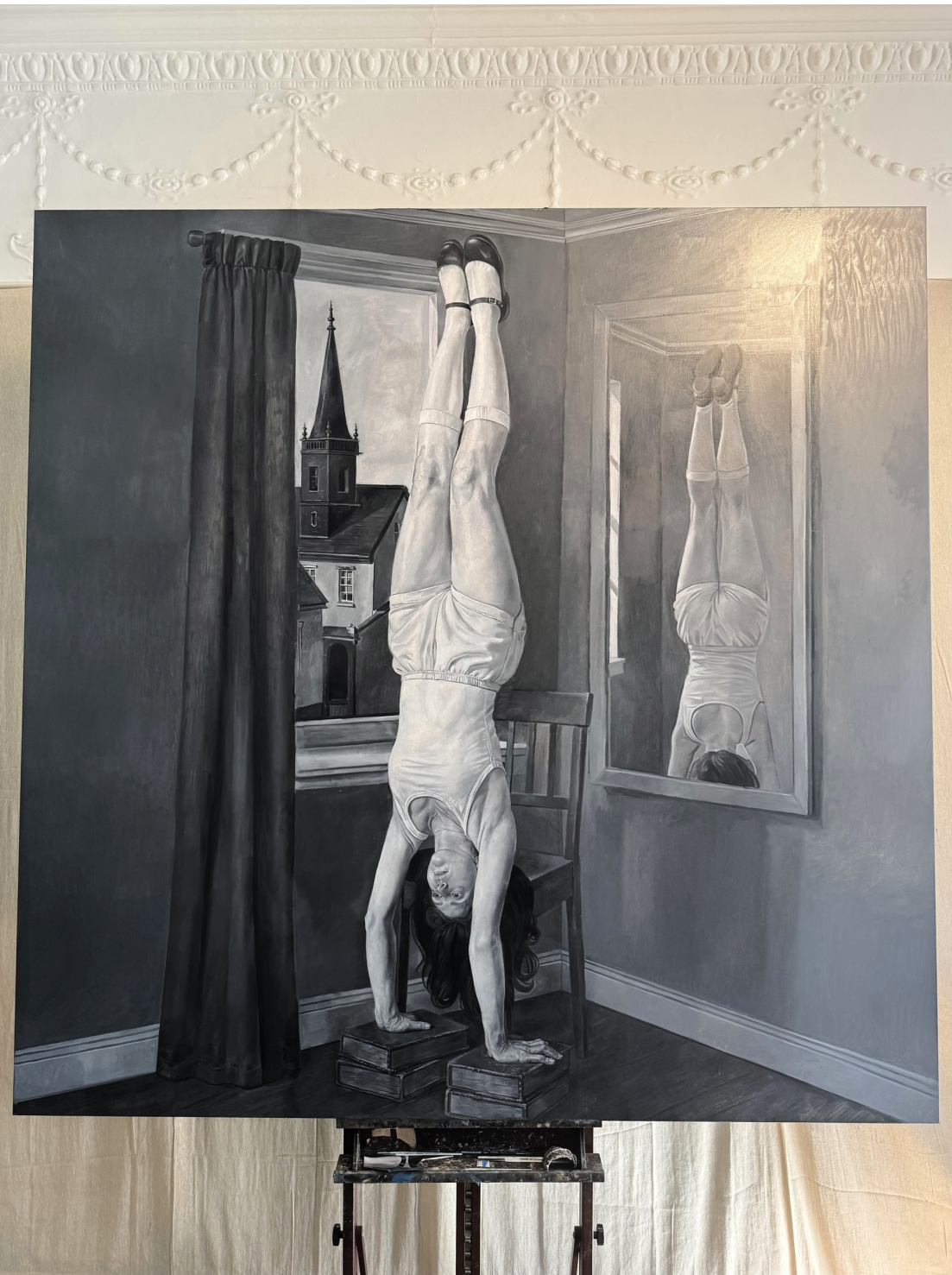


HANS MEMLING



FIRST TONAL STATEMENT





GRISAILLE COMPLETE



MODELLING LIGHT AND SHADOW



IV

FIRST COLOUR





THE FACE GLAZED





VI

THE FINISHED GLAZES