

Walter Price *Pearl Lines*

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616 N Western Avenue, Los Angeles



Walter Price, *Both addicted and trapped*, 2024. © Walter Price. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present *Pearl Lines*, the gallery's first exhibition with Brooklyn-based artist Walter Price since the announcement of his representation earlier this year. Marking Price's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles, *Pearl Lines* will include paintings from a new body of work that feature recurring motifs from his characteristic visual domain.

Price is known for his richly vibrant paintings and drawings, which bypass strict allegiances to representational or abstract modes. In his work, the artist sensitively employs an idiom of motifs that traverse the real world and the dream world, memory and collective history. Price's paintings and works on paper not only experiment freely with color, line, and space but also reveal emphatic shifts in perspective, suggesting scenes and imagery that the artist ultimately leaves for viewers to absorb and contemplate on their own. He has given the title *Pearl Lines* to the majority of his solo presentations, suggesting that each exhibition expands beyond the confines of its own time and place, becoming part of a larger body of work.

In this Los Angeles presentation, Price pays homage to car culture, with its particular relationship to the city and its environs. Across his canvases, sleek automobiles are stamped into rows of busy traffic or delineated by the artist's hand, their forms splintered and spectral. Trodden footsteps on surfaces bring to mind a foot on the gas pedal. Alternatively, they register a leisurely stroll or a labored gait. The vehicles are at times shrouded in billowing clouds of scumbled paint, other opalescent penumbræ, and showers of dancing stars. The shapes evoke further poetic links with Los Angeles's other famous exports: Hollywood, its cast of personalities, and its production of artifice.

In *Pearl Lines*, Price merges points of view while playing with spatial depth. Overstuffed armchairs, contoured by the artist's signature staccato lines, appear as ghosts from another world. The silhouettes of faces in profile conjure up headshots of enigmatic figures in the shadows. Scarlet flames lick nothing

in particular, perhaps suggesting the aftermath of a car accident. A splash of red-orange paint overwhelms a canvas, recalling sunsets on the Pacific Ocean as seen from the freeway.

These warm reds contrast sharply with the prominent blue palette featured in many of these works. Price mines the color's multitude of timeless and timely associations, invoking such quixotic historical connections in Western art as early cyanotypes, International Klein Blue, artists' blue periods, and the Virgin Mary's mantle. The color summons a range of emotional responses like sadness and gloom, peace and calm, while also encompassing its applications in society and its appearance in nature. The obscenities and profanities of blue language. The potent hue of indigo dye. The azure of skies and the aquamarine of seas. The navy blue of the military. The blue-versus-red of conflicting political factions.

Price stretches and expands the bounds of blue as he layers, speckles, and scrapes the color onto his canvases in unorthodox applications, merging and abstracting its symbolism as well as its use in language. The artist quotes an observation from *On Being Blue* (1976) by the novelist and critic William H. Gass, who writes of the color:

*So a random set of meanings has softly gathered around the word the way lint collects. The mind does that. A single word, a single thought, a single thing, as Plato taught. We cover our concepts, like fish, with clouds of net. Cops and bobbies wear blue. We catch them and connect. Imagined origins reduce the sounds of clash and contradiction, as when one cries out blue murder in the street.*¹

Walter Price (b. 1989) was born in Macon, Georgia, and served in the US Navy for four years before entering art school on the GI Bill. He received a BA from the Art Institute of Washington, Arlington, Virginia, in 2011 and an AA from Middle Georgia College, Cochran, in 2013.

The artist has exhibited widely throughout the United States and Europe. In 2018, Price was the subject of a self-titled solo exhibition at MoMA PS1, New York. The same year, *Walter Price: Pearl Lines* was presented at the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne. In 2019, *Walter Price: We passed like ships in the night* was held at the Aspen Art Museum. The Camden Art Centre, London, presented *Walter Price: Pearl Lines* in 2021, which was accompanied by the first major monograph of the artist's work. In the fall of 2024, the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, opened the most comprehensive exhibition of the artist's work to date.

The artist has also had solo exhibitions at the Modern Institute, Glasgow (2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022); Greene Naftali, New York (2020 and 2022); Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin (2022); 14a, Hamburg (2023); and Modern Art, London (2024).

Price's work has also been included in several notable group exhibitions, including *Fictions*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2017); the 2019 Whitney Biennial; *100 Drawings from Now*, The Drawing Center, New York (2020); *The Drawing Centre Show*, curated by Franck Gautherot, Seungduk Kim, Tobias Pils, and Joe Bradley, Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2022); *Black Melancholia*, Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2022); and *Toni Morrison's Black Book*, curated by Hilton Als, David Zwirner, New York (2022).

¹ William H. Gass, *On Being Blue* (1976; repr., New York: New York Review of Books, 2014), p. 7.

The artist has been granted several residencies throughout his career, at Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York (2017); Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Captiva, Florida (2018); Fürstenberg Contemporary, Donaueschingen, Germany (2019); and Camden Art Centre, London (2020).

Work by Price is held in prominent institutional collections worldwide, including the Aishti Foundation, Beirut; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Roberts Institute of Art, London; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Tate, United Kingdom; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Zabłudowicz Collection, London.

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