

Say Your Words to the Sun

Ekun Richard



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Say Your Words to the Sun is the first major solo show by Manchester-based artist Ekun Richard, featuring oil paintings on canvas and card, and one textile composition. “My intention with this show is to present a personal ode to nature, dedicated to the begetter of it all — the sun,” Richard says. “It is my way of saying thank you to the sun, and appreciating everything she does for us. The life and nature she fosters inspire the colours I use, and the way I think and feel when creating my work.”

Warm, tactile shades of brown, ochre, terracotta, moss-green and dusty orange typify the paintings in this series, combined with a distinct language of bold, curving forms. The earthy, organic tones, applied with deep brush strokes, heighten the works’ materiality, as if one could reach out to touch the surface of the paint and feel warm, sun-baked soil against one’s fingers, or the comforting rays of the sun itself. “Oil painting allows me to build deep, rich colours by gradually adding layers of hue over time,” says Richard. “I can spend hours mixing each colour as I add warmth and energy to my paintings. Colour is tied directly to energy, and for me, this energy comes from the complex structure and textures of the oils interacting with each other.”

The textile piece in *Say Your Words to the Sun* is handstitched and hand-dyed by Richard, using silk tree cotton grown in Basse, Gambia. “The idea behind my textiles is to create something using only natural materials,” he says. “The organic dye is from plant matter, such as onion skins, which I might collect over a number of weeks. I like to be able to take these natural materials and turn them into something new. I stitch each aspect of the composition together, including strips of fabric made from braided wool. The work is completely from my hands.”

Richard’s compositions begin as words that he writes in his sketchbook in response to his experiences and observations, which often become the title for each piece. Addressing the sun directly, such as *You Are Always in the Sky*, and *Where You Rise and Set* — or referring to the clouds, sky and earth, with *Tell the Clouds to Go Away* and *We Are Just Two Rocks* — the words behave like fragments of poetry, illustrating an intimate and touching connection between the artist and the natural world. “There is a grounded meaning to my abstract work, which I think is discernible through contemplation of these words,” he says. “They offer a sense of narrative and a suggestion of delicacy and thought, which is all part of communicating the energy and substance of nature through my work.”



Ekun Richard
PAINTER

Manchester-based artist Ekun Richard relishes rich, earthy tones that celebrate the physicality of nature. Working with oil on card and canvas, as well as handstitched and hand-dyed textiles, his pieces exhibit a natural warmth and gentle sense of wit. His paintings begin as words, which set an emotional intention and often become the title of the piece. “I write a phrase in my sketchbook in response to what I observe and experience,” says Richard. “The words remind me of the emotion of the situation, and the colours that were present, which allows me to recreate that moment as a painting.”

Richard studied graphic art and design at Leeds School of Art, and as part of the course, spent one year studying at the École Nationale Supérieure d’Art in Dijon, France. It was here that Richard created his first paintings, and began to truly define his artistic practice. “The course at Leeds was very open; initially I was exploring many different forms of screen printing,” he says. “When I arrived in Dijon, where such facilities were no longer available to me, I began to figure out what I wanted to do with painting. I became meticulous about my practice, assessing each aspect of my work, from the ratios of the paper to the mixing of the colours.”

Richard has exhibited his work in London, Manchester and Dijon. Before painting, he explored street photography around Leeds, which taught him the art of composition. “Some of the photographers I was investigating at the time, such as Alex Webb, compose their photographs so well,” he says. “Everything is balanced between the foreground, background, high and low, all within the confines of a 35mm frame. That is what I hope to achieve in my work: a balanced composition, with a sense of depth. In a way, my paintings, which share similarities to landscapes and still lifes, bear a semblance to photography in their conception: I aim to take a snapshot of a moment, a fleeting feeling or emotion, and transform that into a painting.”



1. WHEN I'M GONE (2020)



2. THE RAYS ARE UP (2020)



3. LOOK, THERE ARE EMPTY WELLS (2019)



4. SOME PLACES HAVE TWO (2020)



5. YOUR RIVERS ARE HALF FULL (2020)



6. SUN RAYS DANCE ON MY ROOF (2019)



7. WHERE YOU RISE AND SET (2020)



8. THE BALANCE BETWEEN US (2020)



9. INSIDE YOUR CLOUDS (2020)



10. THE SUN BATH (2020)



11. OFFERINGS TO THE SUN (2019)



12. THE SUN'S HUE (2020)



13. YOU ARE ALWAYS IN THE SKY (2020)



14. TELL THE CLOUDS TO GO AWAY (2019)



15. SEND DOWN YOUR LOVE (2020)



16. SAY YOUR WORDS TO THE SUN (2020)



17. I HELP THINGS UNDERGROUND TOO (2019)



18. WE ARE JUST TWO ROCKS (2019)



19. TREES SING ABOVE THE GROUND (2019)




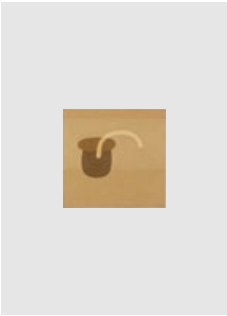
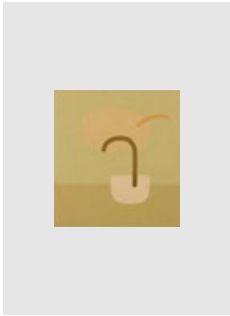
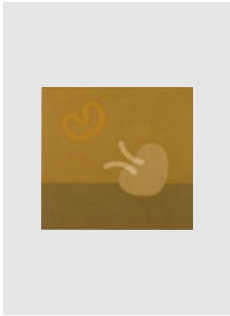
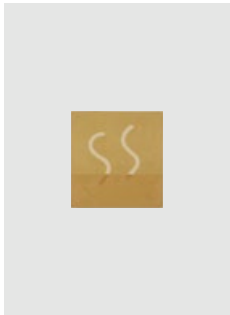
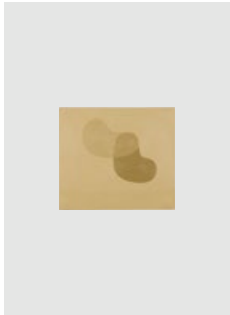

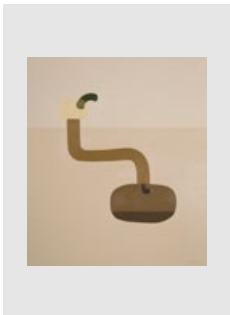

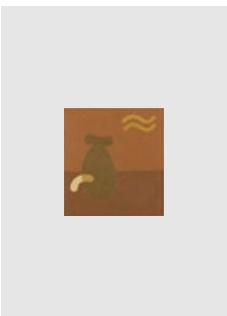
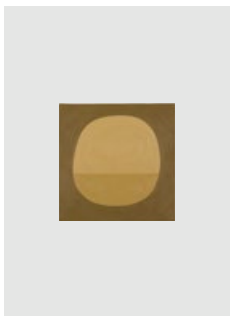
20. WHEN I'M HERE (2020)



21. THERE ARE THINGS BENEATH US (2019)



22. SEND YOUR LIGHT DOWN (2020)

		<p>1. WHEN I'M GONE (2020)</p> <p>W 260mm, H 280mm image W 360mm, H 380mm frame Oil on card — pg. 6</p>	<p>2. THE RAYS ARE UP (2020)</p> <p>W 260mm, H 250mm image W 360mm, H 345mm frame Oil on card — pg. 7</p>	<p>13. YOU ARE ALWAYS IN THE SKY (2020)</p> <p>W 440mm, H 380mm image W 450mm, H 500mm frame Oil on card — pg. 18</p>	<p>14. TELL THE CLOUDS TO GO AWAY (2019)</p> <p>W 430mm, H 400mm image W 540mm, H 510mm frame Oil on card — pg. 19</p>		
		<p>3. LOOK, THERE ARE EMPTY WELLS (2019)</p> <p>W 280mm, H 270mm image W 380mm, H 370mm frame Oil on card — pg. 8</p>	<p>4. SOME PLACES HAVE TWO (2020)</p> <p>W 260mm, H 260mm image W 355mm, H 360mm frame Oil on card — pg. 9</p>	<p>15. SEND DOWN YOUR LOVE (2020)</p> <p>W 500mm, H 540mm image W 600mm, H 640mm frame Oil on card — pg. 20</p>	<p>16. SAY YOUR WORDS TO THE SUN (2020)</p> <p>W 530mm, H 500mm image W 640mm, H 600.5mm frame Oil on card — pg. 21</p>		
		<p>5. YOUR RIVERS ARE HALF FULL (2020)</p> <p>W 250mm, H 280mm image W 345mm, H 380mm frame Oil on card — pg. 10</p>	<p>6. SUN RAYS DANCE ON MY ROOF (2019)</p> <p>W 290mm, H 300mm image W 385mm, H 395mm frame Oil on card — pg. 11</p>	<p>17. I HELP THINGS UNDERGROUND TOO (2019)</p> <p>W 500mm, H 470mm image W 600mm, H 575mm frame Oil on card — pg. 22</p>	<p>18. WE ARE JUST TWO ROCKS (2019)</p> <p>W 560mm, H 560mm image W 670mm, H 670mm frame Oil on card — pg. 23</p>		
		<p>7. WHERE YOU RISE AND SET (2020)</p> <p>W 290mm, H 300mm image W 395mm, H 385mm frame Oil on card — pg. 12</p>	<p>8. THE BALANCE BETWEEN US (2020)</p> <p>W 330mm, H 290mm image W 410mm, H 380mm frame Oil on card — pg. 13</p>	<p>19. TREE SING ABOVE THE GROUND (2019)</p> <p>W 560mm, H 600mm image W 675mm, H 710mm frame Oil on card — pg. 24</p>	<p>20. WHEN I'M HERE (2020)</p> <p>W 840mm, H 960mm image Oil on canvas — pg. 25</p>		
		<p>9. INSIDE YOUR CLOUDS (2020)</p> <p>W 320mm, H 310mm image W 410mm, H 410mm frame Oil on card — pg. 14</p>	<p>10. THE SUN BATH (2020)</p> <p>W 350mm, H 350mm image W 460mm, H 455mm frame Oil on card — pg. 15</p>	<p>21. THERE ARE THINGS BENEATH US (2019)</p> <p>W 850mm, H 1000mm image Oil on canvas — pg. 26</p>	<p>22. SEND YOUR LIGHT DOWN (2020)</p> <p>W 1070mm, H 1250mm Hand stitched, organic and naturally dyed tapestry — pg. 27</p>		
		<p>11. OFFERINGS TO THE SUN (2019)</p> <p>W 350mm, H 380mm image W 460mm, H 490mm frame Oil on card — pg. 16</p>	<p>12. THE SUN'S HUE (2020)</p> <p>W 380mm, H 380mm image W 485mm, H 490mm frame Oil on card — pg. 17</p>				



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