The Observer

The critics

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Art Critic

Helen Chadwick: Life Pleasures

Caroline Walker: Mothering

Both at Hepworth Wakefield; until 27 October

From her 70s subversion of domestic drudgery to her naked adventures with a photocopier, a major new retrospective contains all the late artist's finest provocations. Plus, next door, Caroline Walker’s quiet scenes of modern-day motherhood



Caroline Walker, Bottles and Pumps, 2022, oil on board, 36 x 30 cm.

Chadwick’s preoccupation with women’s lives is paired, not incidentally, with a exhibition of paintings in the adjacent galleries by the Scottish-born artist Caroline Walker. A 20-week scan, a birthing ball, midwives circling a hospital bed, the half-light of a small hours feed: every familiar scene is made new through soft and painterly brushwork. Tellingly, Walker’s canvases are sometimes as large as an old master battle scene. But best of all is a small still life of infant bottles drying in a rack by twilight, humdrum reality made graceful and pale as a Morandi.