



Tyler Mallison

*The Rise of Ei**

14 Sep - 06 Oct 2024
31 Wooler Street SE17

14 September – 6 October 2024
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Tyler Mallison is pleased to present *The Rise of Ei**, an intimate exhibition of new paintings, sculptures and videos situated within the expanded field of painting. In this presentation, Mallison continues his intuitive approach to abstraction, working sensitively with materials through a controlled sensibility and conceptual frameworks that embody the context of their creation: inner questions, external forces, processing and labour. The title of the show reflects the artist's personal journey over the past four years and offers critical provocation and click-bait—with 'Ei' coined from *economic inactivity*¹—in a playful nod to the cultural strategy of mainstreaming techno-capital productivity concepts like EQ (emotional intelligence/quotient) and AI (artificial intelligence) to push people *further, faster, better*.

The subtle surfaces of *NTIME* (2020-ongoing) operate in a register at odds with our digitally conditioned, overstimulated bodies and lenses, confounding both the eye and image-capture algorithms with their barely-there presence. Unlike previous works recruiting visual attributes of colour and texture from source materials like data corruption (*Word Fails Me*, 2017) or global supply chains (*Prime Arcadia*, 2015-17), this marks a significant shift towards exploring the potential of traditional art media and engaging more directly with the canon of painting—breaking down polymers and signifiers in real time, as only a chemist-cum-artist might do.

In parallel, the twists and turns of *Networks* (2019-22, 24) has been another site of focus off-screen, throughout this same period of pensive and frenetic development. According to the artist, they are simultaneously a: 1) memory of queer youthful craft circa 1980s, 2) gesture of gratitude to artists past and present, 3) relic of a speculative dystopian future, 4) painting and drawing, 5) record of labour, 6) dumb object, 7) potential waste, of material, time, energy.

It's no coincidence that these works are now staged in an empty house in Elephant & Castle, itself *economically inactive*, in an area actively redefining itself through ambitious regeneration and progressive social narratives at odds with the conditions faced by many of its local inhabitants. The empty domestic shell amplifies feelings of precariousness and lends an air of idle productivity and uncertainty, not unlike the original site of production in his studio in Old Street. Is this space one of hopeful renewal, laboured stasis or fraught regression?

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In his words, 'beyond these pictures of nothing and broken networks exists a tangled web of contradiction. Allow yourself to sit with them, as have I. Just notice without judgement. It's as much about painting, as it is about everything. What you see is what you can and cannot see².'

1. The British government asserts that 'economic inactivity is holding Britain back.' According to the Office for National Statistics, about a quarter of people of working-age—nearly 11 million people—do not currently have jobs. About 1.5 million are classed as unemployed, meaning they are unable to find a job. The rest are considered to be economically inactive, with the number in this category rising.

2. This last statement is in response to the minimalist maxim 'What you see is what you see' from American painter and sculptor Frank Stella (1936-2024).

**Feeling peripheral /
Economically inactive.**

So, what have I been doing, you ask? I've been busy doing all sorts of things... operating on the fringe. The government might say I'm *economically inactive*, but what does that say about my labour and value? And how can so many cultural column inches and countless tons of CO2 be produced by server farms circulating the labour of such inactivity? Is it not active if unpaid? Is it inactive if not visible?

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There's an unspoken expectation within society to just fall in line and be productive—always efficient, clear, and on-point—but that's not necessarily right or helpful, nor is it in keeping with our times. We're facing big global existential threats: climate change, mass migration, war, and ageism. And with the emergence of AI, it's unclear whether we're witnessing our salvation or further downfall.

On a personal level, there's been a palpable sense of displacement. Covid was a mindfuck, let's be real. For someone operating within the precarious sector of freelance labour, it flipped things 'upside down' like the Netflix series we became habituated to binge-watch to numb the pain.

Resilience—a subject bubbling under the surface of my practice for some time—became a marching call. But after the potential death of all humanity was tempered by the meteoric rise of share prices, every company and worker suddenly had 'resilience' on their LinkedIn profile. (I should know; I wrote this into the brand strategy of a Fortune 200 company back in 2021, when my network still partially functioned.)

I suppose I should have had this game in the bag since I had managed to operate outside and adjacent to dominant power structures for years, professionally and artistically. But whilst companies forged ahead with agendas to 'cut' freelance work, the Arts Council pivoted to 'online presence,' and the government promoted ableist-biased 'retraining,' my form of resilience pushed me in a different direction.

The message was clear: We all needed to appear as something other: our best selves on screen (AKA out of sight, out of mind). I guess my critical nature and different mode of thinking meant that I leaned into perceptions of deficiency and drew inward, in response. I began to revel in recognising what I dislike: busy bodies, noise, saturation, smells, social media, pixels that 'pop.'

I became incredibly active and hardworking yet did nothing at times. I spent necessary time with complexity, being okay with contradiction, finding focus, doing the maths, measuring twice, letting things dry, allowing myself to wait and see. And not see. What's the difference?

The irony is that in all this activity, I gradually became economically inactive. Peripheral. Redundant. Surplus to requirements. Shifting my gaze from PowerPoint to paint—and spending as many hours in the studio as my peers across the street at WeWork—exposed existential questions of my agency.

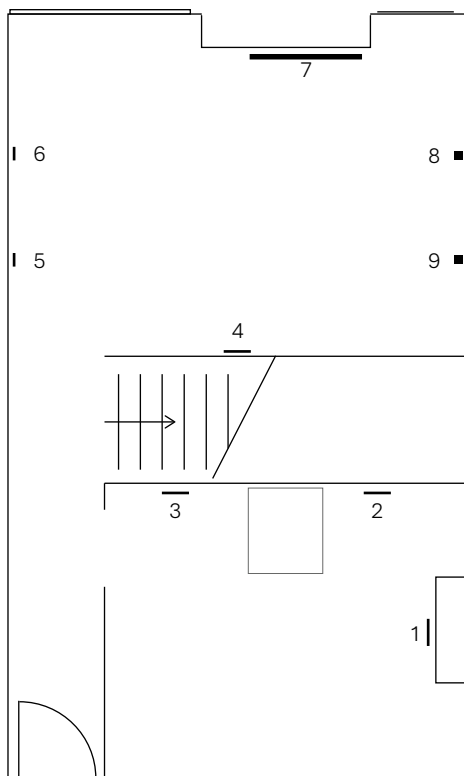
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In the words of others: 'These works aren't rigid. They create space. They hold your attention. You want to spend a lot of time with them.'

In my memory, they were an intense site of introspection, material symbiosis, and laboured production. In turns anxiety-provoking and, only upon completion, meditative. Throughout, there were constant speculations, calibrations, and risks that seemed significant: the result never being within my complete control, as I'm only human with limited powers of perception relative to the laws of nature.

My work became its own thing that seemed to stare blankly and steely-eyed at this transformation. These works speak of many things and nothing at the same time.

GROUND FLOOR



Front space

Untitled (study), 2020 (1,2)
 Synthetic polymer, pigment
 and graphite pencil on canvas
 36 x 28cm

Untitled (study), 2023 (3)
 Synthetic polymer, pigment
 and graphite pencil on canvas
 36 x 28cm

Rear space

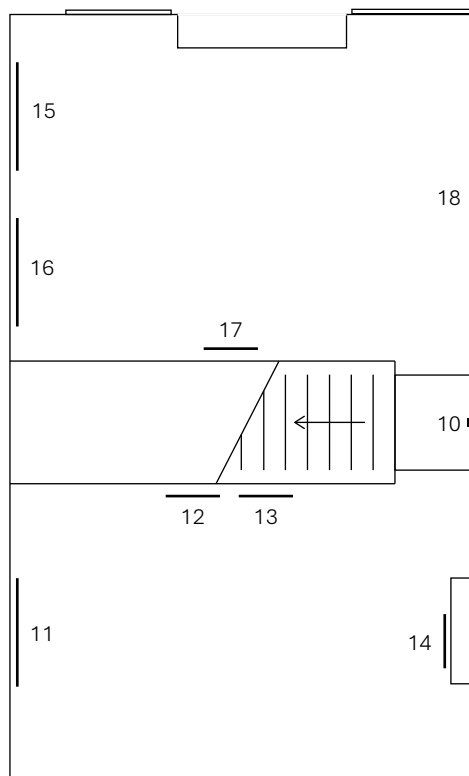
Untitled (study), 2020 (4)
 Synthetic polymer, pigment
 and graphite pencil on canvas
 36 x 28cm

Untitled (Networks), 2020, 2024 (5,6)
 Video, 10m 37s / 12m 32s, 7 in. screen

Untitled (Networks), 2019, 2024 (7)
 Video, 24m 22s

Untitled (Networks), 2020-22, 2024 (8)
 For Agnes (Networks), 2020-22, 2024 (9)
 Ethernet cable, found wood, paint, stainless steel
 Approx. 110 x 34 x 20 cm

UPPER FLOOR



Top stairs

Untitled (Networks), 2020-22, 2024 (10)
 Ethernet cable, found wood, paint, stainless steel
 Approx. 110 x 34 x 20 cm

Front space

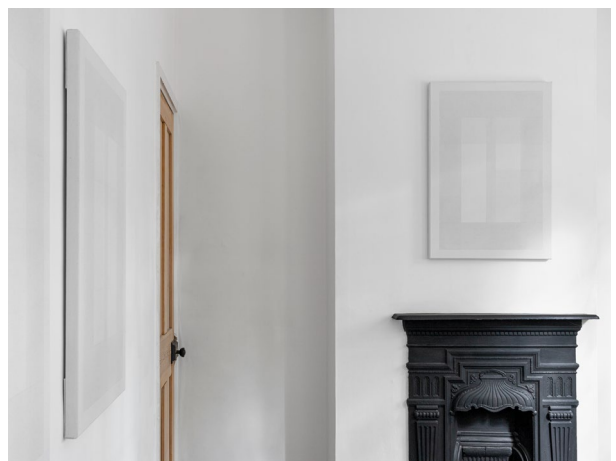
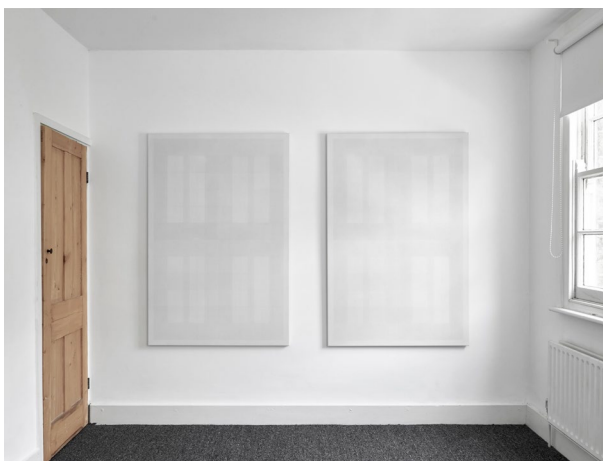
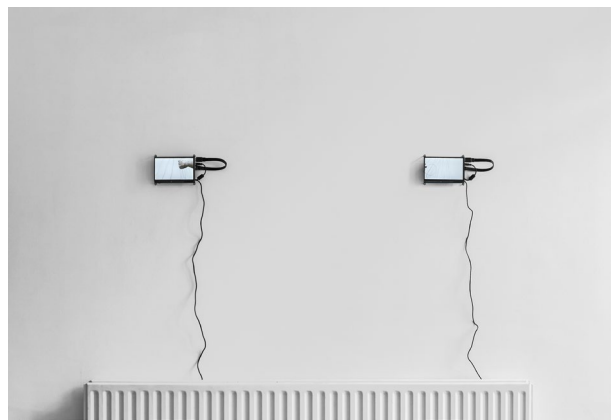
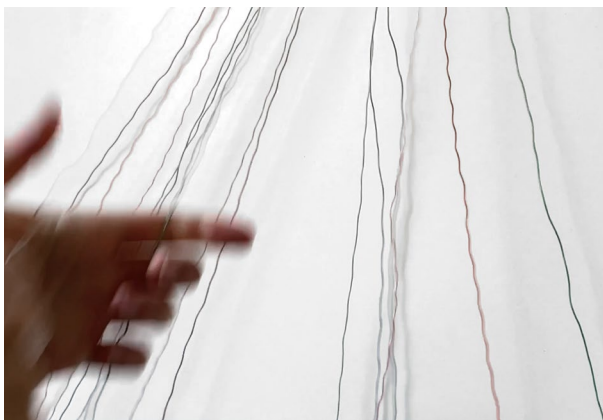
____(NTIME), 2023 (11)
 Synthetic polymer, pigment
 and graphite pencil on canvas
 150 x 100cm

____(NTIME), 2021 (12,13,14)
 Synthetic polymer, pigment
 and graphite pencil on canvas
 80 x 55cm

Rear space

____(NTIME), 2023 (15,16,18)
 Synthetic polymer, pigment
 and graphite pencil on canvas
 150 x 100cm

____(NTIME), 2021 (17)
 Synthetic polymer, pigment
 and graphite pencil on canvas
 80 x 55cm





Tyler Mallison
Biography

Tyler Mallison (*1975 USA, UK) is a London-based multidisciplinary artist and painter working with sculpture, photography, video, performance, installation and the expanded field of painting. Driven by an interest in the notion of potential and questions of agency and logic, his practice actively explores and reinterprets emerging societal narratives through an iterative process of ‘making sense of things’—combining research with hands-on material investigations and imaginative speculation.

Subjects are fluid and often personal, creating traces of complex thought through multi-referential objects that challenge perception(s) and invite moments of pause. Examples include ‘Algorithmic’ paintings made with Primark T-shirts that expose systems of globalism; sculptural prototypes, presented as a ‘proposition for a better way of working,’ offering a pre-pandemic vision of future labour, complete with USB jump ropes; and enigmatic meta-surfaces titled ‘NTIME,’ which demand physical presence, subvert image recognition, and raise questions about our capacity to ‘see.’

A graduate of Central Saint Martins (MA, Interdisciplinary), Northwestern University (BA, Chemistry), Turps Art School (AltMFA Painting) and nationally selected ‘Syllabus’ (AltMFA), Mallison has exhibited internationally at Art in Perpetuity Trust, London; SPACE Mare Street; VFD Dalston (solo); Royal Academy of Arts; Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge; Eastside Projects, Birmingham; nGbK, Berlin; Plattenpalast Berlin (solo); Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund; Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; Melkweg, Amsterdam; ARCOMadrid. Past residencies include Autocenter Berlin, HMKV, Guest Projects London and The Cut Arts Centre, Suffolk. Awards include the Royal Society, 2023; A-n Artist Bursary, 2022; Aesthetica Art Prize, 2019, 2023; London Creative Network, 2018; Arts Council England (GFA), 2017. He is also a Trustee of OUTPOST and currently conducting artistic research in conversation with scientists in the areas of nanotechnology, quantum theory and plasmonics at King’s College London.



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