

Ben Lingard

Version Control

'The world wasn't real anymore. Everything in it was a fraudulent copy of what it should have been, and everything that happened in it shouldn't have been happening.' Paul Auster, *4,3,2,1*

Version Control presents a new body of paintings made over the last six months, exploring the impact of generative Ai on the fragile process of remembering. Working from real moments, places, and experiences, the artist described these memories to various machine learning systems and asked them to reconstruct what had been lived. The resulting images—partial, distorted, strangely familiar—were collaged, altered, and repeatedly re-submitted to the Ais in an iterative feedback loop, each version drifting further from its origin.

Through this process, memory becomes both subject and material: unstable, editable, and increasingly detached from any fixed truth. As in the *dérive*, the work moves through physical and psychological landscapes without a predetermined path, accumulating fragments rather than certainties. Painting, drawing, and printmaking intervene in this algorithmic cycle, interrupting the smooth logic of the machine with the slowness and resistance of the hand.

Throughout the exhibition, data centres appear as recurring motifs—monolithic architectures of memory-storage and forgetting. At times they smoulder or blaze, recalling Philip James de Loutherbourg's *Coalbrookdale by Night*: a glowing industrial inferno in which the machinery of progress threatens to consume the world that built it. These burning data centres become metaphors for the instability of digital memory and the volatility of outsourced recollection.

The works exist in a space between figuration and abstraction, recognition and invention, uncertainty and misdirection. In **Version Control**, reality is no longer retrieved—it is revised, reprocessed, and reimagined, again and again, until the original moment dissolves into speculation, simulation, and paint.

Ben Lingard is a London-born artist who currently lives and works in Glasgow.

He graduated from the Glasgow School of Art in 2022 with a degree in Painting & Printmaking. On graduating he was awarded an RSA John Kinross travel scholarship and spent three months living and working in Florence, Italy.

Lingard works across various mediums but always with a strong emphasis on drawing. His practice addresses and brings together a number of interests including psychogeography and the life of the city, the nature of memory, the act of looking, and the role of craft in contemporary art. He is currently researching the mediation of memory through the use of generative Ai.

Ben teaches painting and drawing at Leith School of Art. He is currently studying for an MA in Fine Art at Central St Martins in London.

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