

Tommy Harrison *Displays*

April 10 – May 31, 2025
2 Bourdon Street, London (UK)



Tommy Harrison | Detail | *Display II*, 2025

GRIMM is pleased to announce *Displays*, a solo exhibition with new works by Tommy Harrison (b. 1996, Stockport, UK). This is the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery and the first in the gallery's London location.

Displays presents a shift towards the personal for Harrison's practice, making direct reference to the specificities of his studio and locating it as the site for further investigation into the visual tensions of narrative and form, as well as a continuation of his interest in classical art historical and religious iconography.

Located in the industrial environment of Ardwick, Manchester, within a grand red-brick building on a cathedral-like scale, Harrison's studio has begun to evoke feelings of worship and reference for him. Along the large central corridor of the studio block is a series of metal shutters, each a threshold into an unknowable, impassable void. The shutters feature in all of these new paintings, dragged down to reveal or obscure to differing degrees, each rolled segment carefully considered within a series of classical ratios. Sometimes they are ever so slightly askew, summoning the creaky sound of a malfunctioning motor or a frustrated hand wrestling with the slats. The rectangular forms of the shutter and its contents are reduced to ratios of space and mass, allowing intuitive decisions made across the canvas to find their certainty.

Behind these shutters lie a number of scenarios and narratives, each of which is obfuscated by the semi-closed barriers. Motifs may be drawn from religious iconography and wider visual culture as much as they may from Harrison's immediate surroundings – one can find both an unplumbed toilet sinking into broken floorboards and a headless Christ on the cross amongst a pile of rubble. In *Display II*, a floating veil of Veronica and delicately rendered hand, as though taken straight from a classical composition, stretch out from a clatter of timbers and metal poles, as though the victim of an accident.

The carefully rendered folds of fabric on depicted figures typically cropped or without a head, make reference to wayside shrines or altarpieces, yet with their true function disguised. Instead, these suspenseful voids become complex grounds for worship or reverence, devoid of a hierarchy and thereby allowing the mundane to have the same weight as that which is sacrosanct. In *Display IV* a written-off car seemingly breaking out of the shutters is juxtaposed with a ghostly figure in an immaculately pleated dress. A sense of mystery pervades the relationship between these different objects and settings, with this dissonance functioning as it does in music, creating something jarring and unknowable but with the ability to elicit a specific sensation.

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The two-dimensionality of the shutters and their presence in the foreground of the picture plane reinforces a tension between the flatness of the canvas and its role as an illusionistic portal into other times and places. Indeed, Harrison's interest in the surfaces and traditions of the past is present in his highly sophisticated range of painterly techniques. He works on multiple paintings at once, slowly applying very thin layers of paint, allowing elements to drift between each canvas, naturally drawing them together despite their differences.

Harrison is interested in how his surfaces are viewed as both a whole and with just a short distance between the viewer's eye and the picture plane, their visual effects just a few inches away. He sees beauty in these details, in moments severed from their referent, treated as such by careful cropping and collaging. This fragmentation allows for narrative and meaning to also become warped, producing a visual intensity of the peculiar.



Tommy Harrison in his studio, Manchester (UK), 2023 | Photo: Michael Pollard

About the artist

Tommy Harrison (b. 1996, Stockport, UK) lives and works in Manchester (UK). He graduated with an MFA in painting at the Manchester School of Art (2021-23), for which he received in 2020 the Haworth Trust Painting Scholarship.

In the fall of 2025, Harrison will present a solo exhibition of new works at Iris Art Museum, Suzhou (CN). A new publication will be published to accompany the exhibition.

Recent exhibitions include *A Room Hung With Thoughts: British Painting Now*, curated by Tom Morton, Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, TX (US); *Double Bind*, GRIMM, Amsterdam (NL); *The Silver Cord*, Huxley-Parlour, London (UK); *Prophetic Dreams*, Kutlesa, Goldau (CH); *Self-Portraits*, GRIMM, New York, NY (US); *Frozen Mid-Melt*, Pipeline Contemporary, London (UK); *Tone Cluster*, GRIMM, New York, NY (US); *Centre of the Periphery*, Pipeline Contemporary, London (UK); *The Belly and the Guts*, Alice Amati, London (UK); *Divinity*, Islington Mill, Salford (UK); *Nothing has changed, Everything has changed*, Elysium Gallery, Swansea (UK) and *High Humanity*, Chapelle de l'Humanité, Paris (FR).

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