

Manifesto for Sustainable Experimentation 21 May-9 August 2025

Luke Turner

Cross-examination

2025

Graphite and acrylic paint on emulsion, action

The artist will be working in situ on the following dates:

24, 27, 28, 29, 31 May

4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 18, 19 June

2, 3, 9, 16, 23, 24, 30, 31 July

Luke Turner has been invited to reflect upon his recent experience in the High Court of Justice, combating an accusation of libel. The case centred around Turner's response to racially motivated bullying and saw him interrogated under oath for three days by the claimants' leading counsel. The case has been dubbed 'the free speech trial of our age'.

Turner has chosen to re-transcribe, in public, a particular excerpt of the court transcription at the point at which one of his own previous artworks was brought into the argument against him. The passage will be hand-painted on the gallery wall over the course of the exhibition.

The artist views the work as a meditation on the role of artistic expression and experimentation in challenging the repression of freedoms. In this case, a series of far-right conspiracy theories – often antisemitic in nature – were advanced about the artist, his artworks, his writing, and his public stance in opposing the emergence of contemporary manifestations of fascism.

Cross-examination presents an exchange in which passages of Turner's 2011 artwork *The Metamodernist Manifesto* are read to the Court in an effort to prove the incoherence of his work, and to link this to an unrelated academic piece of anti-fascist writing that the claimants had falsely attributed to him. In doing so, the barrister inadvertently makes a case for the meaninglessness and futility of both art and anti-fascist resistance.

The judge ruled in the artist's favour.

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Luke Turner (b.1982, Manchester, UK) is an artist and writer based in London. His projects and participatory performances explore the operations and oscillations of art, utilising empathy, emotion and social interaction to foster new forms of communality across digital and physical networks. His research also examines online extremism, and in 2023 he won a precedent-setting High Court victory against two far-right conspiracy theorists in a case concerning antisemitism and online abuse, in what has been dubbed “the free speech trial of our age”.

Turner’s practice grew from his pioneering work on the early web in the late ’90s with The Void. He went on to co-edit the aesthetics and culture website Notes on Metamodernism, and in 2011 he authored the Metamodernist Manifesto. He has shared a collaborative practice with Finnish artist Nastja Säde Rönkkö since 2008, and is co-curator of HOAX, a radical platform for creative works that incorporate text.

Turner has exhibited and performed internationally at venues including Kiasma, Helsinki; Sydney Opera House, Australia; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; FACT, Liverpool; Museum of the Moving Image, New York; Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź; Wellcome Collection, London; South by Southwest, Texas; Le Lieu Unique, Nantes; and Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Colorado. His work has been screened at festivals such as Manchester International Film Festival, UK; Helsinki International Film Festival, Finland; American Documentary Film Festival, California; and Ivy Film Festival, Rhode Island.

Education

2010

Royal College of Art, MA Fine Art

2008

Central Saint Martins, BA Fine Art

<https://luketurner.com/about>