

*"Who controls the past controls the future" George Orwell*

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## **The Propaganda Paintings** (2024 - on)

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My fascination with the use of typography and words to influence people's decisions or opinion was first instilled in me as an art school student studying graphic design in the early eighties.

I became obsessed with the work of Warhol and Ruscha in particular; both artists with a background in the commercial world of advertising and design who understood that images and words can have a dramatic impact on people's perception of a work of art.

The power of language, especially when expressed visually, *typographically*, to communicate an idea, a concept, or indeed an *ideology*, can prove pivotal in communication campaigns designed to sway electorates worldwide, moving the very *dial of democracy* to one political party's favour or the other.

This ongoing series of paintings forms part of my **'WHO FEEDS THE MACHINE?/Mass Observation'** project looking at the increasing use of AI (artificial intelligence) in contemporary online propaganda.

I refer to these works as being made *in collaboration* with AI; the words are created by prompting an AI to suggest those most frequently and effectively used in political propaganda, both historically and in today's digital realms. It is this *collaboration* with an AI that adds something *other* to the paintings, affording them an extra dimension beyond the artist's hand and control. The overall visual impact is one of a minimalist ground with densely painted typography, including lines of binary code interspersed with the AI-generated words, some of which are written backwards or upside down, further obfuscating *the message*; the feeling of having to *excavate* the words and meaning from the many layers references classical palimpsests, a graven language on a wall or stone tablet, perhaps?

The suggestion is that this layered text is being constantly *overwritten* and changed in meaning to suit a political narrative *in flux*, as is the case in George Orwell's disturbingly prescient novel *'Nineteen Eighty-Four'*.

I am currently developing and expanding this collection of paintings into a full exhibition.

All paintings are 1.25m x 1m, acrylic on canvas.