

The approach

Phillip Allen *Farm*

17 September - 31 October 2026

Preview: Wednesday 16 September, 6-9pm

The Approach is pleased to present *Farm*, Phillip Allen's tenth solo exhibition with the gallery. For this presentation in The Annexe, Allen will showcase a group of felt-pen drawings produced between 1998 and 2026 alongside three new paintings. By showing works on both paper and board together, the exhibition reveals how Allen translates between mediums through a process of repetition and habitual mark making.

Allen first began working on paper for his debut solo exhibition at The Approach in 1999, making pastel drawings on newsprint inspired by the sculptures he was producing at the time. Drawing has since remained a thread running through his practice, sharing a common visual language with his paintings. The title *Farm* refers to Allen's process of propagation: cultivating ideas through drawing that may later find their way into painting. More recently, the relationship between the two has become more fluid, each feeding into the other.

Working on paper allows Allen a sense of immediacy, enabling him to produce freely in the moment before acknowledgement or ego sets in, before thought is fully registered. At the same time, his use of felt-tip pen imposes an intentional rigidity. Restrictive in both line and material presence, the pen neither drips nor bleeds, while preserving the bold colour elemental to his work. In translating between the two mediums, its lack of material substance is what allows for reinterpretation.

Both drawings and paintings are abstract, though familiar forms occasionally emerge. Roadways recur, creating depth within the pictorial plane while also suggestive of a horizon. The idea of an aperture or window is significant for Allen: in his works on paper, he first draws a frame within which to work, distinguishing the surrounding absence from the blankness of a virgin sheet of paper. His paintings similarly establish their own frames, with dense bubbles of paint accumulating around the edges to form a border from the material itself.

The drawings emerge through repetition. Lines, bubbles, clouds and orbs emerge through muscle memory and habitual practice, gradually shifting until something unfamiliar surfaces. Often it is this moment of discomfort, when something appears that Allen does not recognise, that a new direction opens in the work. The 'long game' lies in allowing a sustained and consistent practice to create the conditions for invention.

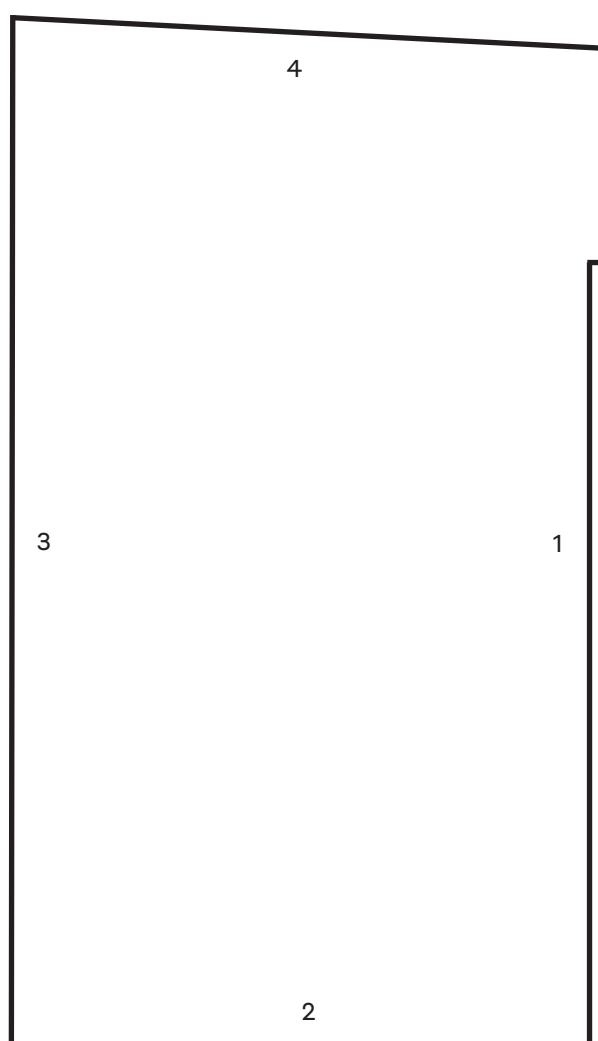
What cannot be translated between drawing and painting is equally important. The gap between the two holds a sense of anticipation: rather than resolving their differences, Allen allows them to remain open, creating the possibility of rediscovering something lost or forgotten, or uncovering something new in the movement between mediums.

Philip Allen (b. 1967, London, UK) lives and works in London, UK. He received a BA from Kingston University in 1990 and an MA from the Royal College of Art in 1992. He is Director and Programme Leader of Turps Education, London, a tutor on The Royal College of Art MA painting programme, and a visiting lecture at various colleges including The Royal Academy, Ruskin School of Art Oxford and Goldsmiths.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Deep Waiting*, Kerlin Gallery, Dublin, ROI (2026); *Phillip Allen*, Miles McEnery Gallery, New York (NY), USA (2024); *Phillip Allen, Recent Works*, Luca Tommasi Arte Contemporanea, Milan, IT (2023); *Coarse Grain*, The Approach, London, UK (2022).

Selected group shows include: *Personal Preference*, Thames-Side Studios, London, UK; *On the thick and thin of painting*, Cross Lane Projects, Kendall, UK (both 2026); *The Good Intent*, Guest Gallery, New York, NY, USA (2024); *Stellatundra*, Sim Smith, London, UK (2023); *The Renaissance*, Luca Tommasi Arte Gallery, Milan, IT (2020); *The Aerodrome*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK (2019); *20 Years*, The Approach, London, UK (2017).

His work is in the collections of Arts Council England, UK; British Council, UK; CCA Andratx, Mallorca, ES; Government Art Collection, UK; Southampton City Art Gallery, UK; and the Tate, UK.



1. *Strange road to walk*, 2026
Mixed media on board
52 x 42 x 7 cm
2. *Curse of the so called (Version)*, 2026
Mixed media on board
50 x 40 x 8 cm
3. *Untitled*, n.d.
Felt tip on paper
Each: 42 x 29.7 cm or 21 x 29.7 cm
4. *High Memory*, 2026
Mixed media on board
52 x 42 x 7 cm

In the office:
Untitled, n.d.
Felt tip on paper
Framed: 50.3 x 37.8 x 3.9 cm