



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

**NEUBAUER COLLEGIUM
FOR CULTURE & SOCIETY**



WORKS BY

Tony Lewis with Bethany Collins, Devin T. Mays & Ellen Rothenberg

NEUBAUER COLLEGIUM FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY

MAY 1 – JULY 14, 2024

How much work does it take to make art seem effortless? *WORKS BY* attempts to answer this question by bringing together four Chicago-based artists who share an interest in the many meanings of “labor.”

The centerpiece of the exhibition is a new graphite floor drawing, produced in situ by **Tony Lewis** (b. 1986)—the labor of its making being the primary attraction until the artwork is completed. Lewis’s floor drawings are made by manually rubbing graphite powder onto large swaths of construction paper, resulting in dark, dust-coated expanses of monochrome gray. These works call attention to the seemingly mindless chore and anti-theater of their production, though there is evidently a mystical element at play in the smudgy void they engender. (Consider the analogous art of the mandala and comparable exercises in monastic focus and absorption.) Upon the exhibition’s conclusion, the floor drawing will be rolled up into a giant paper ball, to be unwrapped in a different context at a later date. Lewis has invited **Devin T. Mays** (b. 1985) to devise a series of performative interventions into his workspace over the first three weeks of the exhibition. These interventions include the phased installation of a sculpture featuring elements of a distinctly workaday nature: pallets collected during the artist’s wanderings around Chicago’s South Side. *Erased: (Unrelated)*, a large photograph by **Bethany Collins** (b. 1984), will be installed in the lobby until Lewis’s floor piece is completed, when it will be transferred to the gallery. The image captures a cloud of chalk dust released into a black void—the remnants of the word

“unrelated,” repeatedly written on a blackboard and then erased. This photograph presages later works centered on the laborious rituals of erasure and loss for which Collins has become well-known. Two new photo pieces by **Ellen Rothenberg** (b. 1949) complete the picture conjured in *WORKS BY*. One is of a work boot exhibited on the gallery’s east-facing exterior wall. The other, taken during the dismantling of Barbara Kruger’s 2022 retrospective at MoMA, is of a giant lump of crumpled paper that was once a Kruger mural. The latter photo will be mounted on a free-standing wall that will be placed on top of Lewis’s finished floor drawing.

The fruits of these artists’ labors will be on view from May 1 (celebrated the world over as International Workers’ Day) through July 14 (Bastille Day)—two dates that commemorate landmark events in the history of the working class.

Curated by Dieter Roelstraete.

The Neubauer Collegium gratefully acknowledges the Brenda Mulmed Shapiro Fund for its generous support of the gallery, and is grateful to Rick Lowe and the Black Wall Street Project for their additional support of this exhibition.

IMAGE: Devin T. Mays, *Untitled (Unnamed)*, 2023. Installation view, *In Practice: Devin T. Mays*, SculptureCenter, New York, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Regards, Chicago. Photo: Charles Benton.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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Gallery hours: M–F, 9:00am – 4:00pm

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