

SABOTAGE**SALVATORE VITALE****06.03 – 31.05.2026****1. Biography**

Salvatore Vitale (b. 1986, Italy) is a Swiss-based artist whose work explores the changing face of contemporary society. Through speculative storytelling, he investigates how technology influences societies, focusing on the political, social, and visual dimensions of modernity. His work has been widely exhibited internationally and is held in several public and private collections.

2. SABOTAGE

Salvatore Vitale presents an exploration of how the gig economy is reshaping labor and revealing the contradictions of digital capitalism. Rather than relying on spectacle, he turns attention to the everyday realities of workers whose lives are increasingly governed by data and algorithmic control.

In his art, he examines how promises of technological progress often conceal forms of inequality and exploitation that have their origins in the colonial era. Through his work with South African freelancers, Vitale highlights both the vulnerability and resilience of digital workers, revealing that human labor, though increasingly hidden, remains central to digital economies.

Through film, photography, archives, textiles, and text, the project uses the notion of sabotage as a form of resistance, imagining ways to disrupt or challenge an unjust system built on exploitation.

The exhibition unfolds as a journey, beginning with a corridor that evokes a corporate space, progressing through fragmented and intimate workspaces, and culminating in an e-waste scene. This transition mirrors the cycle of digital labor, from promise and productivity to exhaustion and disposal.

Through this installation, Vitale invites viewers to reflect on control, inequality, and the human cost of technological progress in a world increasingly shaped by digital technology.

3. I AM A HUMAN

Video, 31:17, 2023

I AM A HUMAN is a collaborative short film that explores the hidden connections between digital platform work and the mining industry in South Africa. South African workers were paid at standard Western rates to contribute videos, music, and images drawn from their

daily lives. Their stories reveal the economic uncertainty, mental fatigue, and social isolation of gig work; yet they also affirm dignity and agency within those conditions.

Interwoven with these accounts is the world of the *Zama zamas* (meaning “to try one’s luck” in isiZulu), the informal miners who risk their lives in abandoned or inactive mines. Their labor continues a history of land loss and exploitation rooted in colonial and apartheid systems, showing how these inequalities persist today.

The film draws a parallel between the extraction of minerals and the exploitation of human creativity in the digital economy. Both rely on the same structures of domination and inequality. The inclusion of figures such as Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos highlights how narratives of innovation often overlook the material and human costs behind technological progress.

I AM A HUMAN offers an intimate view of what it means to remain human in systems that continuously test the limits of that very idea.

4. WORK WITHOUT WORK

Video, 6:42, 2024

Work Without Work is a video performance that stages a fictional job interview with a South African freelancer. Through a simple, direct-to-camera exchange, Salvatore Vitale recreates the familiar atmosphere of remote work.

The freelancer’s responses move between honesty, irony, and humor, showing how digital work promises freedom but delivers insecurity and scant recognition. Sarcasm becomes a way of pushing back against a system that demands much while offering no security in return. The conversation deconstructs the “freedom” myth associated with the freelance lifestyle and reveals the increasingly blurred boundary between life and labor.

Vitale draws attention to how labor exists in two opposing states: entirely under surveillance, yet invisible in terms of value and recognition. *Work Without Work* shows how work today often extends beyond physical tasks to include emotional and cognitive effort that goes unnoticed. This dynamic is especially sharp in the Global South, where digital platforms create opportunities while also reinforcing inequality.

5. LISTEN ALL Y’ALL, IT’S A SABOTAGE

Six-channel video, 3:40, 2023

Listen All Y’all, It’s a Sabotage is a video installation in which the destruction of office equipment becomes a symbolic act of rebellion against digital labor and algorithmic control.

The work, inspired by the Beastie Boys’ song “Sabotage” (*Ill Communication*, 1994), unfolds

through a series of slow-motion explosions that turn destruction into visual poetry. Each detonation becomes an act of refusal, turning destruction into expression.

The video echoes Legacy Russell's idea of the "glitch" as a moment of resistance, exploring disruption as a creative and political act.

Salvatore Vitale reclaims the right to pause, feel, and resist the dehumanizing forces of the digital age. *Listen All Y'all, It's a Sabotage* is not about chaos. It imagines the "glitch" as a strategy, a way to reveal hidden systems of control and to ask what it means to withdraw, refuse, or simply break away.

6. AUTOMATED REFUSAL

Video, 24:36, 2023

Automated Refusal explores the fragile realities of gig work, where surveillance, rankings, and long hours blur the boundaries between life and labor.

Blending observation and fiction, the work examines how automation transforms not only work but also identity and social connection. Through fragmented storytelling and interrupted rhythms, it mirrors the instability of digital labor and the uncertainty of those who depend on it.

The video follows four freelancers whose stories unfold in parallel, each revealing personal strategies of adaptation and quiet resistance. It focuses on small acts of defiance, such as moments of hesitation, retreat, or persistence that reveal traces of agency within systems of control.

Grounded in research, interviews, and situational testimonies, *Automated Refusal* reimagines these experiences through scenes that combine elements of reality and fiction. The result is a portrait of contemporary labor marked by contradiction and endurance.

7. DEATH BY GPS

Series of photographs, C-prints, 2022–2025

Salvatore Vitale's photographs trace the close and often uneasy connections between sites of labor, extraction, and disappearance. The images shift between offices, workshops, and homes that have turned into workplaces. They appear next to scenes of informal mining by the *Zama zamas* (meaning "to try one's luck" in isiZulu), miners who return to abandoned shafts in South Africa to search for traces of gold.

Vitale treats these subjects with precision, revealing how both physical and digital economies rely on similar models. The *Zama zamas'* descent into unstable ground mirrors the position of digital workers who operate within environments where job safety, legality,

and recognition often fade. Their gestures reflect endurance and exhaustion within economies built on overexploitation.

Desks, cables, and screens appear beside stripped earth and dismantled electronics. Alongside these images, a series of portraits depicts freelancers encountered during the making of *Death by GPS*. Blurred to the edge of recognition, the portraits suggest the near-invisibility of digital workers, always present yet partially erased. Referencing the early visual language of artificial intelligence imagery, Vitale creates tension between representation and disappearance.

Together, these photographs shine a spotlight on the fragile infrastructures that sustain digital life and the human labor that remains both essential and overlooked within them.

8. ENDURING FRAGMENTS

Installation, 2025

Enduring Fragments is a site-specific installation produced for *SABOTAGE*. It is composed of discarded parts from electronic devices, including motherboards, wires, screens, and keyboard membranes. These materials are arranged into a fragile sculpture that feels both archaeological and futuristic. Marked by wear and decay, they form a landscape of remnants that accumulates behind the polished surface of the digital economy.

Each fragment holds the trace of a hidden cycle of extraction, production, consumption, and disposal. The work reflects on the rapid turnover that drives digital capitalism, where devices become obsolete almost as soon as they are acquired.

As these objects circulate between hands, continents, and markets, they reveal the hidden violence of labor, environmental damage, and infrastructural decay. The pursuit of innovation produces not only connection and progress but also waste, exhaustion, and loss.

Traduit par Christopher Scala