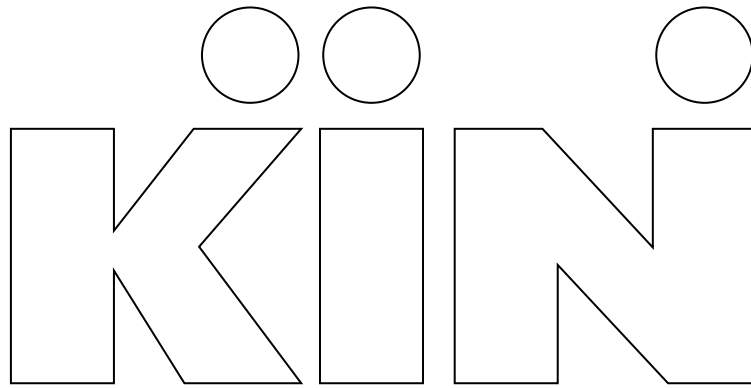


Recognitions

Ryan Cullen

06/03/26, 6 pm - 02/05/26



“That romantic disease, originality, all around we see originality of incompetent idiots, they could draw nothing, paint nothing, just so the mess they make is original . . . Even two hundred years ago who wanted to be original, to be original was to admit that you could not do a thing the right way, so you could only do it your own way.”

In 1955 the novel *The Recognitions* by William Gaddis appeared. At its centre stands a painter, Wyatt Gwyon, who produces technically perfect paintings in the style of the Flemish Old Masters. His works circulate successfully on the art market: collectors buy them, dealers sell them, experts admire them. And yet they are considered forgeries. Not because the painting itself is bad, but because the name underneath is wrong. Gaddis describes here a fundamental shift.

It is exactly in this field of tension that the work of Ryan Cullen operates. The difference between original and copy does not lie in the image itself, but in the system that recognises it. It is not about creation, but about recognition. A work becomes art because it is recognised as art, by dealers, institutions, critics and discourse. As long as everyone believes in the attribution, the system works perfectly.

The situation Gaddis describes has become a central tenet of contemporary art. Today, originality is less a property of the work itself, but rather an effect of context and institutional validation. It is not artworks that produce their own meaning, but the system in which they are exchanged.

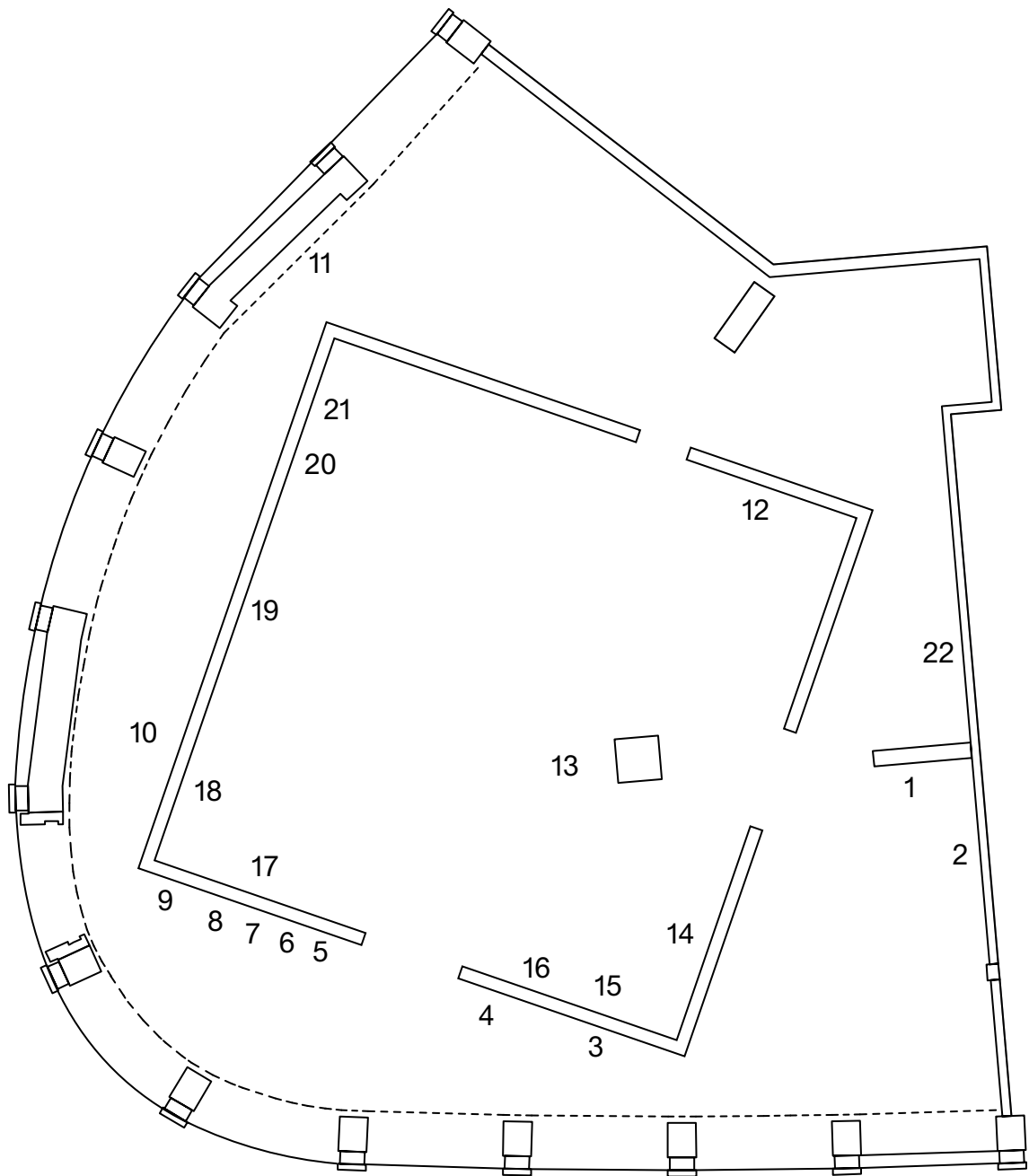
This exhibition presents the contradictions between the logic of apocalyptic thinking and the end of history. The titles, like the works themselves, move through different systems of bygone knowledge: Economics, Politics, Psychology and History.

In this way, images circulate here almost like a symbolic currency within a global system of history, capital and ideology. And akin to Gaddis, the central question persists. Not: What is an image? But: From where does an image receive meaning?

His works therefore move constantly between six poles: image and system, reference and construction, history and its repetition. It is within this tension, between recognition and circulation that this exhibition unfolds.

Nicolaus Schafhausen, 2026

Ryan Cullen (b. 1992) lives and works in Brussels. Cullen studied at Cooper Union, New York, and the Städelschule, Frankfurt. His work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions at KIN, Brussels (2025); Briefing Room, Brussels (2023); Musée La Boverie, Liège (2022); Situations, New York (2021); CLEARING, Brooklyn (2019); Nassauischer Kunstverein, Wiesbaden (2018); Etablissement d'en Face, Brussels (2018); Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (2017); and Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main (2017). Upcoming exhibitions include Z33, Hasselt (2026) and MARTa Herford (2026). In 2026, Cullen received the Ars Viva Prize.



- 1 *Trillion*, 2025, oil on linen, wood frame
73 x 60 cm
- 2 *Two Trillion*, 2025, oil on linen, wood
frame, 120 x 100 cm
- 3 *Lead Azide*, 2026, oil on linen
32 x 42 cm
- 4 *The Casting Out of the Black Swans*,
2026, set of 3 framed lambda prints
3x (30 x 40 cm)
- 5 *Snow*, 2025, Framed lambda print
42 x 32 cm
- 6 *Snow*, 2025, Framed lambda print
42 x 32 cm
- 7 *Snow*, 2025, Framed lambda print
42 x 32 cm
- 8 *Snow*, 2025, Framed lambda print
42 x 32 cm

- 9 *Greek Sovereign Eurodebt Crisis
2008-2016*, 2025, oil on linen, wood
frame, 90 x 120 cm
- 10 *The Populations*, 2026, oil on linen,
wood frame, 60 x 100 cm
- 11 *Diane*, 2026, oil on linen, 151 x 101 cm
- 12 *The Prince*, 2025, oil on linen, wood
frame, 160 x 100 cm
- 13 *To hold to account*, 2025, Oil on
ikea furniture, 43.5 x 40 x 180
cm
- 14 *OK.*, 2026, oil on linen, wood frame
90 x 70cm
- 15 *Spanish Anti-Austerity Unrest 2011-
2014*, 2026, oil on linen, wood frame
120 x 90 cm
- 16 *Recapitalization efforts of the*

- European Financial Stabilization
Mechanism 2010-2012*, 2026
oil on linen, wood frame, 120 x
90 cm
- 17 *Charity*, 2026, oil on linen, wood frame
60 x 100 cm
- 18 *Security (Reckfall)*, 2025, oil on linen,
wood frame, 200 x 90 cm
- 19 *Michael being chased by bees*, 2025
oil on linen, wood frame, 90 x 90 cm
- 20 *How the world wishes it saw itself*, 2026
oil on linen, wood frame, 90 x 70 cm
- 21 *Sword*, 2026, oil on linen, wood frame
120 x 40cm
- 22 *Object Constancy vs. Permanence*,
2025, oil on linen, wood frame,
170 x 130cm