

Representational markings
Bendt Eyckermans
Apr 23 — May 30, 2025

THINGS I COULD'VE SAID

I was supposed to meet Bendt in Antwerp, around 1 p.m. on a Tuesday, but then there was a hideous emergency at my flat: my drains exploded and there was suddenly shit all over my back garden, which I don't exactly take tremendous care of anyway, especially in the winter months, so it looks like a depressed jungle. And I kept thinking while I was standing there what it'd look like if Bendt painted it: would he add some crows like in *The Feast* wings shiny and chrome, ready to erase me? Would he change the weather to make it sundown in midwinter, like in *The Swamplands*, the sky red and raw, like bruised flesh? (Oil on linen makes the paintings look lit within, like by a low flame.) Time congealed; the train went without me. I thought about that Wire song, "The Other Window": "Time passes as it often does..."¹ I made some calls. I went inside. I thought about all the things I could've said.

Maybe I would've started by asking Bendt what was the last movie he'd seen. I'd thought a lot about Roy Andersson's movies while I was looking at those paintings, like *Songs from the Second Floor*, which consists, like Bendt's paintings, exclusively of sinister tableaux, conjured up with an atmosphere of deadpan, matter-of-fact weirdness. (E.g., a man covered in soot holds a burned carrier bag on a commuter train. Nobody seems scared.) A sense of things being simultaneously real and yet... not. Not in a flashy way, but a low-volume but inescapable feeling of being not quite at home somewhere. Subtle dislocation. Unsettled weather. All the stranger because things seem to be proceeding as normal.

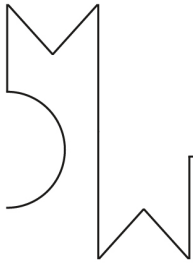
I wouldn't have asked where a painting comes from. Nobody knows what that means or how to answer it. Bad dreams? The wrong medication? I mean, the imagination doesn't sleep. Things step out of strange fog, touch your hand as they slip past. Gone again. I wonder what that was. I wonder why it came to me.

I might have mentioned Magritte, feeling weirdly obligated to do that in Belgium. Bendt might have shrugged and told me it was going to rain later.

Clouds multiplying like tumors.

I could bring in the crows again. Consider how the man and woman's legs are disembodied in *The Feast* and what kind of world that means we're trapped within. I might have wondered aloud about whether the paintings are about haunted-ness and what they are haunted by... (Jean Cocteau? Monica Majoli? Baroque hyperrealist renderings of flesh? Get close enough to *Graves and Idols*, you might see blood flow beneath the marbled flesh.) Being haunted would've been on my mind since I knew that Bendt works in the studio in his grandfather's old studio, which must make some kind of psychic imprint (I would've regretted saying that...) on the work. Maybe it creates a certain feeling of continuity. Or sadness. Ghosts across from you at the table in the morning.

And I would've mentioned *The Pig* which makes me feel like I'm trespassing on a porn movie shot by Michael Haneke, the discombobulating 8K rendering of the leather jacket, the 1990s



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camera, his jacket. Animal skin, so, yes, flesh: Bendt's paintings have a certain softness but it doesn't feel "nice" or "inviting," it seems close to skin, lukewarm, suggestive of a world gone out of focus, like you've just had an overdose of tranquilizers on an early spring afternoon...

The sculptures add an extra layer of goosebumps, seemingly from another time, circa the 1920s, maybe. Melted clocks, trippy shadows, leopards prowling around the tuxedoed men and the ladies in their gowns, sipping cocktails, speaking several languages at once.

Maybe that would be a cue for a walk to see how one world mutates into or feeds off another. We might pause on a street, and Bendt might point out some witchy trees and say they were the trees from *The Swamplands*, and with a little jolt like I was falling out of bed, I'd remember where I was. And I would've said, "I have to go, before I miss my train."

– Charlie Fox

1. A song which, now I think about it but oddly it didn't occur to me then, is about a man's uneasy journey on a foreign train to somewhere unknown.

Bendt Eyckermans (b. 1994, Antwerp, Belgium) lives and works in Antwerp.

The artist's solo exhibitions include **Mendes Wood DM**, Brussels (2025); **Gallery Sofie Van de Velde**, Antwerp (2023); **Carlos/Ishikawa**, London (2023); **Andrew Kreps Gallery**, New York (2022); **TANK**, Shanghai (2022); **Gallery Sofie Van de Velde**, Antwerp (2019); **Carlos/Ishikawa**, London (2019); **S.M.A.K.**, Ghent (2018); **Kusseneers Gallery**, Brussels (2018); **Kusseneers Gallery**, Brussels (2017); **Kusseneers Gallery**, Brussels (2016); **Park Spoor Noord**, Antwerp (2016); **Antwerp Tower**, Antwerp (2016); **Hof ter Biest**, Ekeren (2016); **Troncaise** (2016); **Handelsbeurs**, Antwerp (2015); **Marion de Canniere Gallery**, Antwerp (2014); **Galerie van Campen en Rochtus**, Antwerp (2013).

His group exhibitions include **S.M.A.K.**, Ghent (2025); **The Perimeter**, London (2025); **The Campus**, Hudson (2024); **M HKA (Museum of Contemporary Art)**, Antwerp (2024); **Andrew Kreps Gallery**, New York (2021); **M HKA (Museum of Contemporary Art)**, Antwerp (2021); **Kunstfestival Watou**, Watou (2021); **CC Mechelen**, Mechelen (2018); **Plus One**, Antwerp (2017). Eyckermans's work is held in the collections of **M HKA (Museum of Contemporary Art)**, Antwerp; **Rachofsky Collection**, Dallas; **Sifang Art Museum**, Nanjing; and **TANK**, Shanghai.

Mendes
Wood
DM

13 Rue des Sablons / Zavelstraat
1000 Brussels Belgium
+ 32 2 502 09 64
www.mendeswooddm.com
@mendeswooddm