

8 ARTISTS TO WATCH IN 2026

Editors' Choice

Words by Julien Delagrance

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5. Bendt Eyckermans

Arguably one of my favorite artists over the past ten years is Bendt Eyckermans (born 1994, Antwerp, Belgium), who has continued his upward career trajectory into 2026, convincingly becoming one of the leading Belgian painters of his generation. His work draws on everyday scenes from his own life while maintaining a strong sense of narrative ambiguity. His paintings depict friends and acquaintances, often people who pass through his studio, positioned in carefully directed stances that function less as portraits than as gestures or poses. These figures appear within familiar yet subtly estranged situations, where ordinary actions suggest moments unfolding beyond the frame, rendered in a line that seems to echo the work of Belgian painters such as Constant Permeke (1886–1952) and Jean Brusselmans (1884–1953).

Eyckermans' practice is shaped by a longstanding engagement with sculpture and history, influenced by a family tradition of artists that includes his father and several generations before him. Raised among sculptural works and continuing to work in his grandfather's former studio, he developed an early fascination with monumentality and the narrative qualities of bas-reliefs, which continue to inform the structure and material presence of his paintings. His compositions often feature tactile, almost bas-relief surfaces, dramatic lighting, and figures caught mid-motion, with exaggerated gestures that heighten their physicality. Classical references such as busts, statues, gateways, and sculptural fragments appear alongside contemporary elements, creating deliberate anachronisms that introduce surreal or absurd undertones while maintaining a contemporary register.

Bendt Eyckermans studied painting at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, graduating in 2016. His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at venues including M HKA Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, S.M.A.K. Ghent, Kunstfestival Watou, Andrew Kreps Gallery in New York, Carlos/Ishikawa in London, Gallery Sofie Van de Velde in Antwerp, and Mendes Wood DM in Brussels, and is held in collections such as M HKA Antwerp, the Vlaamse Gemeenschap, and TANK Shanghai. Eyckermans lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium.



Studio portrait of Bendt Eyckermans. Image courtesy Antwerp Art ©