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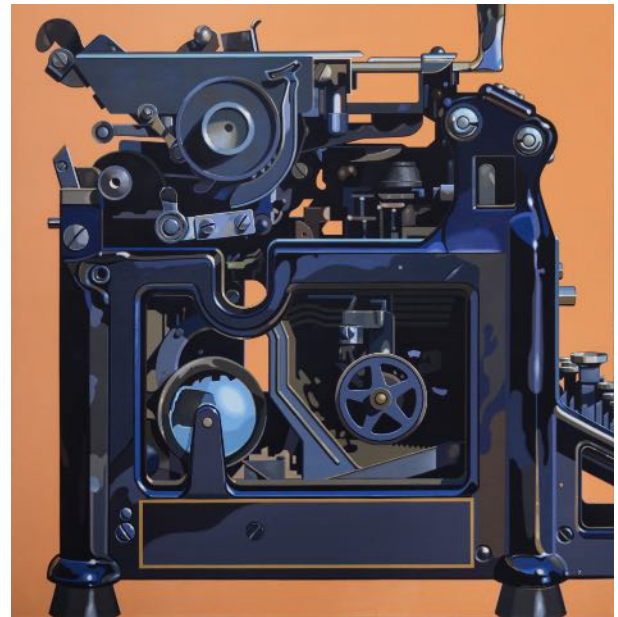
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Julien Berthier <sup>FR</sup>  
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Alain Bublex <sup>FR</sup>  
Robert Cottingham <sup>US</sup>  
John DeAndrea <sup>US</sup>  
Massimo Furlan <sup>IT</sup>  
Eulàlia Grau <sup>ES</sup>  
Taro Izumi <sup>JP</sup>  
Richard Jackson <sup>US</sup>  
Adam Janes <sup>US</sup>  
Jean-Yves Jouannais <sup>FR</sup>  
Martin Kersels <sup>US</sup>  
Paul Kos <sup>US</sup>  
Zhenya Machneva <sup>RU</sup>  
Francis Marshall <sup>FR</sup>  
Jeff Mills <sup>US</sup>  
Henrique Oliveira <sup>BR</sup>  
Paybak <sup>FR</sup>  
Lucie Picandet <sup>FR</sup>  
Emanuel Proweller <sup>FR</sup>  
Duke Riley <sup>US</sup>  
Lázaro Saavedra <sup>AR</sup>  
Niki de Saint Phalle <sup>FR</sup>  
Pierre Seinturier <sup>FR</sup>  
Peter Stämpfli <sup>CH</sup>  
Jean Tinguely <sup>CH</sup>  
Keith Tyson <sup>US</sup>  
Tomi Ungerer <sup>FR</sup>  
Jacques Villeglé <sup>FR</sup>  
William Wegman <sup>US</sup>  
Winzluss <sup>FR</sup>  
Virginie Yassef <sup>FR</sup>

"To consider Robert Cottingham's painting by first evoking what it does not show might seem cavalier and paradoxical. Even stranger to extrapolate from what would then be understood as an absence to grasp the cardinal properties of his project. After all, as an art of framing, painting is indeed an operation of limitation – of omission, of exclusion – by which something is made accessible to the eye, restored to its uniqueness, singularized, sometimes magnified, at the expense of all the rest, offered outside the ordinary course of events on the restricted plane of the canvas. When looking at it, we can say that we are there, utterly devoted to the form of the subject. What is never seen in Cottingham's work obviously cannot be characterized as a lack since it is, after all, a deliberate banishment entirely consistent with his initial intuitions.

With one exception [...] the human figure is absent from his work. Exiled without return, in an off-screen made improbable, almost unthinkable [...] "the things I choose to paint say much more about man than painting a man."

The painting is simultaneously the instrument and the destination of the photographic capture, aiming less at sublimating these details than determining them as objects soon relieved of their condition as fragments and then means to become a legitimate whole in themselves. From this perspective, Cottingham's art, like that of other photorealist artists, is to be understood less



*Underwood Side View, 2004*

in terms of a form of dependence on photography than as seeking to deceive its quality as a faithful reflection of reality. Pop art had already cultivated a form of disillusionment with photography. For Lichtenstein, Warhol, or Rosenquist, among others, the point was to transform media images (from comic strips to pictures of consumer products or journalistic snapshots) under an ironic prism that required a transfiguration of ready-made images through a strict mastery of plastic means. For the generation of artists who followed him, it was a matter of leaving the "interiors," abandoning the persistent model of still life and challenging photography for the privilege it had acquired in the representation of the real world.

It is no coincidence that, at the end of the nineties, Cottingham undertook two parallel series that can be understood less as a logical continuation of the *American Alphabet* than as a redistribution of the notion of the image and the letter. On the one hand, paintings, watercolors, and drawings of vintage cameras from the 1950s (*Diomatic*, 2000); on the other, typewriters from the same period, seen from all angles, sometimes, revealing their internal mechanism, as in the hypnotizing *Underwood Side View* (2004), for example. No longer the images and letters in their spatial rollout, but the instruments that produce them, intermediaries between the creative intention and its concretization, mechanical means that condition their shapes."

Excerpts from Alain Cueff's text "Des enseignes aux signes - Éléments de la peinture de Robert Cottingham" to be published in the exhibition catalog



*Spartus Full view, 1999*

## Openings

Wednesday the 11  
of June 2025

06.12.25

-

07.19.25

# VALLOIS

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# 33

## Focus #2 - American Photorealism

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## Art|Basel Basel

06.19 - 06.22  
Booth E10

## Art|Basel Unlimited

06.19 - 06.22  
Arman  
Captain Nemo

### NEW YORK

Proposal by Julia Wachtel :  
Julia Wachtel, Wendy White,  
Jason Yates

### Windchimes and Prayers

05.07 - 07.25

John Baeder, Robert Bechtle, Charles Bell, Robert Cottingham,  
John DeAndrea, Don Eddy, Ralph Goings, Duane Hanson, John Salt

"Fifty years ago, the invasion of living rooms by television, the popularisation of photography and its widespread use in advertising and the press, and finally, the success of cinema, imposed what, at the time, seemed like an ultimate dematerialisation of reality by the lens-based image. Today, that revolution of the 1960s looks like a mere ripple compared to the tsunami that has swept over us since. (...)

In this uberisation of the world in which the indeterminate time of the selfie circulating on the Web is more important than our presence in a given place, it is photographs of the pages of books, posted on Instagram, that determine their success. The visual pollution that suffocates us day in and day out, in which the images circulating on the Web and social media now direct our way of seeing and being seen, is not unrelated to the new interest in Photorealism shown by a young generation of artists. Pop Art and then Photorealism, which emerged at an interval of only a few years, both initially met with a very cool response: was this a critique or a celebration of the kingdom of consumption, of generalised ugliness, of urban sprawl? Both were discredited by the "lack of professionalism" of the artists concerned: after all, didn't these painters simply "copy" objects and/or photographs, doing no more than blowing them up in size? What at the time



John Baeder, *Holt's Café, Boonville, 1972*

was taken for cynicism strikes us today as incredibly fresh; what was interpreted as copying has since been celebrated as painting whose complexity and formal virtuosity we are now rediscovering. That is why we need to look more closely at these canvases that look like photographic images but are, from close up, very much paintings. (...)

The half-dozen terms used for the "Photorealist" or "Hyperrealist" movement (...), the number of texts written about the reasons for choosing one or another of these terms, and the number of criticisms coming from the artists in the movement, make this one of the most interesting examples of a "false" movement to be found in art history. Is it legitimate to bring together artists who, without knowing each other, worked on similar subjects using similar techniques? The many recent exhibitions and the discovery of later generations appear to validate the choice made by the critics and gallerists who invested in this gathering. The questioning of the movement – real or fake? – echoes the question raised by the movement itself, and it's no coincidence: are these paintings made after photographs merely "cold" copies – in other words, a kind of realism – or are they the beginning of a narrative, and therefore a form of unreality? True or false images? True or false movement?"



Ralph Goings, *Shaker Detail, 1999*

Excerpt from Camille Morineau's text "Robert Cottingham's true false images" in *Robert Cottingham, Fictions in the Space Between* published by Galerie GP & N Vallois, 2019