

A refraction occurs due to a change in the speed of light when the light rays travel from a rarer medium to a denser medium. Let's say you take a word like "protest" and send its meaning through refractors (could be billions or just a few), mirrors mirroring themselves, sometimes skipping steps backwards, other times mirroring steps forward; an irregular and exhausting buzzing of the word. This saturation of meaning, the non-linear refraction of light turns "protest" into some kind of jewel, a crystal perhaps: shining a torch through it sheds a rainbow onto the wall—and what you see is a pleasurable panoply of colours.

If every power is oppressive then there would be as many protests as there are powers. In moments of great political distress, there are more chances to see a rainbow when seeking irregular velocities in the speed of a word, less so when speed refracts in a linear way—the rainbow's colours would accumulate. This acceleration, according to colour mixing principles, would turn these refractions into a brown, shit tinted crystal. Locking eyes with the past while being thrown into the future allows for a more dialectical understanding of history and therefore makes the crystal clear. In this sense, the need for speed turns the colour of refractions to shit.

Ryan Cullen's series of still life paintings depict light refracting itself in various plastic bottles, in various contexts, images captive from the analogue world. This meditation on refraction invites us to speak about colours, where light bounces off the plastic medium at irregular intervals creating colourful refractions. Density of surface makes speed of light change, speed of light change makes refraction, refraction makes crystal, crystal sheds light on surface: "speed is not a vegetal thing. It is nearer to the mineral, to refraction through a crystal, and it is already the site of a catastrophe of a squandering of time. [...] Speed is simply the rite that initiates us into emptiness: a nostalgic desire for forms to revert to immobility, concealed beneath the very intensification of their mobility. Akin to the nostalgia for living forms that haunt geometry." (Jean Baudrillard, *America*, 1986) The word, the idea, *protest* becomes no more than a projection of your unconscious (there is no real), a projection on a projection, an apparatus for looking— it's the buzzing which forms a rainbow on the wall.



Ryan Cullen

Protestantism in Painting

18.04–04.05.2025

1

Cover Me, 2025

oil on linen, custom frame

55x56cm

2

I'm Goin' Down, 2025

oil on linen, custom frame

55x65cm

3

Darlington County, 2024

oil on linen, custom frame

55x65cm

4

Bobby Jean, 2024

oil on linen, custom frame

56x65cm

5

Working on the Highway, 2024

oil on linen, custom frame

55x65cm

6

Downbound Train, 2025

oil on linen, custom frame

55x65cm

7

No Surrender, 2025

oil on linen, custom frame

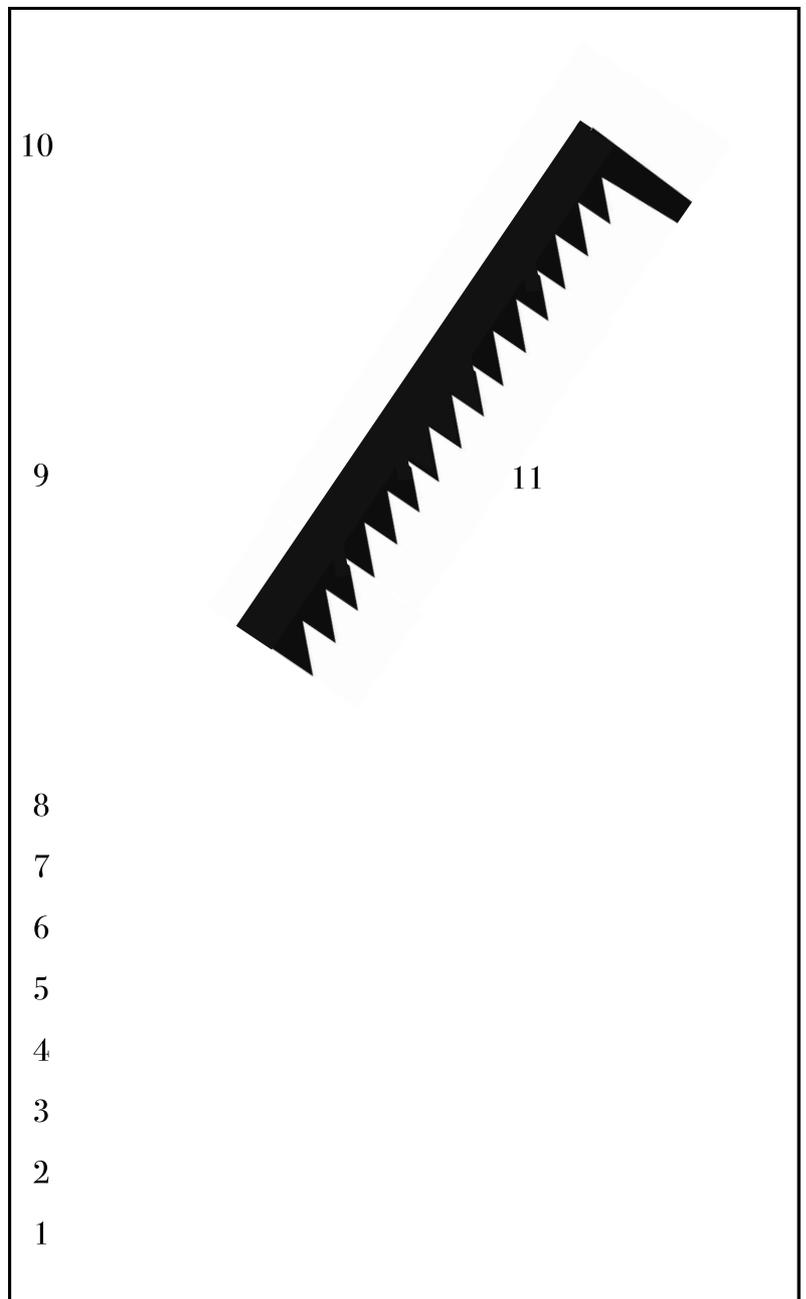
55x65cm

8

Glory Days, 2024,

oil on linen, custom frame

55x65cm



9

Applaud!, 2023,

oil on linen

170x120cm

10

The Men in the Rural Communities, 2024

oil on linen

55x60

11

The Neverending Story AaaaAaaaaAaaaaaaaaa, 2025

Beech wood

500x77x16cm