

ArtSeen

Christopher Wool: *See Stop Run*

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By Amanda Gluibizzi



Installation view: *Christopher Wool: See Stop Run*, 101 Greenwich Street, New York. Courtesy the artist.

101 Greenwich

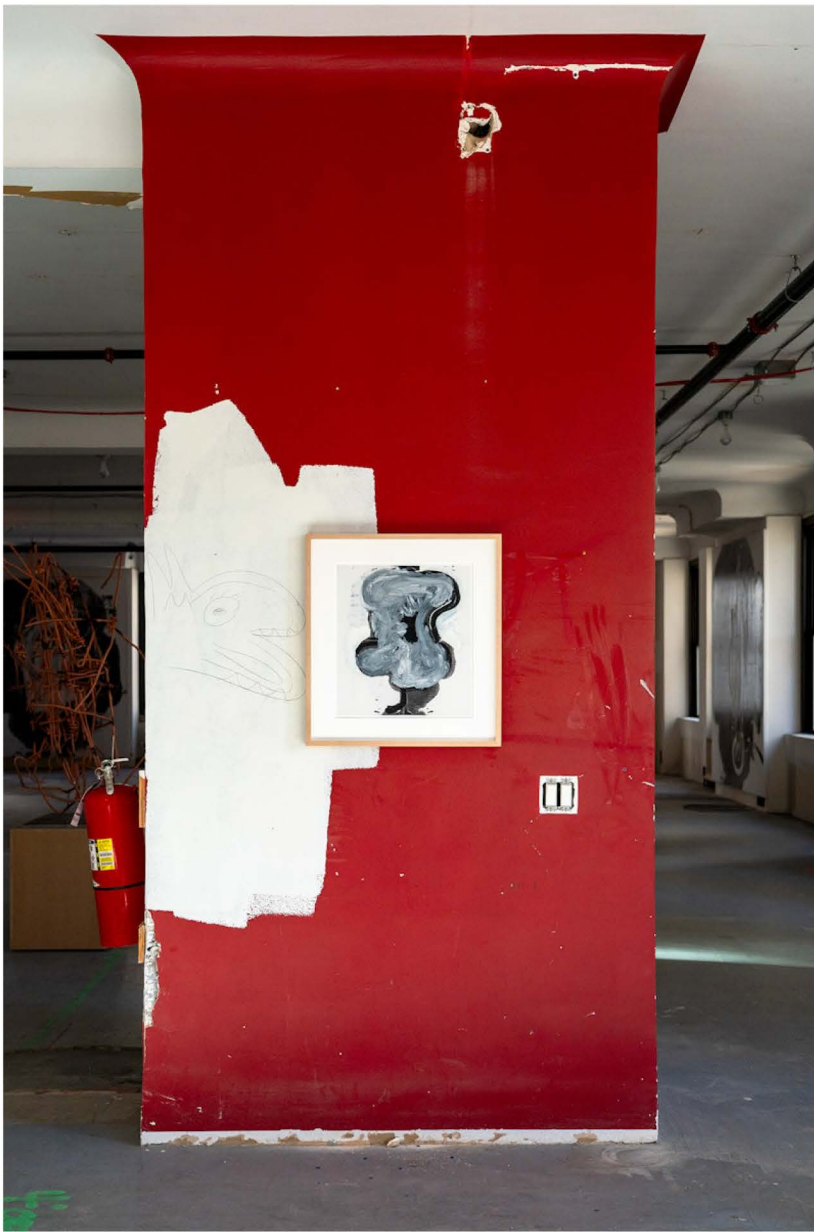
See Stop Run

March 14–July 31, 2024

New York

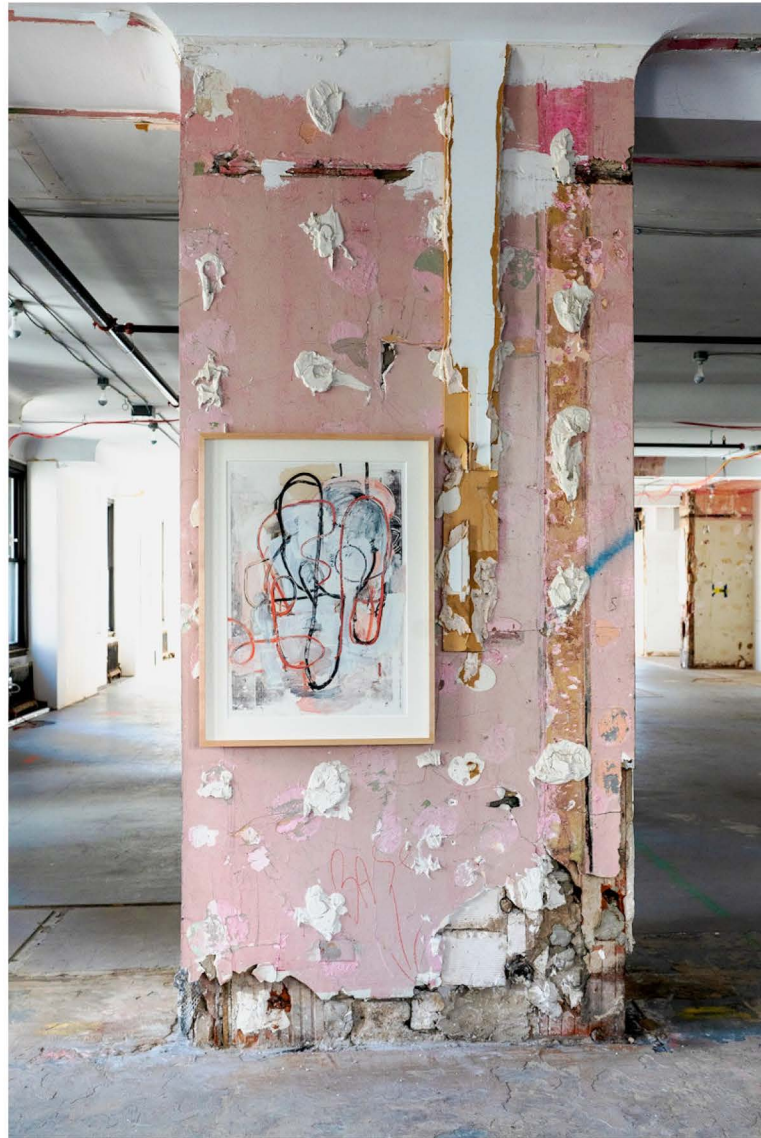
"You must be here for me," said a woman sitting at a small desk in the lobby of 101 Greenwich. Whether we didn't look like office workers, or there *are* no office workers who head into 101 Greenwich on a weekday afternoon, was left unexplained. We were shown to a dedicated elevator that whisked us to the nineteenth floor, where artist Christopher Wool has rented the entire story to install his largest exhibition since his 2014 Guggenheim retrospective.

The elevator opens onto a scene of sublime dereliction. Opened in 1907 to house the headquarters of the United States Express Company (a delivery service), 101 Greenwich has modernized and subdivided; in the work-from-home era, several floors are vacant. The floor that Wool has rented was last occupied by the architect Daniel Libeskind as he undertook the redevelopment of the World Trade Center memorial site after 9/11; the windows on this level overlook that area, as well as Trinity Church, the water, and boroughs beyond. The modern amenities of the nineteenth floor were stripped out before the pandemic, and post-COVID the space has lain dormant, with patches of sheetrock, nonfunctioning windows, newer floors pulled up and left piled upon the original tiled stone, and swaths of green and pink spotting the walls amongst graffiti left by workmen (my favorite: a raw wooden door, bored through with holes, with "Do Not Open Building" scrawled over it). The wind whistles through the windows at one of the corners, a sound that would be decidedly creepy in the dark. Floor nineteen seems like a living embodiment of a peculiarly beautiful Luigi Ghirri Kodachrome of crumbling monuments: even the colors are right.



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Wool, along with curator Anne Pontégne, has situated paintings, works on paper, photographs (some depicting his sculptures and some, appropriately, his 1997 portfolio *Incident on Ninth Street*, which documented the destruction after a studio fire), sculptures, and a wall-sized mosaic throughout the space. His pieces butt up against spackle, and several of his copper-plated bronze looped and knotted sculptures dangle like ganglia from exposed pipes. Works are fortuitously placed: *Untitled* (2021), for example, an oil and inkjet drawing with smears and skeins of black, white, and pink, hangs on a pink wall itself dotted with remnants of paint, glue, and crayon, the right side of its wood frame overhanging the edge of the wall. The *Untitled* (2023) mosaic finds its horizontal counterpart in the pieced floor, and an *Untitled* (2021) sculpture lies prone on an MDF plinth. It is made of a tangle of wires, some of the ends of which are flattened like nailheads. Another sculpture nearby, *Untitled* (2017), is mounted upright on a metal base. Its material is pigmented cement, and its vaguely anthropomorphic form is worn, far more like a twenty-first-century *Pasquino* than the decorative caryatids you can see adorning the Beaux-Arts building outside.



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Wool has recently said that he's tired of museums and galleries and was looking for a different space to display his art, but why here? What do we make of such *Ruinenlust*? Early features on this project have compared it to the first days of the New York art scene, "loft living," and artists squatting in cold-water squalor, and I think that's certainly part of it, at least for viewers. But I don't think that's all of it—for Wool—not least because this installation doesn't seem to involve nostalgia. Something different is at play, not a sentimental decision but a strategic and an *artistic* one. "The fragment," wrote Linda Nochlin of the art of early modernity, "rather than symbolizing nostalgia for the past, enacts the deliberate destruction of that past, or, at least, a pulverization of what were perceived to be its repressive traditions. Both outright vandalism and what one might think of as recycling of the vandalized fragments of the past for allegorical purposes functioned as revolutionary strategies." (Nochlin goes on to note that modernity is contrarily "marked by the will toward totalization [as in the artistically unified *Gesamtkunstwerk*] as much as it is metaphorized by the fragment," an observation that feels apt here.) *See Stop Run* is not so much a refutation of the art world—Wool can afford this project as a result of that world—as defiance of and repulsion at its trickle-down effects, the literal graying and impersonality of our environment in pursuit of a gallery aesthetic, the weird desire to occupy cold boxes, our spectacularization of culture. After all, Wool's art, none of which is for sale, looks *great* here.

"To delight in the aspects of sentient ruin might appear a heartless pastime, and the pleasure, I confess, shows a note of perversity," Henry James wrote in *Italian Hours*. Heartless is the right word, not because I don't love it, but because I do.

Amanda Gluibizzi