

ArtSeen

Christopher Wool: *See Stop Run*

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By Andrew Paul Woolbright



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

101 Greenwich

See Stop Run

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New York

Christopher Wool's retrospective *See Stop Run* is located on the 19th floor of 101 Greenwich Street above a corporate lobby with a Rentbrella stand. After passing through elevators with stock updates ticking across video screens, you emerge on a long-empty floor to find a selection of the artist's work over the last decade. This emptied and exhausted site of commerce around the corner from the stock exchange feels specifically chosen for its resets and erasure. Wool's interest in tautologies scrape it all down to build it back up, exhuming an abstraction that echoes the churn of cities. It is a retro(spective) that is more like a demo(lition) that utilizes abstraction as a repo(ssession). Framed within the vacant FiDi floor, the artist's lines move through smudge like girders through concrete, rebar through structure, snaking through what is unresolved while continually broken down to be copied again and remixed.



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Wool's work of the last ten years stakes out a space of abrasion and abbreviation. There is a gravitational weight to each smear of paint or pastel in the drawings that channels the abrasion patterns of the unfinished drywall behind them. His untitled works on paper often feel voided out, not only erased but then mopped up with a dirty mop. Lines weave through the misregistered marks that want to tile but don't quite slot into position, pulling things with them through the matter. The inkjet prints preserve forensic impacts and the rawness of something in between states of formation and being restored. The grid of the screen and its super black pixelation left on white burns an afterimage from its contrast. A head circles like a concrete mixer or a settled Wols stain. Split in half vertically by a seam, the right side starts to blur and warp like an uncontrollable bandwidth, a frequency of gray that runs headlong into a black hole. The swirl of registration dots exhales the patterns of building codes surrounding them, a nest or an island of travel routes and craters. Beyond the crisp contrast of black and white, the other consistent color is a pink that vibrates between that of salmon and the Neapolitan pink of Italy. It reveals the details of the chewed-up columns and the exposed mosaic tiles beneath the poured concrete of the space, but it also remains elusive. The fleshy color of processed food, Wool's pink is something adjacent to the body that retains an inherent fraudulence.

A shadow copy is software jargon for a copy made by a given program of a file currently in use. After Wool's practice shifted out of palindromes and textual rhythm, he investigated what can be learned from the re-performance of unique gesture, making shadow copies of his own work. It is spectral in that way, purposefully exhausted to take Modernism to task by running it through the copy machine. These works began as literal indexical procedures that would stack the original gesture with its facsimile, thus undermining originality and implicating the work in conversations about irony and mediation. Wool turned improvisational gesture into rote grammar. In context of his chosen space for this retro, it is difficult to not also draw connections to architecture. Wool lived for twenty years in Chinatown, a zone that refuses definition, keeping the city alive and vibrant and possible. New York shakes out new shapes with each renovation, a perpetual Adam's rib of ordinance, final warnings, and safety orange; that represent the promise of innovation but often perpetuate the endless copies of Mies van der Rohe's mirror.



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But they aren't just about the exhaustion and re-performance of painting. The tension within Wool's work lies in the contradiction between this Kraussian interest in the copy, and what seems like an emphatic belief in the abilities of irresolution. Wool has shifted his tautological *Run Dog Run* to an erotics of pre-form and agnosia, where Giacometti is endlessly broken down and De Kooning is eternally erased to then be copied and again voided out. The artist suspends the tathata of abstraction, making it echo the chant of piledrivers, jackhammers, and crowbars. Wool is pulling open the city cadaver to mine it for its extended possibility at a time when the future of the white cube gallery seems uncertain and we enter into the likewise uncertain terms of our latest market crash. His work seems to echo this through painting's own aporia, and stress tests the discipline of sculpture while he's at it. A gnarl of thick gauge wire sits on the floor in front of a looping drawing. The twisted rebar is inchoate between gesture and readymade, a subtle blur of boundaries between found object re-performed and then fabricated. Towards painting, whether the gray matter is a smear or an erasure remains open to interpretation as well. Wool's work in this space becomes encoded as a kind of semantic architecture, mirroring the carve outs and the embedded memories of buildings that get left behind in foundations. The artist seems to suggest that those indistinct memories of space induced by the city-as-gesture have to pass through the body to get to where they are going. Is it rebar or neural network? Sledge or sludge? Whatever it is, Wool is applying the defibrillator paddles to the corpse of painting and sculpture, to see what can be loosened from its death drive.

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