

Petzel

AUSTIN MARTIN WHITE

Familiar Dysphoria

September 13 – November 4, 2023
35 East 67th Street

Petzel is pleased to present *Familiar Dysphoria*, an exhibition of new paintings by artist Austin Martin White. The show marks White's debut solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view from September 13th to November 4th, 2023, at Petzel's parlor floor Upper East Side location at 35 East 67th Street.

In collaboration with Petzel, Derek Eller Gallery will simultaneously show an exhibition of White's work, titled *Lost in the Sauce*, running from September 5th to October 7th, 2023 at the gallery's 300 Broome Street location.

In eighteenth-century colonial Mexico, the ruling class of generational Spanish settlers sought to order identities in a way that reflected their interests and channeled the reality of *mestizaje*, or race mixing. They desired a hierarchy that organized Spaniards in a position over, first, mixed *mestizos*, then the Indigenous—who had been first slaughtered then subjugated, though legally speaking never enslaved—and at the bottom, Black people who had been enslaved. Through the application of the rudimentary science supported by European scholars—the eugenic fixers of the Enlightenment—as well as religious missionaries to the New World, the *sistema de castas* became a political and cultural rubric for classifying peoples by their relative proximity to or distance from whiteness.

The genre of *casta* painting emerged to illustrate and help codify such logic. Genteel figurative compositions generally featured scrolls of text across the surface of a painting, sometimes also the titles of the works themselves, to offer equations that must have seemed at least superficially factual to their audience: *De español e india nace mestiza* (From Spaniard and Indian a Mestiza is born), as the title to Buenaventura José Guiol's ca. 1770–80 painting goes. Another work by an unknown artist, dated ca. 1780, went further in its didactic function by painting the numbers one, two, and three next to two adults and a child in the composition to ensure there could be no ambiguity regarding this system of identification nor its mathematical reasoning.

Austin Martin White's research into *casta* painting is a foundation for his newest body of work. Rather than serving as proof of a conviction about origin the images he makes incorporate and dissociate from their sources. This approach has a personal valence for the artist, whose father recently discovered their lineage was less straightforward than previously known. The premise of belonging becomes a font of anxiety, while a hierarchy of subjects dissolves into layers of pigment, acrylic medium, and spray paint across different substrates, including a screened mesh of the type more often used in construction or athletic gear. One might naturally search for the eyes in a figure to try and identify with it, but the hardened nodules of White's subjects tellingly fail to offer the reward of emotional insight when you meet their gaze, instead throwing the viewer back onto the paintings' expansive fields of protrusions. Consider opacity maintained. A caste system, like the history of colonialization, becomes a backdrop in his paintings, just as it is the lurking backstory behind the way we live, or fail to live, today.

—Paige K. Bradley

About Austin Martin White

Austin Martin White (b. 1984, Detroit, Michigan) is an artist living and working in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He holds a BFA from The Cooper Union and earned an MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College.

Working with a variety of mediums including rubber, acrylic, spray-paint, vinyl, 3m reflective fabric and screen mesh mediums, White creates paintings and works on paper that investigate representations of historical memory, drawing on archival research that addresses issues of identity, race and postcolonialism.

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White's work has appeared in numerous publications including *Artforum*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Flash Art*, *032c* and *The Observer*, among others.

In addition to his solo exhibitions at Petzel and Derek Eller Gallery, White had his first solo exhibition at Capitain Petzel in Berlin in 2022. He has also shown in group exhibitions at And Now in Dallas, at Derek Eller Gallery in New York alongside artist Kathia St. Hilaire, as well as at T293 in Rome, Italy and at Y2K group in New York.

Petzel Gallery is located on the parlor floor and third floors of 35 East 67th Street New York, NY 10065. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquires, please contact Hanna Andrews at hanna@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.