

Petzel

AUSTIN MARTIN WHITE

Tracing Delusionships

520 W 25th Street

September 4 – October 18, 2025

Petzel is pleased to present *Tracing Delusionships*, an exhibition of new largescale paintings and works on paper by Philadelphia-based artist Austin Martin White, opening Thursday, September 4, 2025. The show marks White's second solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view through October 18, 2025, at 520 West 25th Street. This exhibition corresponds with the release of Austin Martin White's first monograph. A book launch will take place on Saturday, September 13, 2025, at 4pm, which will feature the artist in conversation with contributor Johanna Fateman.

Austin Martin White draws on various references to excavate the ways in which history can be bent, reassembled, or hallucinated. Among the most ambitious in scale White has completed to date, the artist debuts a new series which interprets etchings by 18th century Italian architect, artist, and archaeologist Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who fused real monuments and fictive views from antiquity. White probes the inspirational potential of a collapsed, classical past, summarized by Piranesi's concept of "speaking ruins"¹: a description for architecture that conjures a world beyond its remains.

Interested in how these images traffic through time as empires decline and global powers shift, White warps, stretches, and splices Piranesi's reproductions, investigating ruins as arbiters of historical memory. Crumbling arches and labyrinthine stairways, once etched in ink, are fractured and extruded by White through his signature process. Drawing from archival sources, he translates imagery into digital drawings, laser-cuts vinyl stencils, and pushes latex paint through mesh screens from behind. He renders his "Ruins" in maze-like, snaking estuaries of paint. Surfaces appear ridged and vascular, as if oozing from a primordial core.

Monumental in scale, these paintings conjure visions of fantastical follies—structures made not for function but for wonder—while also signaling scenes of industrial collapse or cities devastated by war. Saturating the present yet overlapping with centuries past, White's images of wreckage become sites of projected anguish, longing, delusion, and desire.

White also turns to the legacy of Bob Thompson, an artist who reimagined the formal and conceptual boundaries of classical painting. Through his "After Thompson" works, White references *La Mort des Enfants de Bethel* (1964/1965), Thompson's gouache rendering of the biblical Massacre of the Innocents. White distorts Thompson's composition further, reframing the plight of the innocents in a present tense. Figures appear ghost-like, as if excreted from the surface, and landscapes buzz with volatile, chromatic intensity—an afterlife of an image that resists repose.

Returning to artists like Thompson and Piranesi, White explores how both destabilize their sources—sometimes reverently, sometimes destructively. White embraces the fragment, sitting in the tension between structure and breakdown, past and present, image and aftermath.

¹ Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Prima Parte di Architetture, e Prospettive* (1743), translation cited in Dorothea Nyberg, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: Drawings and Etchings at Columbia University*, exh. cat. (New York: Avery Architectural Library/Columbia University, 1972), 117.

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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.

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

White was included in the group exhibition *Overflow, Afterglow: New York in Chromatic Figuration* at the Jewish Museum, New York in 2024, marking his first institutional presentation. White had his first solo exhibition at Petzel's Upper East Side location in September 2023 and had his first solo exhibition at Capitain Petzel in Berlin in 2022.

Petzel is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Karolina Chojnowska at karolina@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.