

# M. L<sup>E</sup>BLANC

Marika Thunder

*Demolition*

February 21 - March 28 2026

M. LeBlanc is proud to present 'Demolition', New York artist Marika Thunder's debut solo exhibition at the gallery. Comprising the exhibition are several of the artist's most recent paintings.

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Death, decay, destruction, the onslaught of entropy. All organisms transform into rudimentary particles, so too do national and cultural identities.

Our time is burdened with the malaise of technological pessimism. In the past, the Interstate inspired a sense of freedom and an illusion of individuality. The car was a mold into which the average American expressed their identity and discovered their freedom. It functioned as a symbol of American industrial capacity, of engineering innovation, and of personal aesthetic expression. It could be exported around the world as a staple of American dominance in the context of the Cold War. Its economic and psychosocial attributes helped revitalize the losers of the great war — Germany and Japan — as bastions of American capitalism and liberal democracy. The Interstate was a development of that war, a key feature of military infrastructure and economic development. Most importantly, cars became in the last century an image of American progress and optimism, a symbol of national hope and triumph.

The modern computer and Internet are the result of military infrastructure development too. They define the American ideal in the 21st century where the car defined it in the previous one. But the Internet era quickly adjusted its horizons to a dystopian image of thought-bubbles and technological surveillance and domination. Our relationship to contemporary American technology today is therefore rationally jaded, as romantically depicted in Marika Thunder's painting *Gears*. The era of industrial manufacturing, shopping malls, expressive cars, diners, drive-ins, and the open highway all have an increasingly nostalgic flavor. The decline of a national or cultural ideal, like the rusting away of a machine or the death of an organism, is not reversible. However, articulate observation of its process may lend a glimmer of insight, resolution, and closure.

It is easy to take for granted the stability of artificial objects from the fervently replenished markets of the metropolis. Our attention is more readily drawn to the innovative capacities of new buildings, cars, appliances, while the old falls unnoticeably into irreversible decay. There is something about a rural setting that makes the raw nature of an artificial object more palpable. Its systems and functions appear simpler, more crude. The fragility of its matter in the face of time renders its components more banal. As objects discarded decompose into their primary elements, they reveal man's productive will to be little more than a phantom, passing through the eternal irreducibility of nature's basic components. Thunder

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depicts these images throughout 'Demolition' in works like 'Junkyard Snowday', 'Soviet Cartoon Wolf', and 'Egyptian Chevy, Car Door (B&W)'. These sights are deeply romantic. They are mournful, but they also ask their viewers to free themselves from the illusion of the present, to embrace the larger mystery of nature's evolution. These are images of a passive entropy.

Demolition derbies taunt and mock decay's arrival. Here, people actively perform the entropy of the world. The participants skirt death while they enact the fears of the collective: the cold violence of machine collisions. The thrill of the destruction comes from its taboo in a society predicated on production and from the cheat of death. The awesome image of demolished cars is a surrogate for the fragility of our own lives and activities. These derbies have become an occasion for Thunder to expand her themes, as demonstrated in her work 'Demolition Derby'.

Marika Thunder's paintings derive from repeated visits to junkyards and rural demolition derbies. The paintings are carefully rendered and often drained of color, like a body in early stages of decomposition. The attentive illusory renderings are often composed confrontationally, with the shapes of her decaying subjects dividing the frame of the canvas into stark planes of value.

These works are reconfigured *memento mori*. And, as anatomical *memento mori* once did, Thunder's portraits of discarded machines remind the viewer of the inevitable onslaught of time and the unstoppable power of nature's entropy. They carry a humbling reminder of the ephemerality of human-scale achievements, of our prizes and products. They capture objects as they dissolve into oblivion, revealed as inescapably transformed by nature's cyclical metabolism. And they memorialize staples of a common cultural identity. But they appear satisfied by this condition. In recognizing the inevitability of decay, one learns to appreciate its creative dimension: the beauty of nature's loving reclamation. Or one accelerates its process, as they do at the demolition derby.

Text by Grant Edward Tyler

**Marika Thunder** (b. 1998 in New York City) lives and works in New York City. Select recent solo exhibitions of Thunder's work include, 'Sensitive Machines' (2025) at Caprii Room (Sies + Höke), Düsseldorf, DE, 'Dr. Oppenheimer' (2025) at Will Shott in New York City, 'Desire' (2024) at the National Arts Club in New York City, and 'Body Of Work' at Reena Spaulings in Los Angeles. In addition, Thunder participated in numerous group exhibitions recently; select exhibitions include 'Revolve' (2025) at Market Gallery in New York City, 'Small Format Painting' (2025) at 56 Henry in New York City, 'Holy Motors' (2025) at Temple Projects in Los Angeles, 'This Might Be It' (2024) at Galerie Hussenot in Paris, FR, and 'Everyone Loves Picabia' (2024) at David Lewis Gallery in New York.