

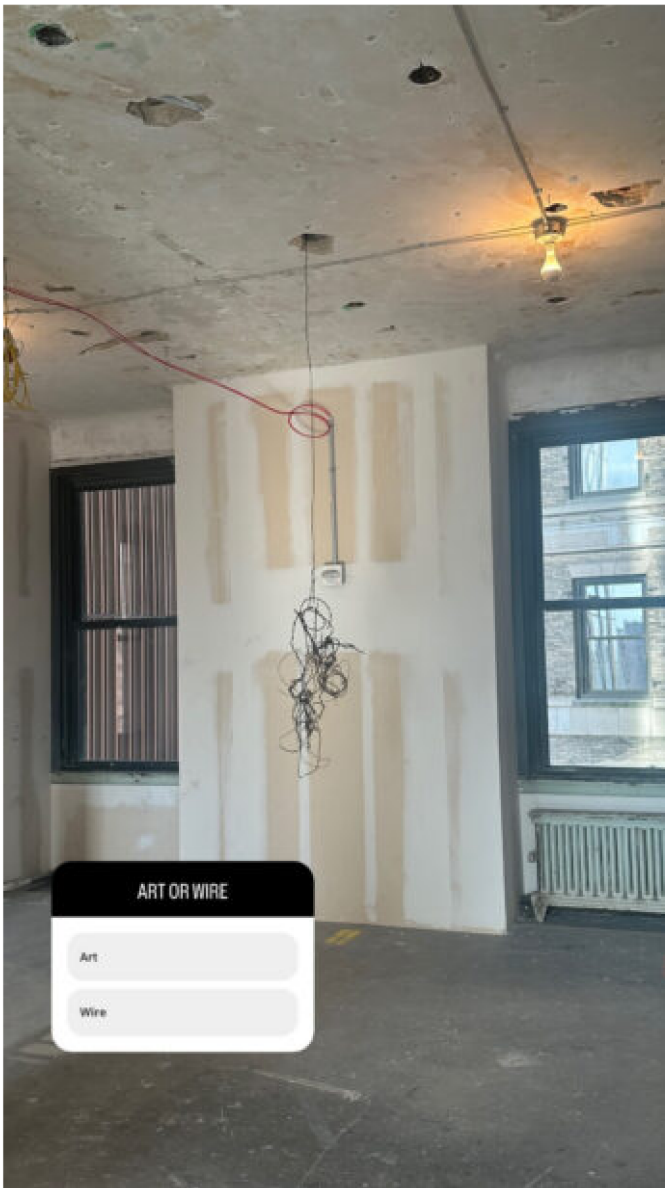
Disruption of Time & Place In the Classroom

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Generally, it's an artist at the beginning of their career who commandeers an unlikely or unfinished space, unheated, with questionable lighting, for an exhibition, which often turns out to be primarily an opportunity for their friends to gather and, in a perfect world, for someone to buy a piece over time. Christopher Wool's unexpected exhibition *See Stop Run*, at 101 Greenwich Street in New York City, took on the guise of the guy with no gallery, driven to exhibit his work, damn-the-torpedoes sensibility, except in reality the situation was quite other. Wool has enviable gallery representation and shows internationally, and yet the show had the vibe of a Young Turk. This exhibition, a retrospective of work of the past 10 years, most of which had never been shown in the States, was not for sale.

A relatively low ceiling contributed to the compressed, dense, and intense art energy despite the sprawling space and alluring views out of the windows on three sides from the 19th floor in Lower Manhattan. The pink of the sheet rock with white stripes of taping, a job left undone by the workers without final paint, felt like old fashioned wallpaper and condensed the space even more to a bedroom at grandmother's house feel. The occasional spray-painted graffiti brought street sensibility to the space, and added a moment of levity due to the incongruence of gravitas and smut.



A screenshot of a social media post featuring an image of a wire sculpture by Christopher Wool

After a visit to the exhibition in New York a woman posted a photo of Wool’s work with a poll, asking if it was art or wire, on Instagram. I felt like the third option needed to be “Both.”

The exhibition then traveled to Marfa, Texas, and opened for a two-year run in May 2025. In a flip of the script this exhibition spans two large unmarked spaces, ground floor, accessible via the main street in the easily identifiable Brite Building 107-109 Highland Avenue, as opposed to the need for an appointment and access to an elevator to the upper floor in Manhattan.

Only upon stepping into the bright, white exhibition spaces with high ceilings in Marfa, freed from the surrounding visual competitions of the unfinished space in New York, did I realize how frail my abilities were to sort out the art from the structure and what I had missed.

The sheer expanse of the New York space allowed almost every work to be stand-alone while wandering the exhibition. In the gallery space at 107 Highland Avenue the proximity allows the repeating patterns to overlap as the eye travels from wire sculptures, works on paper (oil and ink jet) and linen without moving.

Following the repeating patterns in loops of paintings and loops of wire, a summation of the parts, seems Wool has found himself at ease in revisiting his earliest mark making. Learning to read and write involves mimicking shapes, black ink, paper and study of letter making, and it all makes a strong showing here. Even the pink of the oil on prints reminds of pencil erasers.

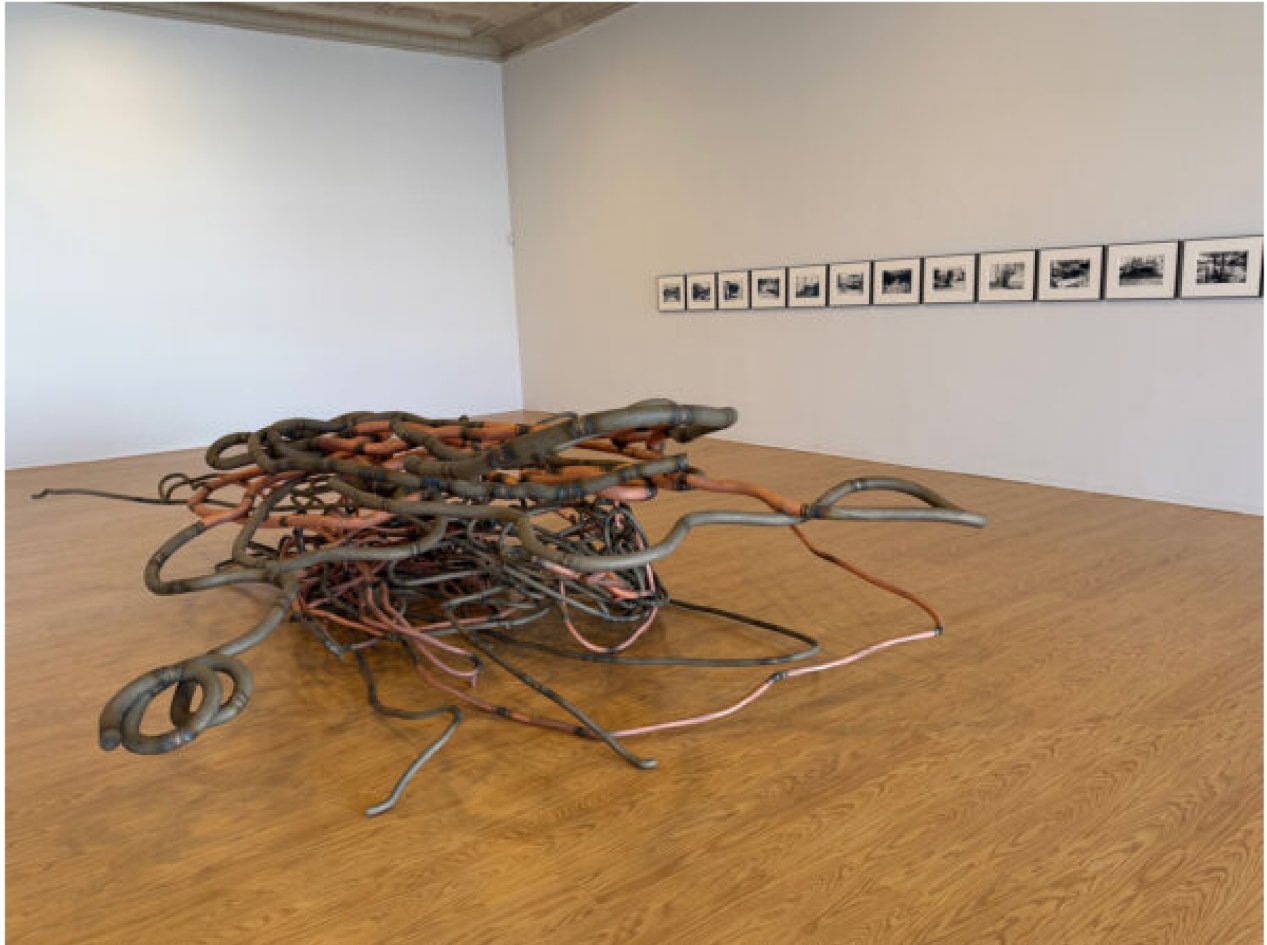


An installation view of Christopher Wool's "See Stop Run" on view at the Brite Building in Marfa. Photo: Alex Marks

A most notable change centers on a 16-1/2-by-11-foot mosaic that was exhibited horizontally and barely squeezed in under the low ceiling due to its sheer size in New York. It was no less captivating; however, with the vertical orientation in Marfa, it towers in the space, and better

lighting does matter.

There's exuberance in the manipulation of the prints and photographs and ever-expanding size and heft of the sculptures. The movement from the two dimensional to the expanse and space of the wire sculptures, reflects moving in the larger world and becoming comfortable taking up space and being seen from every angle, the result of learning to read, write, walk, then run. And then finally take flight, which happens with the dramatic new addition in the space at 109 Highland Avenue.



An installation view of Christopher Wool's "See Stop Run" on view at the Brite Building in Marfa

One large cast bronze and copper plated steel sculpture, 3 feet 8 inches by 15 feet 5 inches by 15 feet 8 inches, anchors the room. Two series of small, framed black and white photographs line two opposing walls. One group of 18 are all images of wire and metal, printed in high contrast, which gives the impression of silkscreens. The 24 photos on the opposite wall are all double, or maybe even more, exposures. They are intimate and provocative with surely what must be familiar and identifiable structures and locations, and yet upon further study that idea floats away.

Up close the sheer mass of the sculpture, and in this “gauge wire” as it were, makes clear Wool’s ability to manifest shapes that captivate him. This accomplishment, an expression of love, perhaps with a touch of madness, a deep bow to the inspiration of wire.

A special experience and thoughtful touch in both New York and Marfa was the inclusion of elephant size folios with prints of work on paper and silkscreens: all lined up on a table for individual perusing. The bindings open flat; the paper, good rag. These compendiums have the intimacy of going through racks of paintings in a studio without another person around. It was good to touch the work. The addition, a stroke of genius.



A work by Christopher Wool on view in Marfa

Pretty much everyone in Marfa has a collection of found wire. A visitor to Marfa picked up some cheese at the store and a little wire on the street, then posted it on social media. In New York, the smaller gauge wire sculptures felt out of place, too familiar. My dismissiveness was born of what felt like appropriation of the essence of Marfa. Don't @ me. I know this is a very personal take. I'm also aware that artists are free to embrace and introduce to the world the work that matters to them. They just felt wrong until seeing the large-scale sculptures in Marfa, there are three outdoor installations available by map from the gallery as well. My prejudice fell away and the exhibition became a classroom.

Christopher Wool's exhibition See Stop Run was on view in New York City, March 14 - July 31, 2024. The show opened in Marfa in spring 2025, coinciding with the Chinati Foundation

Symposium Art in Context Part I.

See Stop Run is on view at the Brite Building in Marfa through spring 2027. Gallery hours are Friday and Saturday, Noon to 6 p.m.