



CAMERON SPRATLEY

*Angels with Filthy Souls*

21 June - 31 July 2025

Washington DC: von ammon is pleased to announce a solo show by Chicago-based artist Cameron Spratley (b. 1994, Manassas VA). A native of the DC metro area, this is Spratley's first solo exhibition in the nation's capital and his first appearance at von ammon.

The exhibition will be concerned mostly with a suite of new paintings, the common subject of which is a gray-clad Confederate soldier, the erstwhile mascot of South Willoughby High in Ohio. Following the *Unite the Right* rally in 2016, the school district's superintendent ordered the mothballing of the mascot, while dubiously allowing the school to preserve the name *Rebel* for its sports teams. The *Rebel* mascot of South Willoughby, while far more cartoonish and absurd, alluded strongly to the *Raider* mascot of Spratley's rival high school in Manassas, Stonewall Jackson (renamed Unity Reed in 2020).

Spratley's practice draws the art of bricolage far away from the 20th century salon, imbuing the medium with the rageful disorder of the kidnapper-for-ransom or the asylum inmate. This is a collage emanating from a distinctly American sensibility borne of deranged, insoluble ideologies. Having conjured this recently-scuttled Southern icon, Spratley proceeds to distort the image into a pudgy, inglorious caricature. Further humiliations abound: some of the soldiers don the honk-nose of a clown; others deign to be cased in miscegenated two-tone skin. Nevertheless, the *Rebel* is figured predominantly in this exhibition, like a bad romantic partner that just won't stop showing up. For this artist--and the school superintendent--it seems to be difficult to seal the door on a folk tradition of gleeful exploitation and zealously-wrought treason.

Hundreds of collaged bullethole decals riddle each painting, and spill out copiously onto the gallery walls. A simplistic explanation of this painterly act of mass-violence would have something to do with the death-by-firing-squad of the *Rebel* icon, as some final coup-de-grace of National closure. Of course not. The stellate, cartoony bullet decal has little to do with the solemnity of gun violence, but rather a rageful exuberance around gunfire and the mirthful chaos it sows: the road sign embossed with bulletholes commemorates some catharsis, perhaps even a high school graduation.

The utter insolubility of American folk ideology finds ample opportunities to take shape in Spratley's compositional derangements, which force a belief into the same space as its counter-belief. This tendency shares form with the city hosting the exhibition: concurrent with Spratley's exhibition is the inauguration of *The Executive Branch*, a private members-only club for the American Right ensconced in the liberal stronghold of D.C., and across the street from this gallery.