

Innocence Abroad: Dominic Palarchio at Abattoir, Cleveland

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On July 11, 2025, New York-based artist Dominic Palarchio celebrated the opening of his second exhibition with Abattoir, a gallery on the West Side of Cleveland, Ohio located inside the historic Hildebrandt Building. The show comprises what initially seems like two separate bodies of work linked through fictional storytelling, worldly explorations and common misfortunes. The artist's ongoing reverence for manual labor as an essential but often overlooked aspect of human society is reiterated here through the application of mundane objects, and complemented by a particular focus on the perspective of *the individual*, as represented in recordings of first-hand experiences throughout history.



(Left) *Innocence Abroad*, Sanguine and pumice on paper in artist's frame, 2024
(Middle) *North Channel*, Pastel and pumice on paper in artist's frame, 2024
(Right) *Innocence Abroad*, Sanguine and pumice on paper in artist's frame, 2024

The show's title is inspired by a text with just a slightly different name: *The Innocents Abroad* by the author Mark Twain. Published as a satirical travel guide written while on The Grand Tour across Europe and the Mediterranean in 1867—a trip he referred to as his “great pleasure excursion”¹—the book demonstrates the naivety of the typical American traveler through humor, insight and critique. This reference sets the stage for Palarchio's plein air drawings of Mount Vesuvius done in a sanguine pigment made from Italian iron ore. His visit to Italy in 2024 was, in a way, a performative act, following in the footsteps of numerous artists of the past who have visited and rendered their own first-hand views. Palarchio recognized this opportunity as an honor, but also as a chance to touch on the subject of privilege and class, which have become central themes in his work. Both Twain and Palarchio recognized Romanticism's search for overwhelming beauty to be a major influence on 19th century tourism; before long, the industry had come to rely on guidebooks to know where to go and how to feel, resulting in what Palarchio describes as “the blunt insertions of oneself”² into foreign spaces and “a clumsiness”³ of cross-cultural engagements that remain common practice into the present day. Attempts to challenge such superficiality are realized through Twain's first-hand accounts in *The Innocents Abroad*, and are perpetuated further in *Innocence Abroad* with the incorporation of *The Papered Mount*, published in conjunction with the show. This piece of non-fiction literature written by contemporary artist Kye Christensen-Knowles assumes the perspective of a man living in Pompeii on the day in 79AD when Mt. Vesuvius erupted. The reader, however, is able to orient themselves on this date and in this place *only* through *small* narrations here and there, quietly included amongst poetically inquisitive passages about life, and the protagonist's preoccupation with a love affair. Like Twain, Palarchio strategically integrated storytelling and personal reflection into the exhibition in order to emphasize experiences that are shared by people around the world, and to find a common humanity between ancient peoples and his contemporaries.



(Left) *Advanced Age Assemblage*, Dolly, crate, Murano glass, petroleum jelly, light bulbs, fabric, 2024
(Middle-Left) *So Desirable Product*, Murano glass, tool case, oak, petroleum jelly, incandescent bulb, 2025
(Middle-Right) *Less Leaden*, Glass drainline, box, petroleum jelly, incandescent bulb, 2025
(Right) *Untitled*, Tool box, liquor bottle, petroleum jelly, light bulb, 2024

This panorama of landscape drawings is activated by the story of the man in Pompeii, but also by the group of sculptures, which are suggestive of factory buildings. Palarchio's upbringing in Metro-Detroit informs his awareness of both the benefits and the harm of the automotive industry. Toxicity in the air is probably the most apparent parallel here, but Palarchio locates another, more abstract connection; the energy transference and physical disequilibrium that occurs in both industrial and natural bodies. Each of the sculptures is an assemblage of found objects—tool boxes, trunks, file folders, aged liquor bottles—combined with parts from a Murano glass chandelier filled with petroleum jelly. During the show, the warmth of incandescent light bulbs slowly melts the jelly, representing the artist's contemplation of “high-end” and “low-end” modes of production, the manipulation of materials from the Midwest to Europe, and the way that manual labor transforms the mind and body over time. To unpack the complexity of this exhibition requires a kind of curiosity that both Twain and Palarchio have strived to incite, one that reveals the world as an integrated fabric of personal experiences that are just as important as the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, the Industrial Revolution, or any news-worthy event happening today.



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Dominic Palarchio: Innocence Abroad opened July 11th and will be on view until September 27th 2025.

Abattoir Gallery

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<https://www.abattoirgallery.com>

Images courtesy of the artist and Abattoir Gallery. Photos by Field Studio

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1. Twain, Mark. "The Innocents Abroad, Complete | Project Gutenberg." www.gutenberg.org, 1884. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3176/3176-h/3176-h.htm>.

2. Abattoir, "Dominic Palarchio: Innocence Abroad" (Cleveland, Ohio, 2025).

3. Abattoir, "Dominic Palarchio: Innocence Abroad"