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Press Information

Ming Wong | *Jag skulle vara som du / I should be like you*

November 3rd - December 22th, 2012
Opening: Friday, November 2nd, 6-9pm

'Imagine, talking and talking. I've been talking about myself all day and you've listened. How boring for you. What could possibly interest you about my life? I should be like you.

You know what I thought after seeing your movie that night? When I came home and looked in the mirror, I thought, "But we look alike." Don't get me wrong. You're more beautiful. But somehow... in some way we're alike. I think I could change myself into you. If I really tried. I mean, inside. Don't you think so? Of course you wouldn't have any difficulty turning into me. You could be me, just like that. But your soul would stick out everywhere, it's too big to be inside me. It would look all sort of odd.'

For his first exhibition in carlier | gebauer gallery, Ming Wong presents an installation developed from his multifaceted project *Persona Performa*, originally commissioned last year for Performa 11, the visual art performance biennial in New York. Inspired by Ingmar Bergman's 1966 cinematic masterpiece *Persona*, the event featured a 'live' movie strip - comprising 24 actors as 24 film frames - that wound its way through the Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria, Queens.

In his installations, video pieces and performances, Ming Wong examines the nature of identity from cross-cultural perspectives. He has drawn inspiration from filmmakers such as Fassbinder, Pasolini, Visconti, Sirk, Wong Kar-Wai, Polanski as well as exploring classic cinema from his country of origin, Singapore. Almost all of his pieces deal with language barriers in juxtaposition to the ostensible universality of film-image.

The exhibition *Jag skulle vara som du / I should be like you* restages haunting images and moments from Ingmar Bergman's film *Persona* which explores the relationship between an actress who, in the middle of a stage performance, loses the will to speak, and the nurse who is assigned to look after her. For convalescence, the two women leave the urban world and go into exile on a remote island. Over the course of a summer, the identities of both women become increasingly intertwined.

Originally conceived as a visual art performance event and now reconfigured as an installation, Ming Wong's project shifts between the literal, the parody and the transformative in his thematic exploration of communication and doubling, the definition and boundaries between cinema, theater and performance.

In the first room of the exhibition is a projection of a moving strip of close-ups of three distinctive and expressive parts of the human anatomy: eye, mouth and hand. These were taken from 24 performers, 24 'personas' who were cast to play both the actress and the nurse, highlighting the notions of repetition and difference, which is key to much of the artist's work.

Another video features a chain of actors who one by one, drift down to stare at the audience, seize up onstage, as Elisabeth Volger does during a performance in the movie and becomes at this very same moment horrified and mute. Each of the performers, as in a rehearsal or screen test - wearing an

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identical blond wig and white robe - offers a slightly different interpretation of the scene. Layered over one another, they stop short and stare, stricken, into space, near-exact copies of one another, repeated in a series, like a continuum of silver screen spirits.

The core of the exhibition, 'I should be like you' is the only spoken piece in the show, derived from a monologue by the pair of women looking at themselves in a mirror. Ming Wong sorted a dozen performers (men and women of various ethnicities) into matched duos who performed the text in 20 different languages and accents - thus adding a layer of variation and defamiliarization to the original Swedish version.

By the impossibility to understand all the languages or ways of speaking a known or barely recognizable language, this work transcends the linguistic dissonance and leaves all the same an uncanny feeling of closeness - the feeling of 'watching someone else watching a film'. Actors and actresses perform continuous configurations, deconstructions and reconfigurations of the film's most intimate moments. Furthermore, the artist layers one pair's performance with another, by literally overlapping one projection with another, further blurring the identities of who is speaking and who is spoken to.

The video works displayed in this exhibition must be understood as a whole where what really matters for Ming Wong is the reconfiguration of the essential moments, positions and gestures of the original film - a way for him to think and explore the great vulnerability of identity, made of lost pasts, forgotten traumas, happy reveries.

Beyond the tribute to an historical film, there is in this work the renunciation of the possibility of any fusion with the other, 'a space between the real, the perceived and the imagined'. The lines between self and other, real and onscreen space, original and copy remain unstable. Rather than emphasizing their 'actual' difference, however Ming Wong strives to have us recognize a world where our understanding of sameness and difference is perpetually subject to change. Like Bergman's image of Elisabeth and Alma, we are all hybrid creatures. And in Ming Wong's world of strange and shifting doubles, we can only recognize ourselves.

Born in Singapore, Ming Wong moved to London to go to art school. He lives and works now in Berlin, Germany. He represented Singapore at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 with his solo presentation 'Life of Imitation' which was awarded a Special Mention. His most recent exhibitions include in 2012 Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool, United Kingdom; 'Future Projections', Toronto International Film Festival, Canada; 'Making Chinatown', REDCAT, Los Angeles, United States; 'A Trip to the Moon', Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden. He has also shown at Performa 11, New York, United States; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan; Hara Museum, Tokyo, Japan; Vitamin Creative Space, Guangzhou, China; Villa Romana, Florence, Italy; House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany; Museum de Moderne, Salzburg, Austria; Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Germany; Frye Art Museum, Seattle, Washington, United States; Cornerhouse, Manchester, United Kingdom; neuer berliner kunstverein, Berlin, Germany; Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany; and Singapore Biennale 2011; Sydney Biennale 2010; Gwangju Biennale 2010. In 2013, Ming Wong will present two solo exhibitions at the University of Oregon, United States and at the Shiseido Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.

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Ming Wong

born 1971 in Singapore
lives in Berlin

Education

1997-99 MFA (Fine Art Media) at the Slade School of Art,
University College London
1992-95 Diploma of Fine Arts (Chinese Art) at Nanyang Academy,
Singapore

Solo Exhibitions (Selection)

- 2012 *I should be like you*, carlier|gebauer, Berlin, Germany
Ming Wong: Making Chinatown, REDCAT, Los Angeles, US
- 2011 *Persona Performa*, Performa 11 at the Museum of the Moving
Image, New York
LIFE OF IMITATION, Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo,
Japan
Devo partire. Domani, Villa Romana, Florence, Italy
LIFE OF IMITATION, CAST Gallery, North Hobart, Tasmania,
Australia
Ming Wong's CYCLORAMA, Vitamin Creative Space, Guangzhou, China
LIFE OF IMITATION, Frye Art Museum, Seattle, Washington, USA
- 2010 *Gruppenbild*, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, Germany
Life & Death in Venice, Studio Tesorio, Naples, Italy
Napoli Teatro Festival, PAN, Naples, Italy
Life of Imitation, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
Life & Death in Venice, Hermes Gallery, Singapore
Life & Death in Venice, Gallery Invaliden1, Berlin, Germany
- 2009 *Life of Imitation*, Singapore Pavilion, 53rd Venice Biennale,
Italy
Vain Efforts, Gallery 4A, Asia Australia Arts Centre, Sydney,
Australia
mononoaware, MK Galerie Rotterdam, the Netherlands
- 2008 *mononoaware*, MK Galerie Berlin, Germany
Angst Essen - Eat Fear, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany
Filem-Filem-Filem, Singapore Fringe Festival
- 2005 *Whodunnit?*, Toynbee Studios, London, UK
- 2004 *Whodunnit?*, Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, UK

Group Exhibitions (Selection)

- 2012 *Kann es Liebe sein* (upcoming), Künstlerhaus Wien, Austria
Gebärde Zeichen Kunst, Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, Germany
Meta-Ikon, September, frontviews, curated by Stephan Köhler, Berlin, Germany
Kann es Liebe sein, Cercle Cité, Luxemburg, France
Liverpool Biennial Liverpool, UK
Encounter, Experience and Environment, Gillman Barracks, Singapore
Kann es Liebe sein, Grimmuseum, Berlin, Germany
Ming Wong: Making Chinatown, TIFF - Toronto International Film Festival, Gladstone Hotel, Toronto, Canada
Masquerade, Coreana Museum of Art, Korea
A trip to the Moon. Before and after Cinema, Bonniers Konsthall. Stockholm, Sweden
- 2011 *On Received Pronunciation*, Banner Repeater, London, UK
Backstage Riders, Tagesspiegelgebäude, Berlin, Germany
Berlin 2000-2011: Playing among the ruins, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Japan
Finding Correspondences, Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, BC, Canada
Double Democracy Video, art:gwangju:11, Gwangju, Korea
Rollenbilder - Rollenspiele, Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Austria
Invisibleness is Visibleness, MOCA Taipei, Taiwan
Knotting: Swarm in the Era of Digital Media, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan
based in berlin, Atelierhaus Monbijoupark, Berlin, Germany
Biji Diva!, In Transit Festival, House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany
Singapore Biennale, Singapore
Echt? based on a true story, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany
- 2010 *Unspooling-Artists & Cinema*, Cornerhouse, Manchester, UK
Essential Cinema, Toronto International Film Festival, Canada
Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea
AH Oh, Galeri NON, Istanbul, Turkey
Sydney Biennale, Cockatoo Island, Sydney, Australia
The Fate of Irony, KAI10, Düsseldorf, Germany
Yebisu International Festival for Art & Alternative Visions, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Japan
- 2009 *Playing Homage*, Vancouver Contemporary Art Gallery, Canada
The Simple Art of Parody, Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, Taiwan
If There Is No Audience!, Centro Cultural Montehermoso, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain
And the Difference Is, Gertude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, Australia

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- The Agency of Words*, Text Festival, Bury Art Gallery, UK
Images Festival, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Canada
Jakarta Biennale 09, Indonesian National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2008 *And the Difference Is*, National University of Singapore Museum
I Queerelanti, Galleria neon>campobase, Bologna, Italy
Das Piraterieproblem, Brandenburgischer Kunstverein Potsdam, Germany
Everybody Knows This is Nowhere, Galerie Wendt + Friedman, Berlin, Germany
Vertraut oder Verdaut, ZKM Center for Art & Media, Karlsruhe, Germany
Kunstinvasion, Blumengroßmarkt, Berlin, Germany
- 2007 *S.T.O.R.A.G.E: Ming Wong*, The Agency Gallery, London, UK
WE, National University of Singapore Museum
Futurama and Re-inventing Tradition, Collegium Hungaricum Berlin, Germany
- 2006 *A Complete Guide to Rewriting Your History 2*, Sparwasser HQ, Berlin, Germany
- 2005 *LabiLabu*, The Esplanade, Singapore
- 2004 *Re:Thinking:Time*, Peterborough City Art Museum, UK
- 2003 Michael Marriott & Ming Wong Windows Gallery, British Council Prague, Czech Republic
- 2001 *Dia E Vento*, Teatro do Campo Alegre, Porto, Portugal
swipe2001, PVA MediaLab, Bridport, Dorset, UK
EAST International, Norwich Gallery, Norwich, UK

Screenings, Talks, Events

- Biennial 2012: Making Chinatown - Ming Wong in conversation, with director and film critic DW Mault, Liverpool Biennial, 2012
- Mission Afterviews: Devo Partire. Domani, Screening, Victoria Theatre, San Francisco, USA , 2012
- Filmic Affairs - Schnittstellen zwischen Kunst und Kino, Talk with Brice Dellsperger, Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg, Germany, 2012
- Made in Germany Zwei, Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany, 2012
- Fuel4talk: Ming Wong with Aram Moshayedi, Haudenschild Garage, San Diego, CA, USA, 2012

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Videoart@Midnight '32: Ming Wong, screening Life&Death in Venice, Devo partire.Domani, with live piano accompaniment by Ming Wong, Kino Babylon, Berlin, 2012

Before and After Cinema. Talk with Sara Arrhenius International conference at Cinema Sture, Stockholm, 2012

Ming Wong at Art Center, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, 2012

Artist talk, Frank Sinatra School of Performing Arts, Astoria, 2011

Films by George Kuchar, Ming Wong, Elaine at Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel, 2011

Raumkontrolle, Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin, 2011

A Wedding, Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong, 2011

Art Must Be Beautiful, Intelligence Squared Asia, Art HK, Hong Kong, 2011

Myths of the Artist, Tate Modern, London, UK, 2010

An Evening with Ming Wong, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA, 2010

Oberhausen Film Festival, Oberhausen, Germany, 2010

Oberhausen Film Festival, Oberhausen, Germany, 2010

Singapour, Malaisie - Le Cinéma Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, 2010

Duet for Cannibals, Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2010

Stage of Desire, Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung M.1, Hohenlockstedt, Germany, 2009

S1 Salon 2009, S1 Artspace, Sheffield, UK, 2009

VideoVortex3, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey, 2008

Film Programme, Kunstverein Dusseldorf, Germany, 2008

Damn! I Wish I'd Done That!!, Project Space 176, London, UK, 2008, Chapter, Wales, UK, 2008

The Mothership Collective, South London Gallery, UK 2006

Lassie Come Home, Camden Arts Centre, London, UK, 2006

HOMOFONIA, The British Library, London, UK, 2005

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Awards

Award of the Distinguished Alumni Medal, NAFA, Singapore, 2012
Special Mention (Expanding Worlds), 53rd Venice Biennale, 2009
Awarded the Wollita Kulturpreis, Berlin, Germany, 2008
One year residency at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin, Germany,
2007-08
The Fire Station Residency and Bursary, awarded by ACME Studios, UK,
2005
Pearson Creative Research Fellowship, at the British Library, UK,
2003-05
London Artists Film & Video Award from Film London, UK, 2002/03
ACAVA First Base Studio Award, UK, 2000

For more information, please visit www.mingwong.org