

Wong Ping

The Great Tantalizer

September 9 - October 23, 2021

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present Wong Ping's first solo exhibition at the gallery, *The Great Tantalizer*, on view September 9 - October 23, 2021 in New York.

For this exhibition, Wong Ping casts himself as the curator of a didactic exhibition recreating the laboratory of *The Great Tantalizer*, an enigmatic protagonist of Wong's own creation.

According to his legend, The Great Tantalizer was a mad scientist determined to increase the panda population through highly unconventional and erotic panda mating techniques, which scholars have deduced from the artifacts discovered in the ruins of his abandoned laboratory. The laboratory and its contents, including The Great Tantalizer's trophy for best hand skill in the industry, a painting of his panda avatar, and his panda tantalizing machine, are displayed throughout the space as an historical reconstruction and biographical study of this apocryphal figure.

Research found that The Great Tantalizer went missing after a planned exhibition documenting his work was cancelled due to the symbolic and sacred representation of pandas. The Great Tantalizer was intending to publish important research for the cancelled exhibition, but instead had to abandon his laboratory. A damaged exhibition poster hanging in the corner has evidence of the proposed title, "EAT.SLEEP.POOOOOP.DIE". These words are also repeatedly carved into a long bamboo pole, presumably by the pandas themselves. It is implied that the pandas were expressing and contemplating the meaning of their own existence, but the truth—such as it exists—has been buried inside an exhibition that never took place.

The film in the main exhibition space is a documentary about The Great Tantalizer in the form of a narrated video presentation. Wong Ping, the curator of the exhibition and host of the video, leads a historical overview and discussion of The Great Tantalizer's life and work, in conversation with his former laboratory staff, one night stand, and competitor.

In the rear gallery, an installation consisting of a broken and defunct panda kiddie is displayed under a dim spotlight. Old and no longer in use to fulfill its function as a joy ride for children, The Great Tantalizer converted it into a projector for pornographic panda images. 'The Tender Rider', an artifact discovered from the laboratory, was a way for The Great Tantalizer to elevate the pandas' interest in sexual activity. The film offers the pandas advice and expertise on the length of foreplay and the expectation of cuddling and conversation after intercourse.

Concealed under absurd and playful narratives, Wong Ping's lewd and offbeat stories offer political commentary through the lens of personal experience. In satirizing the lazy and unproductive life of panda bears, Wong Ping draws a parallel to a new counterculture movement in China: *tangping* or 'lying flat'. A form of silent protest against societal expectations, generational pressures, and professional obligations 'lying flat' is a new attitude and outlook on life: you don't need to get married, buy a home, have a full time job, or have children.

In *The Great Tantalizer*, a mockumentary about Wong Ping's enigmatic protagonist, the film appears dated but also references the prevalence of zoom meetings and webinars in contemporary cultural exchange. A cross between an educational talk and a video game simulation, the accuracy of the film's content is ambiguous.

Collapsing the distinctions between real world events and his invented narrative universe, Wong Ping creates transgressive narratives that challenge conventional concepts of human desire, obsession, shame and repression. Through the lens of Wong's vibrant and whimsical animations, storylines often reveal themselves as metaphor for the tension between mainland China and the changing social and economic environment of the artist's native Hong Kong. Many of Wong's works reference the culture of this city, but also touch upon broader issues such as economic disparity, political corruption, generational differences and social anxiety.

Wong Ping was born in Hong Kong, and received his BA from Curtin University, Perth, Australia in 2005. In 2018, he was the recipient of the inaugural Camden Arts Centre Emerging Arts Prize at Frieze, and in 2019, he was one of the winners of The Ammodo Tiger Short Competition at the 48th International Film Festival Rotterdam.

Solo exhibitions include *Your Silent Neighbor*, currently on view at the New Museum, New York through October 3, 2021; *The Modern Way to Shower*, ICA Miami (2019); *Heart Digger*, Camden Arts Centre, London (2019); *Wong Ping's Fables*, SCAD Museum of Art, Georgia (2019); *Golden Shower*, Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2019); *Who's the Daddy*, CAPRI, Düsseldorf, Germany; and *Jungle of Desire*, Things that can happen, Hong Kong. His work has been featured in important group exhibitions such as *One Hand Clapping*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2018); *2018 Triennial: Songs for Sabotage*, New Museum, New York (2018); *XO State Dark: Aristophanes*, Arts Centre Melbourne (2017); *RareKind China*, Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art, Manchester (2016); *Mobile M+: Moving Images*, M+, Hong Kong (2015); and *Essential Matters*, Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul (2015). Wong's animation films have been presented at numerous international festivals, in Belgium, United Kingdom, Mexico and Australia.

Wong's work is held in several permanent collections including Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; M+, Hong Kong; KADIST, Paris/San Francisco; Fosun Art Foundation, Shanghai, among others.