

# Matthew Wong

## A Brief Window

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**MASSIMODECARLO is delighted to announce *A Brief Window*, late artist Matthew Wong's first solo exhibition in the United Kingdom, premiering a collection of ink on rice paper works created between 2015 and 2017.**

*A Brief Window* is an endeavour to highlight self-taught Canadian artist Matthew Wong's graphic, incisive and imaginative expressionism.

Drawing inspiration alternatively from nature and landscapes, Wong's delicate compositions celebrate both darkness and light, exploring abstract and otherworldly realms. His virtuosity in blending styles has prompted comparisons to a pantheon of art historical movements and painters.

In just a few years after earning his MFA in photography at the City University of Hong Kong School of Creative Media in 2013, Wong began developing his exquisitely appealing pictorial language. His paintings, which often portrayed Dantesque forests incorporating a faux-naïf style reminiscent of Paul Klee, were infused with an extraordinarily sophisticated psychological depth combined with richly layered imagery.

Despite his self-taught background, Wong sought to engage in broader artistic dialogue. Driven by his relentless pursuit of visual knowledge, He wholeheartedly immersed himself in the history of art. As eloquently expressed by Massimiliano Gioni, art historian, curator, and artistic director of the New Museum in New York:

*Pierre Bonnard, Caspar David Friedrich, Paul Gauguin, and Édouard Vuillard are just some of the names that recurrently crop up in reviews and comments on his work - not to mention references to Chinese calligraphy and Australian Aboriginal painting. Despite its arcadian, even primitivist subjects, Wong's art is extremely aware of its precedents, full of layered references to art history, sophisticated almost to the point of affectation—his landscapes encrusted with shards of beauty borrowed from centuries of pictorial traditions.*

Wong's paintings thus hold within them a subtle complexity, their initial simplicity giving way to a universe of chromatic, spatial, and psychological intricacies. Whether portraying realistic landscapes or conjuring dreamlike realms, Wong's work exudes an urgent energy that imposes the artist's presence on the rice paper and within the broader context of art history.

Through his deft use of murky black lines and nuanced shading, Wong presents complex interior worlds inhabited by solitary figures and human forms that are both familiar and alien. In these mysterious landscapes, Wong's imagery evokes a sense of introspection and contemplation.

*Wong's paintings and drawings are inner cartographies, weaving marks not only into visions of the outside world but also into complex landscapes of the soul. He knew his drawings were emotional seismographs, even more sensitive than his paintings: "I may really be a black-and-white ink painter at the core of my project," he explained at the beginning of his career. "There is something destroying the past in these ink paintings... much more so than in the colour works which seem to 'fit in' more expectedly with certain norms," continues to explain Gioni.*

As the exhibition title suggests, Wong invites viewers to peer briefly into the window of his inner world, where distant realms dwell in the collective psyche. The landscapes blend with human figures, and nature seems to come to life, blurring the lines between what is real and what is imagined, what we are reminded of and what it is. Wong's work invites us to step into a world where the boundaries between the internal and external are delightfully hazy.

*Wong's drawings are free of any responsibility to describe a landscape or build a world. And so, standing before them, we might echo what he himself insightfully wrote about the work of Lebanese painter and writer Etel Adnan: "The longer one looks, the more hesitant one becomes to name the object of looking, and all that one is left with is the act of looking itself."*

## Matthew Wong

Matthew Wong (1984, Toronto, Canada; 2019, Edmonton, Canada) was a self-taught Canadian artist whose vibrant landscapes evoke the spirit of Post-Impressionist painters like Vincent van Gogh and Paul Sérusier. With his signature style, Wong synthesised forms, bold colours, and mystical themes, creating rich, evocative scenes that often convey a melancholic yearning.

Wong's artworks are visual poems that speak to the subjectivity of colour and the power of universal archetypes. In his landscapes, nature is the chief protagonist, animated with a vitality that transcends time and space. Through bold strokes of colour and the sparest of details, Wong creates scenes that resonate with melancholic tenderness and humour, conveying the ineffable states of being that inhabit the human experience.

Wong's works will be exhibited at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam in February 2024, in dialogue with Van Gogh's practice. The exhibition will later travel to the Kunsthaus Zurich in September 2024.

Wong has been exhibited in numerous solo exhibitions, including *The Realm of Appearances*, Dallas Museum of Art (2022-2023); *The New World, Paintings from Los Angeles 2016*, Cheim & Read, New York (2021); *Blue View*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Ontario (2021); *Footprints in the Wind, Ink Drawings 2013–2017*, Cheim & Read, New York (2021); *Postcards*, ARCH, Athens (2020); *Blue, Karma*, New York (2019); *Day by Night*, MASSIMODECARLO Hong Kong (2019); *Karma*, New York (2018); *Good Bad Brush with Peter Shear*, The Occasional, Burlington, Washington (2016); *Pulse of the Land*, Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre, Hong Kong (2015); *Chapter One*, Cuiheng Art Museum, Zhongshan, China (2014); among others.

Wong's work is held in notable public collections across the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; Aïshti Foundation, Beirut; Estée Lauder Collection, New York; Art Gallery of Ontario, Ontario.

The exhibition *A Brief Window* is accompanied by a catalogue published by Lenz with an introductory text by Massimiliano Gioni, artistic director of the New Museum in New York and of Fondazione Nicola Trussardi in Milano.