

Cary Kwok

30th May – 15th July 2023

Herald St is delighted to announce an exhibition of new works by Cary Kwok, taking place in its Museum St premises. The show features a suite of acrylic and ink paintings encased in artist's frames, which present quiet moments suffused with tenderness. Still lifes of domestic items, portraits of gazing men, and sublime landscapes are rendered in a soft, dreamlike realism, marking a change in mood while continuing imagined, cinematic narratives which have pervaded Kwok's practice. Installed among these is a functional light switch by the artist mimicking vintage Bakelite styles, its phallic toggle continuing the humour and eroticism of his earlier work.

The intimate vignettes in the exhibition unfold like scenes in a movie. Storytelling lies at the heart of Kwok's work, inspired by the period films he watched as a child and his continued passion for the genre. His paintings are akin to film stills and details of sets – even when devoid of characters, the carefully accentuated objects and directed lighting hint at events unravelled and actions to come. In one work, a looming head casts a shadow on a warm burling wood grain near wisps of smoke drifting from a lit cigarette, resting in an ashtray and gently smudged with lipstick. The same pink gloss is found on the rim of a wine glass in another piece, with raking light revealing the gleaming translucence of an opened wine bottle sitting just out of the frame. When conceiving these works, Kwok sets a scene in his head, referencing directors he admires, continuing plotlines from his own previous compositions, and playing out fantasies in his mind.

Kwok instils a tangible presence and heightened sense of emotion of equal measure in his windswept seascapes as he does to two toothbrushes embracing in a cup or portraits of close friends and lovers. A few works within the show are grounded in the artist's own memories and obsessions, from a sudden storm lighting up the clouds on a Uruguayan coastline, to finding heart shapes in leaves. Some are titled after favourite songs, such as Ben Folds's 'The Luckiest' and Patsy Cline's 1957 country classic 'Three Cigarettes in an Ashtray', the lyrics of which suggest a tragicomic sequence of events. This series marks a departure from a more graphic style of meticulously planned compositions to a gentle realism truer to the artist's own hand. While all the works depict fictional scenes, they are loaded with sentiments taken from Kwok's life as well as the books, movies, and music he absorbs.

The object-like paintings in the exhibition above all emanate a mood. A number are bathed in a palpable 1980s quotidian glamour, while others reveal a contemporary romanticism. Loaded with poignancy, the works blend personal musings and imaginative reveries. Through these glowing tableaux, Kwok encapsulates moments of wonder, magnifying emotions and revelling in the magic of details.

Text by Émilie Streiff

Cary Kwok (b. 1975, Hong Kong) lives and works in London. Exhibitions include: *Among Friends: Three Views of a Collection*, The FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2022); *Am I Turning You On*, Herald St | Museum St, London (2020); *Takashi Murakami's Superflat Collection-From Shohaku and Rosarijn to Anselm Kiefer*, Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama (2016); *Nirvana. Strange forms of pleasure*, Gewerbermuseum, Winterthur, and Musée de design et d'arts appliqués contemporains, Lausanne (2015); *Keep Your Timber Limber (Works on Paper)*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2013); *Obsession*, The FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2010); and *British Comic Art*, Tate Britain, London (2010).

Cary Kwok

30th May – 15th July 2023

Front space (Anti-clockwise)

The Luckiest - Chapter 3

2023

Acrylic and ink on paper, artist's frame

24.6 x 19.6 x 4.5 cm / 9.7 x 7.7 x 1.8 in, framed

HS19-CK8367D

And I Sit Alone

2023

Acrylic and ink on paper, artist's frame

41.9 x 32.5 x 4.5 cm / 16.5 x 12.8 x 1.8 in, framed

HS19-CK8348D

One Cigarette in an Ashtray - Chapter 2

2023

Acrylic and ink on paper, artist's frame

42 x 32.6 x 4.5 cm / 16.5 x 12.8 x 1.8 in, framed

HS19-CK8304D

Till the End of Time - Chapter 2

2023

Acrylic on paper, artist's frame

41.8 x 32.6 x 4.5 cm / 16.5 x 12.8 x 1.8 in, framed

HS18-CK8242D

Back space

(Anti-clockwise)

The Luckiest - Chapter 2

2023

Acrylic and ink on paper, artist's frame

29.6 x 22.6 x 4.5 cm / 11.6 x 8.9 x 1.8 in, framed

HS19-CK8308D

Jack

2023

Acrylic and ink on paper, artist's frame

42 x 32.6 x 4.5 cm / 16.5 x 12.8 x 1.8 in, framed

HS19-CK8305D

And I Sit Alone - Chapter 2

2023

Acrylic and ink on paper, artist's frame

41.8 x 32.6 x 4.5 cm / 16.5 x 12.8 x 1.8 in, framed

HS19-CK8355D

Law of Desire

2023

Acrylic and ink on paper, artist's frame

38.2 x 29.5 x 4.5 cm / 15 x 11.6 x 1.8 in, framed

HS19-CK8366D

Charm

2023

Acrylic, ink and (24k) gold leaf on paper, artist's frame

29.6 x 23.6 x 4.5 cm / 11.7 x 9.3 x 1.8 in, framed

HS19-CK8347D

Am I Turning You On

2023

Resin

6.4 x 6.4 x 6 cm / 2.5 x 2.5 x 2.4 in

Open Edition

HS19-CK8364S

David

2023

Acrylic and ink on paper, artist's frame

38.4 x 29.6 x 4.5 cm / 15.1 x 11.7 x 1.8 in, framed

HS19-CK8351D