

CHEIM & READ



MATTHEW WONG. *Untitled*, 2016. Acrylic on paper. 12 1/4 x 9 1/8 in. / 31.1 x 23.2 cm. © 2021 Matthew Wong Foundation / Artist's Rights Society (ARS). Photography: Alex Yudzon / Cheim & Read, New York.

Matthew Wong *The New World* *Paintings from Los Angeles 2016*

May 4 - September 10, 2022

Cheim & Read
547 West 25 Street
New York NY 10001

Cheim & Read is pleased to present *Matthew Wong: The New World, Paintings from Los Angeles 2016*, which will open on May 4 and run through September 10 at the gallery's Chelsea location. This is Wong's second solo exhibition at the gallery, which follows *Matthew Wong: Footprints in the Wind, Ink Drawings 2013–2017* (May 5–September 3, 2021), a suite of works that charted the artist's exploration of ink wash on rice paper, materials traditional to Chinese landscape painting, some of which he began while living in Hong Kong and working in Zhongshan, China.

The works in *The New World, Paintings from Los Angeles 2016* differ markedly from those widely exhibited during the artist's lifetime. Instead of the blues which have become virtually synonymous with the artist in the public imagination, the palette and textures of these paintings reflect the super-heated atmosphere of Los Angeles, where a teeming metropolis collides with the harsh natural landscape: the Pacific ocean, mountains, and desert. Wong, a Canadian artist who was born in Toronto in 1984 and lived and worked in Edmonton, made these paintings in 2016 during a three-month stay in Los Angeles, the last stop on a visit which included New York and Michigan.

The brushwork is loaded and expressionistic, revealing a distinct and compelling aspect of Wong's practice. These works seem to combine the color of the French Fauvists with the alienated sensuality of the German expressionist Die Brücke group, like Erich Heckel or Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and the plaintive directness of Georges Rouault with the streetwise grittiness of the East Village scene of the 1980s. In one image, a man and a woman copulate on the beach under the stars. Other paintings are startling in their simplicity, with mountains, sea, and sky distilled to their essence. Some compositions are clustered with information, with nude figures walking through jungle-like settings, while others are spare, even stark, as in *Infinity*, where a lone grisaille figure wanders along an empty highway receding to the horizon.

The human body is similarly abstracted, such as the columnar torso of *Boyhood*, or the amoeba-like heads in *The Desert*. There are also striking views of interiors, redolent of the artist's love of Henry Matisse and David Hockney, with windows opening to the outdoors or offering glimpses of private lives within. In other works, Wong transforms the casual hedonism long associated with Los Angeles into lyrical evocations of the figure in the landscape, a 21st-century Arcadia echoing the idealized images from 17th-century French painting, where naked humanity and nature coexist in timeless harmony as in a Garden of Eden.

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MATTHEW WONG

Matthew Wong (born 1984, Toronto; died 2019, Edmonton), a self-taught painter, graduated with a degree in cultural anthropology from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and earned an MFA in photography from the School of Creative Media of the City University of Hong Kong. Wong, who suffered from Tourette syndrome, Autism, and depression, died by suicide in 2019 at his home in Edmonton; he was thirty-five years old.

Wong's first museum exhibition, *Blue View*, organized by Julian Cox, which presented his blue paintings alongside Pablo Picasso's Blue Period paintings, was recently on view at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. A survey exhibition, *Matthew Wong: The Realm of Appearances*, curated by Vivian Li, will open at the Dallas Museum of Art on October 16, 2022, and run through February 5, 2023. A forthcoming exhibition at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam will pair his work with Vincent van Gogh. His work is represented in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Dallas Museum of Art; and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.