



Stephen WONG Chun Hei: The Star Ferry Tale

Exhibition period: 23 March – 20 April 2024

Exhibition opening: Saturday, 23 March 2024

Gallery EXIT presents Stephen WONG Chun Hei's solo exhibition 'The Star Ferry Tale', showcasing the artist's latest landscape paintings, on view from 23 March to 20 April, 2024. During his many years living in Hong Kong, Wong sketches as he rambles through the local landscape, which becomes material for his creation. His works vividly depict the urban and rural sceneries that incorporate idealised imagery from his subjective imagination, at once strange and familiar, prompting the viewer to contemplate the interdependence of man and nature between the real and the surreal. Confined indoors during the pandemic, the artist embarked on a virtual journey via Google Earth, experiencing landscape with the aid of imagination. The change in sensory experience has led to a transformation of Wong's practice, the tone and mood of his works, carried over to the post-pandemic present. The new works shown in this exhibition further explore that particular way of seeing, questioning the essence of reality through the combination of real and virtual landscapes: When reality changes unawares, the imaginary world may yet feel familiar. From a more abstract and removed perspective, the exhibition speaks to the Hong Kong landscape during the post-pandemic diasporic experience.

The exhibition opens with 'The Star Ferry Tale', a set of 11-panel large scale panoramic oil paintings inspired by space documentaries. With galaxies as backdrop, the perspective is extended to outer space, overlooking Hong Kong from above planet Earth. Filled with imaginative elements, the work expresses the artist's personal response towards the grandeur and infinity of the universe. Under the scrutiny of the telescope, the universe's past exists in parallel with our present. Likewise, the work adopts a non-linear narrative where different temporal and spatial planes crisscross each other, a Hong Kong space epic documenting the transition of eras. Contrary to Wong's previous works where the magnified hilly landscape of Hong Kong occupies most of the space, the panorama inspects the Earth's curved surface from space, where the upper half is of the brilliant galaxies and the lower half the planet Earth submerged in a sea of clouds, with occasional glimpses of the harbour city and the surrounding hills. Under the immense starry sky Hong Kong appears miniscule even when exaggerated and enlarged out of proportion. Local landmarks such as Victoria Harbour and Lion Rock are the sole clues for identifying our subject. Other playful details include the Star Ferry in its space odyssey, lost landmarks like the Star Ferry Pier and Jumbo Seafood Restaurant, rediscovered upon small meteorites floating above the city. The departed becomes stardust in the night sky, reminding us of the beautiful things we once had.

Following Wong's usual approach of incorporating a mode of transport as a narrative element, *The eye II* and *The starry night over the two pillars* both feature the Star Ferry. *The eye II* documents the event of Super Typhoon Saola last year in Hong Kong. The artist places the Star Ferry in the eye of the storm, carrying the Lion Rock. Based on the iconic scene of the splitting and sinking of Titanic, *The starry night over the two pillars* is set against the Victoria Harbour. In face of crisis panic not: Look, the calm night sky is teeming with bright stars. The image of the Star Ferry sailing into the unknown evokes the theme of migration, a reflection of the artist during his residency in the UK when he met the Hong Kong diasporas there. The 3-panel work *Camping at Long Kei* bears a closer resemblance to Wong's previous landscape works, and records a camping and hiking trip by the artist. The three paintings do not combine to form a larger picture but depict the impressions of the same place at three different times, a tribute to the earliest painters who painted en plein air. Concluding with *Selfish Galaxy*, the perspective has shifted from the distant universe to Earth, from sea to land, eventually back into the artist's studio. A camper van is parked in the centre of the studio, and the artist with his VR goggles on, is embarking on his virtual journey.

Born in 1986, Stephen WONG Chun Hei graduated from the Fine Art Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2008. His early works drew inspiration from landscapes in video games, highlighting the visual impacts of the virtual on the real. In recent years, Wong sketches and paints en plein air during his sojourns into the countryside of Hong Kong, often incorporating his own memories and imaginations in his landscapes. Some of his solo exhibitions include 'Dream Travel' (Unit London, London, 2022), 'A Grand Tour in Google Earth' (Gallery EXIT, Hong Kong, 2021), 'Indoor Travelling with Objects & Indoor Hundred Mountains' (Touch Gallery, Hong Kong, 2021), 'Hong Kong Spotlight by Art Basel' (Gallery EXIT, Hong Kong, 2020), 'Looking at the sky and the landscape beneath' (Gallery EXIT, Hong Kong, 2018), 'Daydream Travelogue' (Gallery EXIT, Hong Kong, 2016), 'The Passenger' (Anita Chan Lai-ling Gallery, Fringe Club, Hong Kong, 2016), 'Step back to nature' (Galerie Ora-Ora, Hong Kong, 2014) and 'Stay Lost' (Galerie Ora-Ora, Hong Kong, 2012). Wong has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, such as 'Breathe of Landscape—Capture the skies' (Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong, 2019), 'Beside the City' (Gallery EXIT, Hong Kong, 2019), 'These Painters' Painters' (ROH Projects, Jakarta, 2018), 'Scenery Poem' (Project Fulfill Art Space, Taipei, 2017), 'Ensemble' (VT Salon Art Space, Taipei, 2017) and 'Paperscape' (Karin Weber Gallery, Hong Kong, 2016). In summer 2023, Wong was the Artist in Residence at Jesus College Oxford and Visiting Fellow in Art. Wong's paintings are collected by institutions such as Jesus College Oxford, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hongkong Land and Swire Group. The artist currently lives and works in Hong Kong.



黃進曦: 這天星際浪漫

展期: 2024 年 3 月 23 日至 4 月 20 日

開幕: 2024 年 3 月 23 日 (星期六)

安全口畫廊呈獻黃進曦個展「這天星際浪漫」，展出藝術家最新風景繪畫作品，展期為 2024 年 3 月 23 日至 4 月 20 日。黃氏在香港生活多年，常攀山涉水寫生，以現實山林景致為創作素材，作品生動描繪城郊風光，融入主觀想像產生的理想化意象，時而熟悉時而陌生，讓觀者於寫實與超現實中思考人與大自然的依存。疫症期間藝術家無法外出，開始了在 Google Earth 的虛擬旅遊，以想像經歷景觀。即使疫症完結，因感官經驗轉變，寫生實踐、作品的色調與氛圍亦從而改變。是次展出新作一再延續那種觀看風景的方法，藉虛實交錯的風景詰問何為真實：現實環境變化猝不及防，幻想世界反或不再陌生。是次展覽以更抽離宏觀的視覺，探討後疫症離散潮下的香港風景。

展覽以一組十一屏大型全景油畫作品《這天星際浪漫》為序幕，取材自宇宙星空紀錄片，以夜空和星空為作品主軸，視點拉得更遠，從外太空、地球高處俯視香港，包含更多想像原素，藉呈現宇宙的宏大虛無抒發藝術家個人情感。宇宙的過去在大型望遠鏡窺視下與當下時空平衡存在，畫中時間觀不取線性敘述，同一畫面中不同時空交錯，記錄了各個時代的交替，是宇宙史詩式的香港故事。相對以往香港山林景緻比例放得很大並佔據畫面大部分空間的作品，這作品取從太空俯瞰地球弧形表面的角度，上半部銀河星光燦爛，下半部地球表面被雲海覆蓋，海港城市和山林若隱若現。香港在浩瀚宇宙星空下，雖已不合比例地誇張放大仍顯渺小，畫面右方的維多利亞港和獅子山等真實景物成為辨識描繪對象的憑據。一些玩味細節如在太空漫遊的天星小輪，在香港上空懸浮的小隕石上有一些已消逝的香港地標，如天星碼頭和珍寶海鮮坊。離去的人物成為夜空的星塵，提醒人們曾經有過的美好。

貫徹藝術家過往以交通工具為畫作敘事元素的手法，《風眼 II》及《星夜下的雙柱》同樣描繪了天星小輪。《風眼 II》記錄了去年香港一次掛十號風球，藝術家把天星小輪置於風眼中，船上載著獅子山；《星夜下的雙柱》以鐵達尼號下沉時一分為二的經典畫面為題，背景換成維多利亞港。災難當前且莫失措：抬頭一看，平靜的夜空星光燦爛。駛向未知的天星小輪意象呼應了近年的離散主題，來自之前藝術家在英國駐場時遇到移居當地的香港人的感悟。三屏作品《浪茄露營》與以往的風景作品較為近似，記錄了藝術家首次野外露營及遠足的經歷。三幅屏畫布並不連貫，描繪了同一地點在不同時間的印象，彷彿是對最早期的外光主義印象派畫家的致意。來到最後的《星空自助》，視點由遙遠的宇宙回到地球，從大海返回陸地，最後回歸藝術家的工作室。工作室中央停泊著露營車，藝術家頭戴虛擬實境眼鏡，展開其虛擬旅程。

黃進曦於 1986 年生於香港，2008 年畢業於香港中文大學藝術系。早期的作品以探索人、大自然及虛擬現實之間的微妙關係為主，突顯虛擬映像於視覺的衝擊。近年創作主力於戶外風景寫生方面，加入想像，描繪人和自然之間的角力和共存。個人展覽包括「Dream Travel」（倫敦 Unit London，2022 年）、「孤高的旅程」（香港安全口畫廊，2021 年）、「斗室島敘」（香港 Touch Gallery，2021 年）、「藝薈香港」（香港巴塞爾藝術展，2020 年）、「眈天望地」（香港安全口畫廊，2018 年）、「卧游」（香港安全口畫廊，2016 年）、「過客」（香港藝穗會陳麗玲畫廊，2016 年）、「退步自然」（香港方由美術，2014 年）和「保留的迷失」（2012 年）。黃氏亦參與多個聯展，包括「自在風景」（香港藝術館，2019 年）、「城外」（香港安全口畫廊，2019 年）、「These Painters' Painters」（雅加達 ROH Projects，2018 年）、「風景詩」（台北就在藝術空間，2017 年）、「類聚集」（台北非常廟藝文空間，2017 年）、「紙如風景」（香港凱倫偉伯畫廊，2016 年）等。2023 年夏天黃氏為牛津大學耶穌學院駐校藝術家及訪問藝術學者，其畫作為牛津耶穌學院、香港藝術館、香港置地及太古集團等收藏。藝術家現於香港生活及工作。