

Press Release Spring Program 2023

Berlin, 31 January 2023

KW Institute for Contemporary Art is pleased to present its Spring Program of 2023 with a focus on *interiority* and *exteriority*. These reflections on the physical and psychological conditions of architecture and city planning inform the work of **Martin Wong**, **Win McCarthy**, and **Karen Lamassonne**, in which notions of 'the self' are being constructed.



Martin Wong, *Tell My Troubles to the Eight Ball (Eureka)*, 1978–81. Courtesy of the Martin Wong Foundation and P.P.O.W, New York © Martin Wong Foundation.

Martin Wong***Malicious Mischief***

25 February – 14 May 2023

Curators: Krist Gruijthuijsen, Agustín Pérez Rubio

Assistant Curator: Sofie Krogh Christensen

Martin Wong (1946–1999, US) is recognized for his depictions of social, sexual, and political scenographies in the United States from 1970s to 1990s. Poetically weaving together narratives of queer existence, marginal communities, and urban gentrification, Wong stands out as an important countercultural voice at odds with the art establishment's reactionary discourse at the time. Heavily influenced by the artist's immediate surroundings, Wong's practice merges the visual languages of Chinese iconography, portraiture, landscape, urban poetry, graffiti, carceral aesthetics, and sign language. His work offers a valuable insight into decisive periods of recent United States history as told through its changing urban landscapes, unfolding hidden desires, and complexities. In the role of an urban chronicler and a critical observer, Wong poetically portrays social realism, transcending harsh realities while opening up spaces of beauty and inclusion. Within these spaces, the existing social relations of class, race, and sexual orientation can be reconsidered and reshaped.

Martin Wong – Malicious Mischief is divided in thematic rooms, guided by Wong's own artistic biography: the exhibition reflects on Wong's multilayered universe as seen through his early paintings, poems and sculptures made in the euphoric 1960s and early 1970s environments of San Francisco and Eureka, California, where he grew up as the only son of American-born Chinese parents, his iconic 1980s and 1990s paintings from his time as a citizen of a dilapidated New York City, as well as his reminiscences on the imagery of the East and West Coast Chinatowns, made prior to his premature death from an AIDS/HIV-related illness. The exhibition is named after a series of significant eponymous works from 1991–98 that broadly represent the concept of the "outlaw," which Wong embraced and fetishized throughout his career, from the juvenile delinquents of Manhattan's Lower East Side (Loisaida) to his befriended graffiti artists operating at night.

Martin Wong – Malicious Mischief is the first international extensive display of the artist's work outside of the United States, initiated by KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin and produced in collaboration with Museo Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (CA2M), Móstoles, Madrid; Camden Art Centre, London; and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive publication, co-published with Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König.

Martin Wong – Malicious Mischief is made possible through support from the Terra Foundation for American Art. The publication and the exhibition at KW are funded by Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation). Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation) is funded by the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (German Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media). With the generous support of The Martin Wong Foundation, P.P.O.W, New York, KAWS, and Galerie Buchholz.

Win McCarthy*Innenportrait*

25 February – 14 May 2023

Curator: Krist Gruijthuisen

Assistant Curator: Léon Kruijswijk

Curatorial Assistant: Linda Franken

With *Innenportrait*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art presents the first institutional solo exhibition of Win McCarthy (b. 1986, US). In his practice, McCarthy explores the subjective understanding of his surroundings through reflections on a built environment. His works are often inhabited by personal and confessional ephemera that question the notion of intimacy. McCarthy works in various modes and media, in which the physiological act of seeing and experiencing daily life is filtered through forms of self-portraiture, underlining the hollowness and estrangement felt within a colorless and atomized metropolis.

The exhibition *Innenportrait* is composed entirely of new work, which focuses on the collision between opticality and intellect and evokes ideas around embodiment, perception, and remembrance. Sculptures made of conjoined prescription eyeglasses populate the rooms of the exhibition. They are the disembodied prostheses of collective vision, straining for clarity. Juxtaposed is a large series of photograms, which depict scenes both personal and universal: domestic interiors, cityscapes, a dog, the birth of a child. All are subtly distorted, either by hand or through collage, in order to further ideas around commonality and individuality.

Finally, various simple, provisional sculptures are installed in front of arrays of photographic lights. These works anticipate their own documentation and accept the primacy of the photograph. By making the photography equipment visible, McCarthy addresses the issue of how art and life are observed, documented, and proliferated. The unequivocal indirectness of one's ever-shifting relationship to the subject matter is made palpable.

If subjectivity has been pivotal in McCarthy's previous work, this new body of work presents a vision of contemporary subjective experience in disarray, in which seeing, understanding, and documenting collapse into one another.

McCarthy's first publication, *Common Ruin*, which reflects his work through personal writings, accompanies the exhibition and is co-published with Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König.

Karen Lamassonne*Ruido / Noise*

25 February – 14 May 2023

Curator: Krist Gruijthuisen

Assistant Curator: Léon Kruijswijk

Curatorial Assistant: Linda Franken

Ruido / Noise is the first solo exhibition by the Colombian-American artist Karen Lamassonne (b. 1954, US) in Europe and is collaboratively presented with Swiss Institute, New York, and Medellín Museum of Modern Art – MAMM. The exhibition brings together paintings, drawings, collages as well as videos that Lamassonne created between 1974 and today.

Many works of Lamassonne, like her early watercolor series entitled *Baños* (Bathrooms, 1978-81), are often situated in domestic spaces like bathrooms, bedrooms, kitchens, and hallways. As a woman, she playfully questions notions of self-portraiture and self-representation by concealing and revealing the self. Lamassonne has tended to describe these paintings as self-portraits, though the figure is usually anonymized shown only from the shoulders down or from the back.

In 1984, Lamassonne conceived *Ruido* (Noise), which has been realized for the first time on the occasion of the traveling exhibition. Television screens displaying 'noise' are used to light several paintings installed around them, each depicting a part of a woman's body illuminated by the glow of the screen.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Lamassonne became closely connected to the Grupo de Cali (Cali Group), a group of filmmakers who heralded the New Latin American Cinema and had a lasting influence on cinema production. Among many other capacities, Lamassonne was responsible for the art direction for *Pura Sangre* (1982), directed by Luis Ospina, and the German-Colombian production *Kalt in Kolumbien* (1985), directed by Dieter Schidor. On view are selected scenes from Lamassonne's storyboard for *Pura Sangre*, a horror thriller centering on a rich sugar magnate who survives on the fresh blood of murder victims.

In later works, like the *Homenaje a Cali* (Hommage to Cali) series (1989), Lamassonne would move towards depicting the tension between the intimacy of sensual and sexual bodies in public urban spaces. This series reflects the importance of the cinematic to her practice, whilst recalling earlier works in which bodies were drawn into landscapes.

In 2019, the artist began revisiting her collection of postcards and, during the lockdowns in 2020, extending the imagery on the front of the cards in surreal directions. Similarly, she began creating drawings and sculptures of "hairy" or "monster" hands. These resemble props or costumes from movies that Lamassonne might have worked on in the past.

The travelling exhibition is supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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