

# Erin Wright

## *Nearly Natural*

Artist | Erin Wright

Exhibition Title | *Nearly Natural*

Dates | June 14 (Sat.) - August 2 (Sat.), 2025

Location | MAKI Gallery / Tennoz, Tokyo



*Bachelor I*, 2025, acrylic on canvas, 158.6 x 128.4 x 4.1 cm

MAKI Gallery is pleased to announce *Nearly Natural*, a new exhibition of paintings by Los Angeles-based artist Erin Wright. Marking Wright's solo debut in Japan, the exhibition opens on June 14, 2025, at MAKI Gallery / Tennoz, Tokyo. In this compelling new body of work, Wright rigorously examines the contemporary condition through the precise and potent metaphor of bonsai, uncovering a nuanced dialogue between disciplined cultivation and the aesthetics of self-styling.

At the core of *Nearly Natural* lies Wright's incisive conceptual parallel: the bonsai tree as a mirror for the modern bachelor. This unexpected yet trenchant comparison illuminates the intricate discipline, restraint, and aesthetic control inherent in both the cultivation of bonsai and the often unseen grooming rituals of the single man. Wright posits that just as bonsai are shaped through guided growth and careful intervention, so too are individuals subjected to invisible structures of taste, identity, and desirability. The resulting forms exist in a state of continuous transformation, embodying a sophisticated blend of organic integrity and social performance.

Wright's "Bachelor" series showcases various stages of this cultivated existence, often with an intentional, subtle humor. *Bachelor I* encases its subject within an elaborate, almost architectural metal scaffold, hinting at the constructed environments that inform identity. In *Bachelor II*, a bonsai laden with prominent, ripe fruits directly references the male anatomy, embodying a "well-hung" man and a moment of potent, deliberate yield. Conversely, *Bachelor III* captures a sparser form with dwindling leaves, a poignant nod to aging and hair loss, reflecting the anxieties of maintaining an idealized self amidst the inevitability of change. Most strikingly, *Bachelor V* features an azalea plant in full, abundant bloom. This work is particularly resonant as azaleas are conventionally unsuitable for bonsai cultivation, highlighting the artist's engagement with the *attempt* to impose control and shape to something that resists. The azalea's fleeting, magnificent bloom further underscores the temporality of idealized beauty and the inherent impermanence of even the most meticulously crafted appearances. These works, which Wright considers portraits, reveal the iterative nature of self, suggesting a continuum of individuals or shifting states within one's journey toward an idealized form.

Beyond the "Bachelor" series, Wright expands her exploration of exacting design and personal ritual. *Tokonoma* reimagines the traditional Japanese contemplative alcove as a contemporary altar of self-curation, featuring deeply personal elements such as the artist's father's ceramic plate, a home-grown bonsai, and a sketch of the artist's son. The exhibition further includes *Dopp Kit*, a hyperrealistic rendering of a collection of bonsai tools whose more ordinary nature contrasts with the profound artistry they enable. A separate painting, *Shears*, foregrounds a single pair of these instruments whose extraordinary craftsmanship is the result of months of bespoke design, underscoring Wright's fascination with the beauty and precise functionality of tools dedicated to meticulous cultivation.



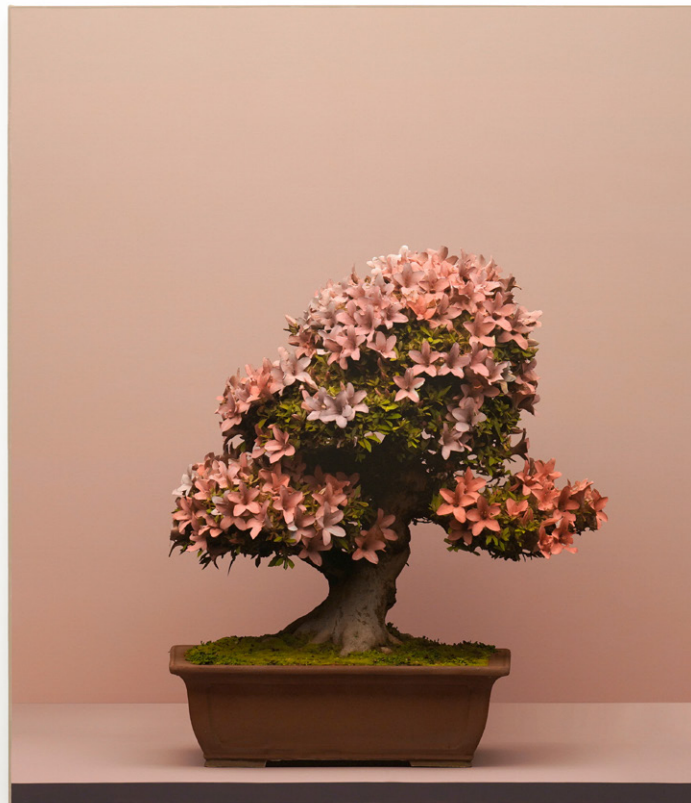
*Shears*, 2025  
Acrylic on canvas, 27.0 x 20.4 x 4.1 cm

*The Reveal I* and *The Reveal II* directly showcase Wright's personal bonsai collection, with *The Reveal I* depicting her 22-year-old tree and *The Reveal II* depicting her 17-year-old tree. Having cultivated bonsai for four years, Wright's intimate knowledge of the practice informs these pieces, whose functional wooden frames open like theatrical curtains to unveil the paintings, underscoring the ritual of observation and inviting a direct, performative engagement from the viewer.

Wright's technical virtuosity is central to her practice. Her acrylic paintings achieve an uncanny, almost digitally rendered precision through rigorous masking, compressor gun application, and minute brushwork. This exacting process, mirroring the discipline of bonsai cultivation, aligns with her guiding principle of "indifference," a deadpan approach that yields straightforward compositions designed to reveal their profound complexities upon sustained engagement. The artist painstakingly applies paint to make new forms appear centuries old, a painterly application that mirrors the natural aging process of trees and the human desire for a seasoned aesthetic.

*Nearly Natural* offers a multifaceted meditation on the art of cultivation, control, and the pervasive human impulse to shape both nature and self. Through her meticulously rendered bonsai portraits, Erin Wright presents a compelling and humorous inquiry into the construction of identity in the contemporary world.

Written by Chelsea Rana



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**Erin Wright**

Born in Memphis, TN in 1990, Erin Wright received a BFA from the School of The Art Institute of Chicago in 2012 and an M.Arch (Master of Architecture) from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2016. Currently based in Los Angeles and an adjunct professor of architecture at Woodbury University, Wright expands upon the legacy of still life painting with a distinct style that echoes the uncanny precision and waxy surfaces of computer-generated renderings. Citing “indifference” as her guiding principle, the artist wields exacting control over her brush, making sure not to leave behind any noticeable strokes that betray her hand or presence. Wright’s compositions eschew traditional perspective for isometric projection, a method used in architectural drawings to represent three-dimensional objects in two dimensions. The lack of a vanishing point allows the artist to place her subjects non-hierarchically within the picture plane; various motifs, like wine glasses, tennis balls, or bonsai trees, appear iteratively across multiple canvases and lead the viewer’s eye through a carefully choreographed narrative. Each painting is an enigmatic vignette—a single frame of a larger story that highlights the ways in which cultural norms and individual psychological states inform our daily existence, from the most minute details of interior design to universally entrenched social customs. Despite touching on such grand themes, the work remains fluid and familiar enough for the viewer to cultivate their own interpretations of the artist’s striking and layered imagery.

Wright held her first solo exhibition, *The Host, The Thief, The Wives, and Their Lovers*, at Sow & Tailor (Los Angeles) in 2024. In recent years, she participated in group exhibitions at such galleries as Roberts Projects (Los Angeles), WOAW Gallery (Hong Kong and Singapore), and Field Projects (New York). *Nearly Natural*, MAKI Gallery (Tokyo, 2025) marks her solo debut in Japan.

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Closed on Sundays and Mondays

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