

In Pictures: See Work From the Late Art Star Matthew Wong's First Museum Show, Dedicated to His Mesmerizing Blue Paintings

The exhibition is on view at the Art Gallery of Ontario.



Matthew Wong, *Starry Night* (2019). © 2019 Matthew Wong Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York. Image courtesy of The Matthew Wong Foundation.

Matthew Wong was a voracious painter. After trying his hand at photography, poetry, and even Chinese scroll painting, the young artist began working with oil paint in 2013. Entirely self-taught, he created more than 1,000 works before his death in 2019, at the age of 35.

At the time of Wong's death, he was building a formidable profile in the art world, but had never been the subject of a museum exhibition. That changes with “Blue View” at the Art Gallery of Ontario in the artist's native Canada. The show (on through April 18, 2022) presents 40 of the roughly 60 works in Wong's “Blue Series,” which the artist worked on from 2017 until his death.

The images are a symphony of indigo, turquoise, azure, and inky-black blues, all depicting quiet scenes that the artist said were gleaned from a trip he took with his mother to Sicily. There are long winding roads and intimate glimpses into darkened rooms. The compositions bring to mind Erik Satie's *Trois Gymnopédies*—melancholy but also serene.

Like the variations of Satie's minimalist piano pieces, Wong's pictures are variations on a theme. The artist once said they are meant to “activate nostalgia, both personal and collective.” The presence of lone individuals, almost always without identifying features and rendered in blurred outline, underscores this effect.

In an essay for the show's catalogue, former Guggenheim curator Nancy Spector describes Wong's work as “Fauvist at heart with an overlay of pointillist patterning.”

His paintings, she writes, “are remarkable for the brilliance of their palettes.” Even when defined by their blueness, they manage to incorporate every shade and are punctuated at times with lilac, silvery white, vermillion, and peach.

Although Wong's work has drawn comparisons to artists as varied as Edouard Vuillard and Yayoi Kusama, he was able to build a mood in paint that was entirely his own.

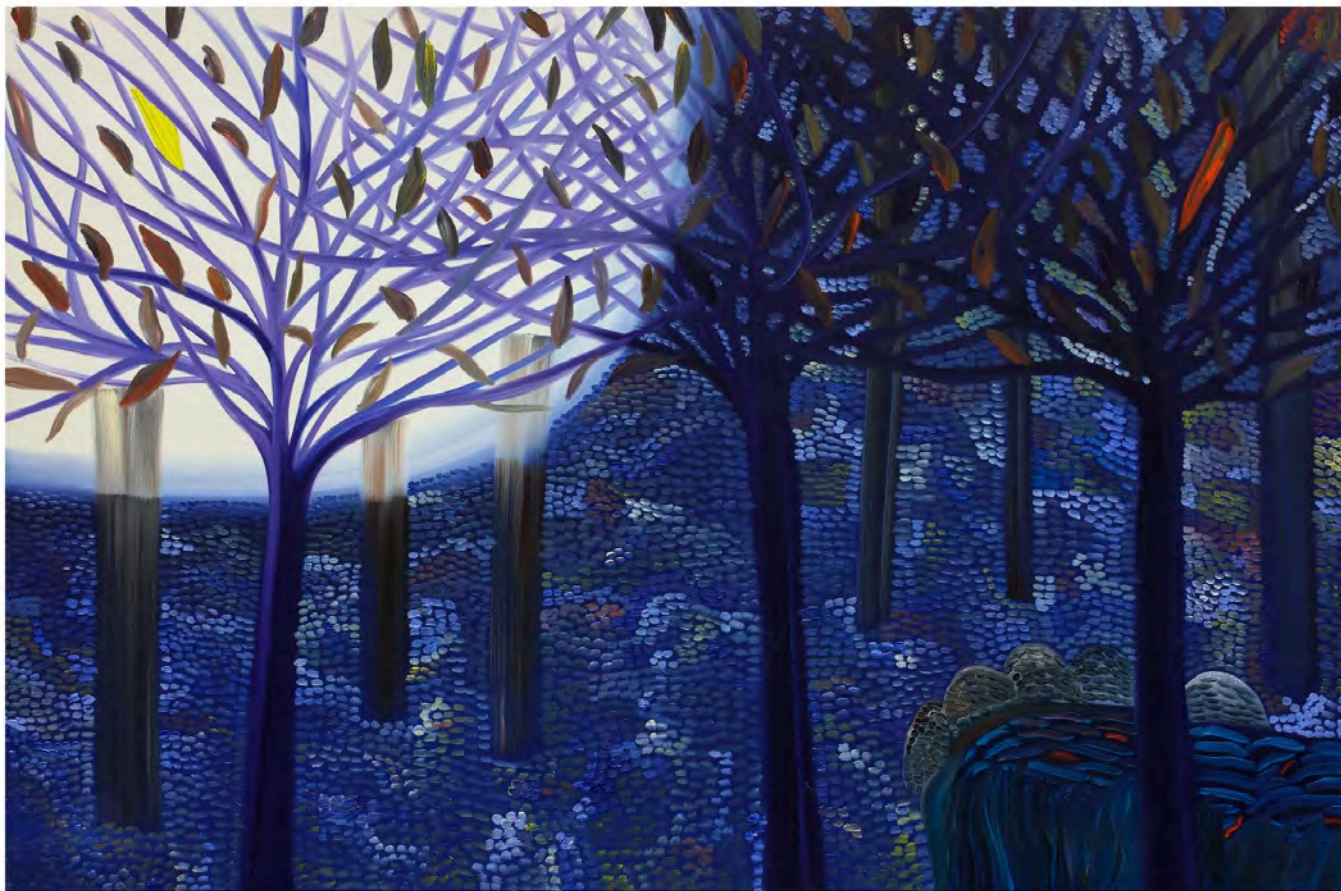
“Matthew Wong: Blue View,” is on view at the Art Gallery of Ontario through April 18, 2022.



Matthew Wong, *Meanwhile...* (2018). © 2019 Matthew Wong Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York. Image courtesy of The Matthew Wong Foundation.



Matthew Wong, *A Dream* (2019). © 2019 Matthew Wong Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York. Image courtesy of The Matthew Wong Foundation.



Matthew Wong, *Autumn Nocturne* (2018). © 2019 Matthew Wong Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York. Image courtesy of The Matthew Wong Foundation.



Matthew Wong, *Blue Night* (2018). © 2019 Matthew Wong Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York. Image courtesy of The Matthew Wong Foundation.



Matthew Wong, *Untitled* (2018). © 2019 Matthew Wong Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York. Image courtesy of The Matthew Wong Foundation.



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