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Art & Exhibitions

An Illuminating Exhibition Pairs Matthew Wong with Vincent Van Gogh

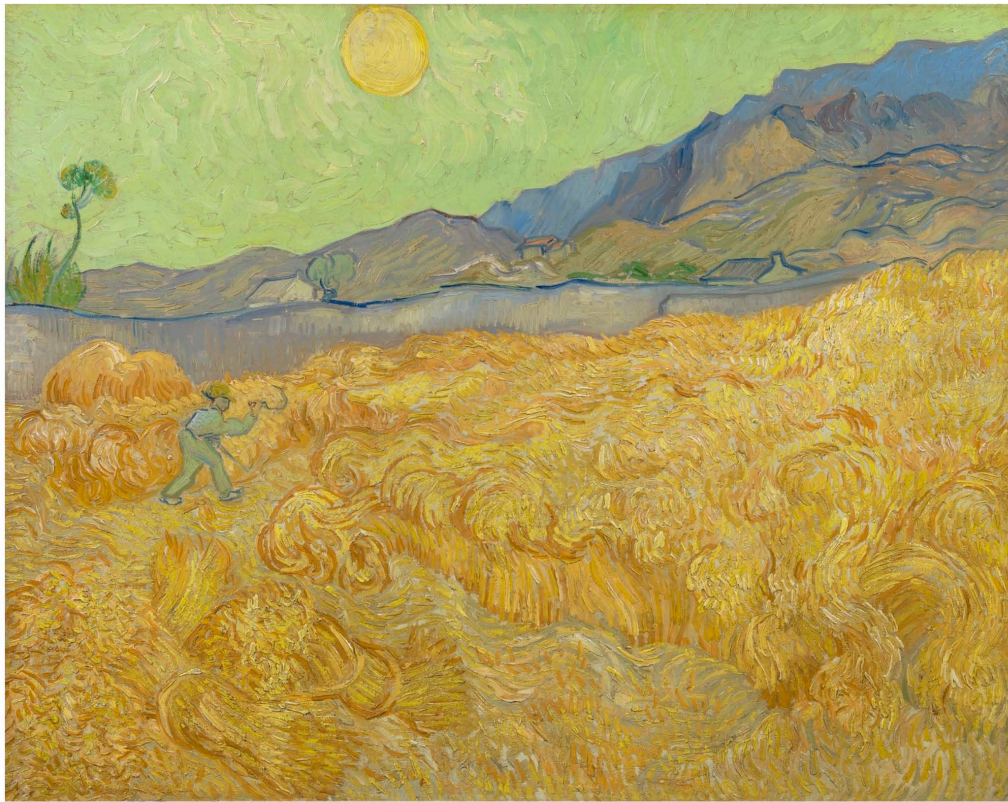
The Chinese-Canadian painter has been called “the modern day Van Gogh.”



Matthew Wong, *The Kingdom*, 2017. © Matthew Wong Foundation c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2023.

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Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum is pairing its namesake with a latter-day expressionist artist who named the Dutch painter as a principal inspiration. "Matthew Wong | Vincent van Gogh: Painting as a Last Resort" will be the largest show yet of the beloved Chinese-Canadian artist's work in Europe, according to the museum. Speaking to Artnet News at the time of Wong's death, his friend, artist Jonas Wood, even called Wong (1984-2019) "the modern day Van Gogh."

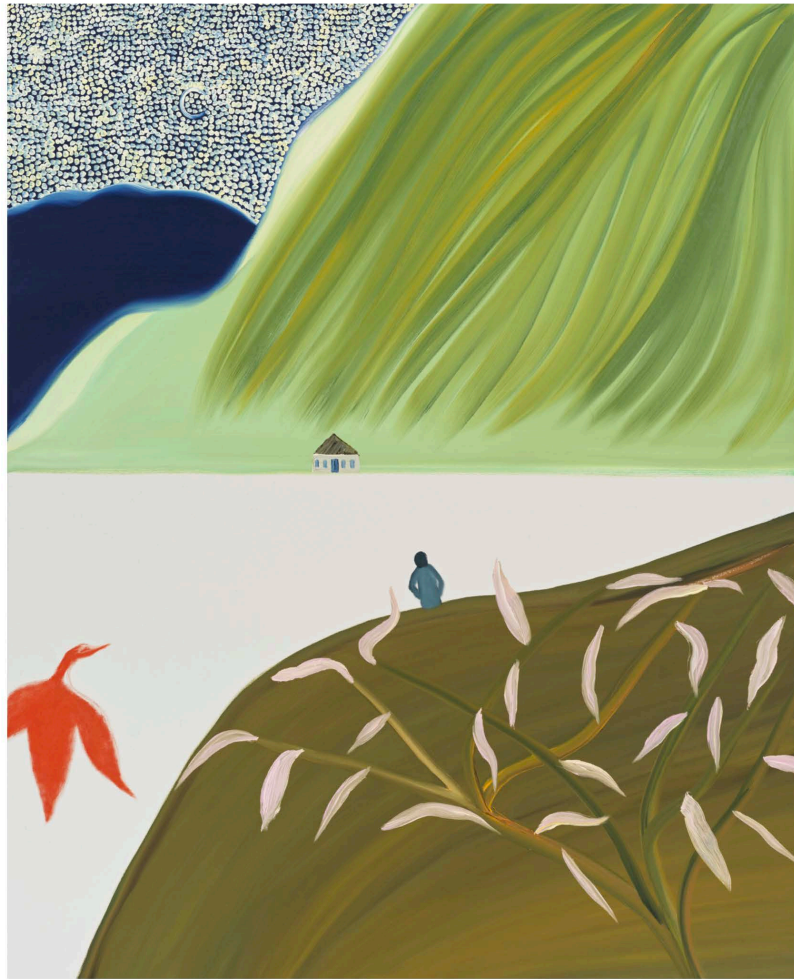


Vincent van Gogh, *Wheatfield with a Reaper*, 1889. Courtesy Van Gogh Museum.

"I see a sincerity, a conviction and total commitment in Wong's work that you also see with Van Gogh," said Joost van der Hoeven, curator of the exhibition and a researcher at the museum. "They are unparalleled in their ability to combine emotional depth with a highly accessible visual language."

The two artist's canvases are similarly soulful, vividly colored, and expressionistic; both made extensive use of impasto. Self-taught as a painter, Wong took up the medium after studying photography, and also named artists like Gustav Klimt and Henri Matisse as touchstones.

Besides the similarities in their work, the artists also share a tragic commonality: Van Gogh died at 37, Wong at 35. When it comes to the market, the artists diverge dramatically. Wong found success during his lifetime, with New York gallery Karma displaying his work; shortly after his death, *New York Times* critic Roberta Smith lauded him as “one of the most talented painters of his generation”; and his market rocketed to surreal heights shortly after his death, as Eileen Kinsella reported in October 2020, when a Wong painting that went on the block at Christie's with a high estimate of \$700,000 fetched some \$4.47 million.



Matthew Wong, *See You on the Other Side*, 2019, © 2023 Matthew Wong Foundation / c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2023.

Van Gogh, meanwhile, sold only one known painting during his life, and even posthumous success came slowly.

“When I saw Wong’s work for the first time, it gripped me instantly, and I saw in it a whole range of art historical references,” said Van der Hoeven. And yet it remains completely original and contemporary. I am fascinated by this tension between recognition and originality, and that is what inspired me to make this exhibition.”

If you can’t make it to Amsterdam (or if tickets sell out), there’s also a catalogue featuring contributions by Artnet contributor Kenny Schachter, Richard Shiff, Sofia Silva, and John Yau.



Matthew Wong, *Unknown Pleasures*, 2019, Museum of Modern Art, New York © 2023 Matthew Wong Foundation / Pictoright Amsterdam, 2023. Digital image courtesy of MoMA

“Matthew Wong | Vincent van Gogh: Painting as a Last Resort” will be on view at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, from March 1 to September 1, 2024.