

# Lyles & King

**Lily Wong**  
***Own Vortex***  
**September 5 - October 4**  
**Opening Reception: September 5, 6-8pm**

Lyles & King is pleased to present *Own Vortex*, a solo exhibition by Lily Wong. This exhibition of new paintings is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Wong has always been interested in investigating cultural memory and how it is stored in the body. As Shigehisa Kuriyama writes in *The Expressiveness of the Body*, "The true structure and workings of the human body are, we casually assume, everywhere the same, a universal reality. But then we look into history, and our sense of reality wavers." Wong's protagonists are made of experiences that extend beyond the physical. They are composed of sensations, moods, inarticulate interiorities. Her paintings collapse space and time like a scroll in which multiple events take place at once. These layered narratives thrive in simultaneity, stemming from a rhizome of subconscious thought under the surface of vibrant landscapes and intimate portraits. Her deliberately warped spaces invite audiences to engage in previously unknown, yet familiar, territories.

*Own Vortex* deepens Wong's use of archetypal figures modeled after the artist's friends. Wong prompted peers to strike poses based on invented scenes, as if stills from a film directed by her. She presents strange landscapes: a body blended into a mountain, a figure in an impossibly long backbend. Like a seashell in the palm of a hand, each piece is a relic of what lived inside of it, a puzzle made of life as much as pigment. Color is its own character, a pulse in the circulatory system of the painting which is often a map of something beyond the depictive. Some truths defy introspection. Louise Bourgeois writes, "nature is a mode of communication." By that logic, Wong is a dedicated translator. Nature speaks in infinities. Growth *becomes* overgrowth.

Contrasting with her earlier black and white work, Wong's turn to color applies a deeper layering of hyperreal impossibility. In one painting, walking through a subliminal forest attached to the same intertwining braid, two twinned figures appear in inverted colors, one in an orange light, one in an underwater blue. The reflected duo continues Wong's practice of mirroring as a way of extending time in a painting. Two things happen at once. It's a deceptively simple idea, until you follow it in sequence (three, thirteen, thirty-four things happening at once) like a spiral increasing progressively as you open your eyes. If infinity can fit in a hand, it certainly fits in the artist's increasingly large-scale paintings. Each offers its own universe.

For Lily Wong, a portrait is "an introduction of how to know somebody." In that way, this exhibition is a portrait of the mind of the artist, a start to knowledge, which implies the impossibility of knowing everything. Puzzles, incomplete puzzles, puzzle pieces, trying to fit puzzle pieces together — here you are given a portion of the whole, and your act of spectatorship fills in the gaps. These are vulnerable depictions of yearning that come with pursuing connectivity. There are literal portals within the frame — arches, spirals, doorways, entry points, beginnings — leading to a secondary, often unseen, space. These paintings are also portals themselves. As a viewer, you're left with the satisfaction of filling in the blank.

—Paul Legault, 2023

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**Lily Wong** (b. 1989, Seattle, WA) received an MFA from CUNY Hunter College in 2020. Her work has been exhibited at Various Small Fires, Los Angeles, CA; Lyles & King, New York, NY; *The Minotaur's Daydreams*, curated by Anthony Cudahy, Semiose, Paris, FR; Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, Los Angeles, CA and New York, NY; Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, TX; Galerie LJ, Paris, FR; Kapp Kapp, New York, NY and Philadelphia, PA; Fredericks & Freiser, New York, NY; and Half Gallery, New York, NY; among others. She lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.