

artillery

PICK OF THE WEEK: Lily Wong

Various Small Fires

by [Lauren Guilford](#) | Dec 1, 2022



Lily Wong's phantasmal figures traverse boundaries that blur celestial realms and built environments, painting a world that evokes fragmented feelings and cosmic confusion spurred by her personal quest for ancestral knowledge and identity. Bodies glow with an iridescence of an apparition or spirit—akin to the bioluminescence of a deep sea fish or the glow of a galactic plane deep in the pit of the universe—light sources that are only visible to those with specialized technology. Wong's paintings are part allegorical, part magical realism. Portals float in space reminiscent of the early renaissance, some thresholds seem to peer out to illusionary-cosmic realms while others lead to familiar facades that make up urban landscapes of the everyday. In various states of spiritual contemplation and transfiguration, Wong's figures trace the different stages of her journey that would lead her to Traditional Chinese Medicine—an ancient practice centered around the body's relationship to nature, applying methods involving plant life that create an internal balance and fleshy disfigurements. One of my favorite paintings titled *At the Gate* depicts a figure caught in a deep gaze, caressing their singular swollen hand that appears grotesque and mannerist. Wong considers the body's capacity for care, healing and trauma—which are often inherited, conditional and/or generational—questioning why and how particular bodies manifest and carry knowledge corporeally. Wong grapples with the impossibility of identity and ancestral knowledge that, while splintered and disjointed, can be found in the cosmic sap of the universe, in the body and the soil beneath one's feet—in imaginary worlds and everyday encounters.

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