

MING WONG

Ming Wong's video works are often founded on the artist's response to feature films or quotations from pop culture. He examines how gender, language and identity are constructed and creates a place in between, an ambiguity. As part of the *12x12* series, the Berlinische Galerie is showing three recent works in which Wong explores our fragmented perception of reality.

Bloody Marys, Song of the South Seas (2018, 10:35 min.) centres on *Bali Ha'i*, a song from the musical *South Pacific* (1949) which was then made into a film in 1958. It describes a tropical island imagined as the very ideal of the "exotic", the "other" – and closely associated with a colonial image about the matriarch of this island, Bloody Mary, a siren who lures (Western) men into her trap with her song. In a kind of kaleidoscope of embodiments, Ming sets up a collage that draws both on his own depiction of Bloody Mary and the portrayal by Juanita Hall, who received a Tony Award for her role – the first Afro-American woman ever to be honoured in this way.

Teach German with Petra von Kant (2017, 8:00 min.) is based on an older work entitled ***Lerne Deutsch mit Petra von Kant / Learn German with Petra von Kant***. This was made in 2007, just before Wong moved to Berlin, and it was an attempt to speak like a German – by imitating Margit Carstensen in her role as the fashion designer Petra von Kant in the film *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972) by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. According to Wong, the language he learned this way and also the character's attitude helped him tackle many a challenge in the following years. After a decade in Berlin he has now adapted this work, with ten students at the University of the Arts, where Wong was a guest professor, slipping into the role of Petra von Kant – some of them just as new to Berlin as Wong was 10 years ago.

In ***Next Year / L'Année Prochaine / 明年*** (2016, 17:40 min.) Wong takes on Alain Resnais's film *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961). This icon of New Wave cinema is distinctive for its diffuse narrative and innovative visual idiom – and Wong intensifies both these factors in his work. In

L'Année dernière à Marienbad we never find out where exactly the story is set, and Wong exploited that ambiguity to include Marienbad Café and Fuxing Park in his version. Both these places are in Shanghai and both display colonial influences. This overlaying of cultural codes also leads to some bewildering moments, as when Wong plays both the male and the female roles, breaking with the customary principles of casting.

Ming Wong was born in Singapore in 1971. He studied at the Slade School of Art in London, and at Nanyang Academy in Singapore. Among the venues which have recently shown his works are the Busan Biennale in South Korea, the 53rd Venice Biennale, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, nGbK in Berlin, the Hartware MedienKunstVerein in Dortmund and the Gropius Bau in Berlin. In 2016–2018 he was Guest Professor at the University of the Arts in Berlin. Ming Wong lives and works in Berlin.