

Upon a Golden Mountain

Adrian Kay Wong

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In *Upon a Golden Mountain*, painter Adrian Kay Wong explores the multifaceted narratives that lie beneath the surface of seemingly ordinary scenes and objects.

With the discovery of gold in San Francisco during the mid-1800s, thousands of Chinese people migrated to the United States for the prospect of finding wealth, and a better life. However, the reality of the “Golden Mountain” proved elusive, marked by hardship and discrimination - while also building resilience and community bonds. Wong masterfully weaves this historical allegory into his paintings, inviting viewers to contemplate the complexities of aspiration, solitude, and the quest for connection.

In what the artist refers to as “appendage paintings”, seemingly incidental circumstances of everyday life are depicted with a keen eye for detail and a profound sense of introspection. There is a central scene which plays out across the primary canvas, and then a connected component that serves to provide extra insight into the scene - an extension of the panorama, or perhaps a key.

Throughout the exhibition, technology acts as a symbol for connection, a tether to the outside world - even in solitude. Objects such as empty chairs, a table of drinking glasses, or multiple cigarettes hint at a more ambiguous reading of the scene, one that could imply the company of many or the isolation of one. Wong’s bisected framing provokes us to consider the subtle narratives that emerge from each object as vestiges of personal significance, cultural identity, and universal symbology.

The exhibition serves as a poignant reflection on the duality of the human condition - contrasting the aesthetic allure of bright colors and meticulously painted tableaux with the somber undercurrents of disconnection, solitude, and yearning.

Upon a Golden Mountain serves as a captivating exploration of the blurred boundaries between artifice and reality, of symbolic abstraction and constructed representation. By depicting the periphery of everyday life - the overlooked and often missed - Wong encourages viewers to confront their own understanding of the world around them, and to embrace the inherent beauty of painting as a medium - a practice steeped in illusion yet grounded in the profound ability to transmit emotive images of lived experience.