

Galeri Sasha

Wong Perng Fey

Being. Here.

24 May – 21 June 2025

Opening reception: 24 May, 3 pm – 7 pm

Gallery Hours: Friday to Sunday, 12 pm – 7 pm

Galeri Sasha is pleased to present *Being. Here*, a solo exhibition by Wong Perng Fey (b.1974, Kuala Lumpur) on view from May 24th to June 21st. Perng Fey's latest body of work marks a decisive shift in tone—away from the psychological urgency of his Beijing years and enters a space of clarity, wit, and restraint. Created between Austria and Malaysia, this series weaves together painting, sculpture, and a contemporary interpretation of *Wayang Kulit*, inviting us into a dialogue between past and present, self and society.

For over a decade, Perng Fey's work was defined by emotional intensity, shaped by his experience living in Beijing. Influenced by the visceral strokes of 'School of London' post-war painters such as Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon, Perng Fey's abstract paintings transcribed raw internal states with immediacy and honesty. The paintings were forged in friction—between cultures, cities, expectations, and the self—each one a site of existential urgency. Now, rooted in the contemplative structure of life in Graz, Austria and the intimacy of his memories in Malaysia, Perng Fey returns to his practice with a different mindset—one guided by observation, humour, and quiet confidence. They reflect a desire to step back, to arrange, and to respond. The result is a visual language that balances looseness and control, intuition and order.

Inspired by the bright absurdity of Franz West and the observational humour of Malaysian Cartoonist, Dato Lat, Perng Fey embraces a new colour palette—pinks, yellows, ceruleans—applied with unapologetic clarity and assertiveness. Paintings unfold as structured improvisations: loose grids, silhouetted forms, and pockets of negative space evoke a kind of stage, where memory, character, and cultural reference coexist without hierarchy. West and Lat appear not as direct references,

but as tonal cues—signals of playfulness, irreverence, and precision. This return to structure is not a retreat but a resolution. Perng Fey's surfaces may appear spontaneous, but beneath them lies careful calibration: emotion distilled rather than dramatized, references integrated rather than declared.

Wayang Kulit, the traditional Malaysian shadow puppet theatre acts as both a visual motif and a way of seeing. It becomes a framework for thinking through dualities: interior and exterior, gesture and interpretation, presence and projection. Rather than focusing solely on formal contrasts, Perng Fey draws on its cast of characters to reflect the strange, animated lives he encounters—figures that are unassuming, often overlooked, but full of quiet drama. These characters become a way to speak about people in transit, in negotiation, in performance. This sensibility carries into a new series of sculptural works that extend his interest in personality and presence. Referencing Franz West's playful and tactile forms, these objects act less as interruptions and more as stand-ins—figures in space that hint at movement, at eccentricity, at the everyday as stage.

There is a shift in narrative structure as well. These works do not seek to reconstruct home or revisit the past through sentiment. They acknowledge the layered nature of diasporic identity—its contradictions, humour, and unresolved tensions—without needing to resolve them. Cultural complexity is allowed to sit alongside formal precision, not as a statement, but as one of many elements in the composition.

In *Being.Here*, Wong Perng Fey invites viewers to reflect on what it means to be fully present—within the layered, often contradictory forces that shape identity. Through nuanced compositions and the integration of cultural motifs, he offers a meditation on presence without performance; on being, rather than becoming. The exhibition signals a moment of arrival. Through its measured vocabulary of colour, form, and material, *Being.Here* quietly asserts that to remain—attentive, grounded, and unguarded—is a radical act. In doing so, Perng Fey affirms his place within an evolving conversation around contemporary abstraction and the politics of self-representation.

Artist Statement

"I have always been captivated by the evidence people leave behind in living spaces, whether it is graffiti, a scratch mark on a wall; a room and its tiles, wall papers or posters exposed when the adjacent house is being torn down. These manifestations are what I catch first when I arrive in a new city. They evoke a sense of nostalgia, of human existence, of living, of belonging to a place. When time goes by, a deeper layer of imagery emerges, both from the unfolding of the memories buried in me, and the emotions kindled from experiences acquired in the new environment, and I use paint

to emulate these emotions on canvases. Through the medium of paintings, I explore the relationship between permanence and change. These works also investigate the mental landscape and consciousness in a particular living environment and are inextricably entwined with the memories of these places.

While living in Beijing, I discovered new freedom in expression by amplifying certain characteristics in material: tension is created by applying different layers of paint to form a surface that is coherent to the emotions I am experiencing. Thought is given to how material can project a sense of strength, power and vulnerability. Throughout the years, the canvases become the visual tapestry capturing the intangible, the feelings harboured in my daily life.”

About the Artist

Wong Perng Fey (b. 1974, Kuala Lumpur) is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice spans painting, sculpture, and installation. His work explores the psychological and cultural dimensions of memory, place, and identity—often drawing on personal transitions and the subtle traces of lived environments. Trained at the Malaysian Institute of Art on a full scholarship, Perng Fey first gained recognition in the early 2000s for his gestural canvases that captured the tension between abstraction and figuration. A decade spent living and working in Beijing deeply influenced his visual language, embedding a sense of existential urgency and diasporic complexity into his practice.

His works have been exhibited widely across Asia and Europe, with solo presentations at Richard Koh Fine Art (Kuala Lumpur, Singapore), Contemporary by Angela Li (Hong Kong), and Art Seasons (Beijing), among others. His paintings and works on paper are held in notable public and private collections including Khazanah Nasional, the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery, and Galeri Petronas. Perng Fey currently lives and works between Austria and Malaysia.

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