



*Sun King*, 2001. Oil on canvas, 60 x 55 inches

## Jimmy Wright: *Emotional Repositories*

June 22 –  
August 10, 2023

### Reception for the artist July 19, 6 – 8 pm

DC Moore Gallery is pleased to present *Jimmy Wright: Emotional Repositories*. This is the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

Jimmy Wright's large scale oil paintings and pastel works of sunflowers reimagine the subject's meaning, becoming what the artist calls "repositories of emotion." Wright began painting still lifes in 1988, during the height of the AIDS epidemic. As he was caring for his partner, who was gravely ill with HIV/AIDS, Wright was looking for a studio practice that would allow him to work intermittently and preserve his sense of self. Never having painted still lifes before, he purchased giant sunflowers from a farmer's market and watched the petals twist and shrink as the flowers withered. These flowers reflect a broad and fluid array of human emotions, and they became powerful memento mori and vessels for themes of grief, memorialization, selfhood, and resurrection.

Jimmy Wright was born in Union City, Tennessee in 1944, and raised in rural Kentucky. In 1964, he moved to Chicago to study at the Art Institute, where he befriended Roger Brown and other members of the Chicago Imagist movement and studied with Ray Yoshida. In 1974, Wright moved to New York City, where he documented the flourishing queer subculture of gay bathhouses and downtown nightclubs. In the 1980s, Wright turned to his childhood in the American South as subject matter, depicting religious rituals, his grandmother's hometown in Tennessee, and his family members. From 1988-91,

Wright produced his first sunflower paintings, a series of large-scale still lifes on canvases measuring six by six feet.

Not all of these blooms are elegiac, many are fiery and exuberant, the capacity for transformation and expressing joy being integral to the work. Wright experiments freely with layering and juxtaposition of bold, vibrating color that pushes beyond observed reality. In some works, monochromatic compositions explore the full range of a color's possibility, while others play with vivid, complementary hues, recalling the intensity of post-Impressionist painters. Textured surfaces created by cross-hatched pastel marks and thick, impastoed oil paint emphasize the emotional heft contained within the forms.

The works on view, completed in the 2000s and 2010s, involve combinations of dried and fresh flowers, creating variations in form and capturing these ephemeral phases of blooming and decaying. Wright's decades-long exploration of the subject creates an archive of feeling, pausing time and preserving the most ineffable human emotions.

Wright has been a New York-based artist since 1974. Recent solo exhibitions include Fierman, New York, NY (2022, 2019, 2016), M+B Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2019), and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago, IL (2023, 2016). His work is currently on view in the exhibitions *Luxe, Calme, Volupté* at Candice Madey, New York, NY; *Jimmy Wright and Arch Connelly*, Southern Illinois University Art Museum, Carbondale, IL; and *Flowers at the Fin de Siècle: Renate Bertlmann, Robert Lettner, Jimmy Wright, 1990-1998*, Wonnerth Dejaco Gallery, Vienna, Austria. In 2009, The Springfield Art Museum, MO, organized the retrospective, *Jimmy Wright: Twenty Years of Painting and Pastels*. Wright's work is in the collections of numerous institutions, including the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; among others.



*Sunflower with Blue Leaf*, 2000. Pastel on Lanaquarelle paper, 22 x 30 inches.

DC Moore Gallery specializes in contemporary and twentieth-century art. The gallery is open Monday through Friday from 10am-6pm. For more information, photographs, or to arrange a viewing please call 212-247-2111 or email Caroline Magavern at [cmagavern@dcmooregallery.com](mailto:cmagavern@dcmooregallery.com).