



Study for Om Mani Padme Hum, 2018 , pencil, gouache, gesso, 22k gold powder on board, framed: 14 1/2 x 11 in. (36.8 x 27.9 cm)

# TOM WUDL

## THE FLOWERBANK WORLD

11 March – 2 May 2020

Reception for the artist:  
Wednesday, 11 March, 6-8pm

**Venice, CA --** L.A. Louver is pleased to present *Tom Wudl: The Flowerbank World*, an exhibition of new and recent works by the Los Angeles-based artist. Among the nearly two dozen works from 2015-20 on display, the exhibition includes one of Wudl's early paper-punch abstractions from 1973, as well as an in-progress large-scale work that he commenced in 2018.

Over the past two decades, Wudl has taken inspiration from the revered Buddhist text, the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (*The Flower Ornament Scripture*), to create an ongoing series of painstakingly detailed paintings, drawings and prints made in response to the text's evocative and profound literary descriptions. Considered "the most colorful and dramatic rehearsals of Buddhist teachings," the *Avatamsaka Sutra* is believed to be one of the earliest discourses by the Buddha.

"The ground was solid and firm, made of diamond, adorned with exquisite jewel discs and myriad precious flowers, with pure clear crystals. The finest jewels appeared spontaneously, raining inexhaustible quantities of gems and beautiful flowers all over the earth. By the Buddha's spiritual power, he caused all the adornments of this enlightenment site to be reflected therein."

(Cleary, Thomas. *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra*)

Wudl has employed formal conventions to translate the textual descriptions of the sutra into dense compositions in which tightly rendered flowers, jewels, geometric forms and club motifs disperse in manifold arrangements – some of which feature paper engineered geodesic constructions that extend beyond the two-dimensional plane. Painted and drawn with pencil, gouache, acrylic and 22K gold powder, Wudl often uses ultra-fine pencils and brushes in order to achieve infinitesimal minute details. He then transcribes the imagery onto delicate tissue-thin materials and papers that speak to the ephemerality of the sutra's teachings. For Wudl, the exacting process requires sustained attentiveness and mindful determination, byproducts achieved through his continued meditation practice.

Intended to be an instrument for meditation, the *Avatamsaka Sutra* illustrates the world as it appears to the Buddha at the moment of enlightenment, where all things are interconnected and interdependent within a cosmos of infinite realms. Just as the

sutra implicates the interdependency of all things, each work by Wudl is interconnected and may be viewed as fragments that inform the collective whole. Every meticulous intricacy speaks to the wonderment and reverie demonstrated in the writings.

In 2018, Wudl began what will be his largest and most complex work made in response to the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. Its title, “Om Mani Padme Hum,” is an ancient Sanskrit mantra that represents the essence of all Buddhist teachings. For Wudl, this ongoing composition is an amalgamation of the subjects and motifs visualized in his work over the past two decades. Still in progress and without a definitive date for completion, Wudl has fully committed himself towards what could be considered the summation of this career to date.



Tom Wudl at work on *Om Mani Padme Hum*, 2018- (shown in progress 2019)

Although inspired by Buddhist principles, the works themselves are not intended to be sacred icons. As a devotee of Buddhism, spirituality has remained at the core of his artistic output; and as a life-long student of Art and Art History, Wudl’s admiration for artists that have embraced the sacred in their work, has encouraged his own artistic pursuits. As a part of this exhibition, a selection of works by these formative “spiritually motivated” artists are presented in conversation with works by Wudl, from Wassily Kandinsky and Agnes Martin, to the Australian Aboriginal artist John Mawurndjul and a 19th century Tibetan Mandala painting. “It is my belief that art has a sacred function,” says Wudl. “The necessity for art is so elemental that it preceded the invention of writing. Art was invented to make the sacred visible by giving form to silent invisible processes that facilitate the unfolding of life.”

A fully illustrated catalogue, with an essay by Tom Wudl and introduction by Kimberly Davis has been produced on occasion of the exhibition.

**Tom Wudl** immigrated to the United States from Cochabamba, Bolivia in 1958. Beginning life in a new country at age ten, Wudl already knew he wanted to become a painter. He earned a BFA from the Chouinard Art Institute, Los Angeles, but gained most of his skills and insight through his independent study of late Medieval and early Renaissance paintings, and travels to the art centers of Europe. Wudl has balanced his painting with a long career teaching art. He has held positions at Art Center College of Design, Pasadena; UCLA; UC Irvine; UC Santa Barbara; Claremont College; and Otis College of Art and Design, in addition to an extensive private teaching practice. Wudl has exhibited widely in museums and galleries throughout the United States and abroad, including *Documenta V*, Kassel (1972); Sezon Museum of Art, Tokyo, and Nagoya City Museum in Japan; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Art; Pasadena Art Museum; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. L.A. Louver has represented Tom Wudl since 1980.

Concurrently on view at L.A. Louver

*Don Suggs: Face-Off* – An exhibition of never-before-seen paintings by Don Suggs (1945-2019), created between 2017-19.

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Third Eye

