



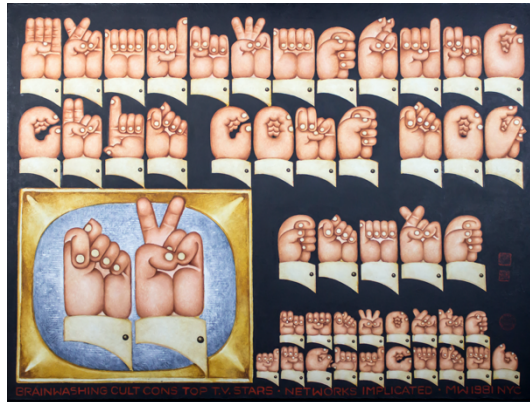
PRESS RELEASE

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BAMPFA Mounts First Exhibition in More Than Two Decades of Work by Renowned Painter Martin Wong

On View September 20–December 10, 2017

***Martin Wong: Human Instamatic* Receives Sole West Coast Presentation at BAMPFA, Including New Archival Materials That Illuminate Artist's Bay Area Roots**



(Berkeley, CA) August 7, 2017—A major exhibition of work by Martin Wong opens at the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive ([BAMPFA](#)) this fall, marking the acclaimed Chinese American artist's first comprehensive retrospective since his untimely death in 1999. **[Martin Wong: Human Instamatic](#)** features more than 100 works by Wong, whose singular aesthetic captures the rhythms of life in the multicultural urban communities he inhabited. BAMPFA's exclusive West Coast presentation of the internationally touring retrospective features an expanded roster of work that highlights the artist's formative emergence in the Northern California art scene of the 1970s.

On view from September 20 through December 10, **Martin Wong: Human Instamatic** surveys the large and eclectic body of work the artist produced over the course of a prolific thirty-year career that was tragically cut short by his death from AIDS-related causes. Though Wong is typically associated with the thriving art scene that emerged in New York's Lower East Side during the 1980s, he grew up in San Francisco's Chinatown and began his practice as a street artist working in San Francisco and Eureka, California. The BAMPFA exhibition highlights many rarely seen works that Wong produced during this early period, including set designs for San Francisco's psychedelic theater troupe the Cockettes; calligraphic poems that reference the artist's Chinatown upbringing; and a series of

portraits that Wong sold to passersby on the streets of Eureka under the nickname “Human Instamatic.”

Martin Wong: Human Instamatic also showcases the large body of work Wong produced after moving to New York in 1978, where he became connected with the city’s Puerto Rican and queer communities through his relationship with the poet Miguel Piñero. Wong turned primarily to painting during this period, producing vivid figurative works that combine social realist and fantastical elements to portray life in the working-class immigrant communities of the Lower East Side. After contracting AIDS in 1994, Wong returned to live with his mother in San Francisco; the exhibition includes a series of enigmatic paintings he produced during these final years, which portray the potted cacti of his mother’s backyard garden.

“Martin Wong was a singular artist whose remarkable creative trajectory was profoundly influenced by the Bay Area’s cultural and creative ferment during the 1970s,” said BAMPFA Director and Chief Curator Lawrence Rinder. “As the sole West Coast venue to present this groundbreaking exploration of Wong’s artistic legacy, we’re pleased to incorporate into the exhibition additional works and rare archival materials that highlight the artist’s deep roots in the Northern California art scene.”

“As an openly gay Chinese American artist from California who integrated himself into New York’s Latino immigrant community, Martin Wong spent his life exploring the nuances of individual and communal identity—an experience that richly informs his body of work, which captures the texture of its time and place even as it anticipates contemporary discourses around intersectionality,” said Adjunct Curator Constance M. Lewallen, who curated the exhibition’s BAMPFA presentation. “By rediscovering the full scope of Wong’s career—from his early contributions to Northern California counterculture, to his indelible depictions of New York’s teeming multiethnic landscape, to the strange and haunting paintings of his final years—visitors to the exhibition will gain a newfound appreciation for the artist’s stylistic breadth and unique voice.”

In conjunction with **Martin Wong: Human Instamatic**, BAMPFA hosts a curator’s talk with Lewallen on Thursday, September 21 at 1 p.m. The exhibition also includes two roundtable discussions about Wong’s life and career, featuring perspectives from a wide range of scholars, curators, and artists—these programs take place on Saturday, October 7 and Saturday, November 11 at 1 p.m., and focus on Wong’s artistic trajectory in San Francisco and New York, respectively. These events, as well as a series of guided exhibition tours with UC Berkeley graduate students, are free with admission; more information is available at BAMPFA’s [website](#).

Support

Martin Wong: Human Instamatic is organized by The Bronx Museum of the Arts and curated by Antonio Sergio Bessa, director of curatorial and education programs, and Yasmin Ramírez, adjunct curator. The exhibition is supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Henry Luce Foundation, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Eric Diefenbach and JK Brown, Florence Wong Fie and the Martin Wong Foundation, Melva Bucksbaum and Raymond Learsy, Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, P.P.O.W Gallery, and other individuals. Archival materials courtesy of the Estate of Martin Wong / P.P.O.W Gallery and Fales Library of New York University.

The BAMPFA presentation is organized by Constance M. Lewallen, adjunct curator, with additional support provided by Florence Wong Fie and the Martin Wong Foundation, the Chu Collection 譽婷堂, KAWS, and Alan and Yenn Lo.



The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

Above

Martin Wong: *Brainwashing Cult Cons Top TV Stars*, 1981; acrylic on canvas; 30 x 40 in.; Bronx Museum of the Arts, Gift of JP Morgan Chase.

Visitor Information

Address

2155 Center Street, Berkeley, CA 94720

Hours

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Information

bampfa.org

(510) 642-0808

Gallery Admission

\$12 general admission

\$10 non-UC Berkeley students, disabled, 65+

Free for BAMPFA members; UC Berkeley students, faculty, staff, and retirees; 18 & under + one adult

Free First Thursdays: Free gallery admission on the first Thursday of each month

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About BAMPFA

An internationally recognized arts institution with deep roots in the Bay Area, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a forum for cultural experiences that transform individuals and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. BAMPFA is UC Berkeley's premier visual arts venue, presenting more than 450 film screenings, scores of public programs, and up to twenty exhibitions annually. With its vibrant and eclectic programming, BAMPFA inspires the imagination and ignites critical dialogue through art, film, and other forms of creative expression.

The institution's collection of more than 19,000 works of art dates from 3000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA's collection also includes more than 17,500 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema

outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, and seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.