

EXHIBITION TOUR INFORMATION**MARTIN WONG: HUMAN INSTAMATIC**

The Bronx Museum of the Arts—October 9, 2015 through February 12, 2016

*Martin Wong: Human Instamatic* will be the first museum retrospective of the work of Chinese-American painter Martin Wong (1946-1999) since his untimely death. This project gains momentum from recent exhibitions examining Wong as a collector and source of inspiration for contemporary artists: *City as Canvas* (Museum of the City of New York, 2014); Dahn Vo, *I M U U R 2* (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2013); and *Taiping Tianguo: Ai Weiwei, Frog King Kwok, Tehching Hsieh, and Martin Wong in New York* (Para Site, Hong Kong, 2012; and e-flux, NY, 2014). In contrast, *Human Instamatic* will offer the first in-depth assessment of Wong's formal contributions as a painter, placing his work in line with such 20th-century painters as Marsden Hartley and Alice Neel, both renowned for their insightful portraits of the communities in which they lived. Co-curated by Sergio Bessa and Yasmin Ramirez, the exhibition will feature over 100 of Wong's paintings with rarely-seen archival materials from the Martin Wong Papers at the Fales Library of New York University.

*Human Instamatic* will explore Wong's engagement with his community as a major concern of his practice. The exhibition will trace Wong's development as an artist, beginning with his transition from an introspective youth in San Francisco painting haunting self-portraits to his self-identification in the mid-1970s as the "Human Instamatic," a street artist selling portraits of passersby in Eureka, CA. *Human Instamatic* will highlight Wong's later years in New York City, where he played a pivotal role in the Lower East Side (LES) arts scene in the 1980s/90s, a period in which he created an oeuvre immortalizing the vibrancy of a resilient, artistic, and multi-ethnic community facing displacement. The exhibition will feature Wong's diaristic renderings of the LES Latino community, NYC's Chinatown, graffiti artists, and later works created in San Francisco, where he returned in 1994. On view at the Bronx Museum from Oct 9, 2015 through Feb 12, 2016, this exhibition will travel to additional venues starting in the spring of 2016.

*Human Instamatic* will be accompanied by a Resource Guide for educators and a 200-page catalog in full color featuring 50 plates, a timeline, an introduction by director Holly Block, a text by Bessa on the role of artists in their communities, and an essay by Ramirez on Wong's paintings of the Latino community in the LES. Additional contributors include: art historian Benjamin Binstock on Wong's place in the history of figurative painting; and poet/critic John Yau on iconography and identity. Public engagement programs will include a panel discussion, curator-led tours, lectures, and activities integrated into the Museum's Education Programs.

<b>Organizer:</b>	The Bronx Museum of the Arts
<b>Curators:</b>	Sergio Bessa and Yasmin Ramirez
<b>Space Requirements:</b>	9,000 square feet
<b>Participation Fee:</b>	\$50,000
<b>Shared Costs:</b>	Pro-rated shipping—insurance provided by The Bronx Museum of the Art
<b>Date:</b>	Exhibition available for travel beginning spring 2016
<b>Contact:</b>	Sergio Bessa: <a href="mailto:sbessa@bronxmuseum.org">sbessa@bronxmuseum.org</a> 347-820-4230

**ABOUT MARTIN WONG:** born in Portland, Oregon, in 1946, Martin Wong was raised in San Francisco, California, and came of age during the city's blossoming countercultural movement. He studied art at Humboldt State University (1964-1968) and after graduation worked closely with the legendary performance art collectives Angels of Light and the Cockettes in San Francisco. Wong created elaborate sets and costumes for these collectives and documented their work from a rare insider's point of view. In 1978, Wong moved to New York City, first occupying a room at the Meyer's Hotel, which he described in a letter to a friend as the last remaining single occupancy hotel at the waterfront. In 1982, he relocated to the Lower East Side until his return to San Francisco in the late '90s, when he lived under his parents' care while fighting AIDS. Martin Wong died in 1999.

#### **ABOUT THE CURATORS:**

**Sergio Bessa, Ph. D.,** is the Director of Curatorial and Educational Programs at the Bronx Museum. A concrete poetry scholar, Bessa has numerous essays published on the subject and is the author of *Öyvind Fahlström—The Art of Writing*. He is the editor of several volumes including *Novas—Selected Writings of Haroldo de Campos*, and *Toward a Theory of Concrete Poetry—The Collected Writings of Mary Ellen Solt*, and the forthcoming *Beyond the Super-square—Art and Architecture in Latin America*. As a curator, Bessa has organized several exhibitions including the 3<sup>rd</sup> Trienal Poli/Grafica de San Juan (in collaboration with Deborah Cullen), 2012; *Intersections—The Grand Concourse at 100* (2009), *Joan Semmel—A Lucid Eye* (2013), and *Paulo Bruscky—Art is our Last Hope* (2013) at The Bronx Museum of the Arts.

**Yasmín Ramírez, Ph.D.,** is an art historian and Adjunct Curator at the Bronx Museum. She earned her Ph.D. in Art History from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and is currently writing a book based on her dissertation "Nuyorican Vanguards: The Puerto Rican Art Movement in New York, 1964-1984." Dr. Ramirez was a research associate at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, from 2006 to 2012 where she oversaw digitization of writings on Puerto Rican artists in the Center's collection for inclusion in an on-line database of Latino and Latin American art organized by the International Center for Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Prior to her appointment at Hunter, Dr. Ramirez was adjunct curator at El Museo del Barrio from 1999-2001 and the curator of Taller Boricua from 1996-1998. Ramirez, a friend of Martin Wong's for eighteen years, has published two important papers on his life and work ("The Life and Writings of Miguel Piñero in the Art of Martin Wong," *Sweet Oblivion*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998; and "Martin Wong: Chino Malo," *Fresh Talk/Daring Gazes, Conversations on Asian American Art*, University of California Press, 2003).

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TRAVEL CALENDAR

FALL/WINTER 2015-16: The Bronx Museum of the Arts (October 9, 2015 through February 12, 2016)

SPRING/SUMMER 2016: AVAILABLE

FALL/WINTER 2016-17: RESERVED

SPRING/SUMMER 2017: RESERVED

FALL/WINTER 2017-18: AVAILABLE

For inquiries contact Sergio Bessa at [sbessa@bronxmuseum.org](mailto:sbessa@bronxmuseum.org)

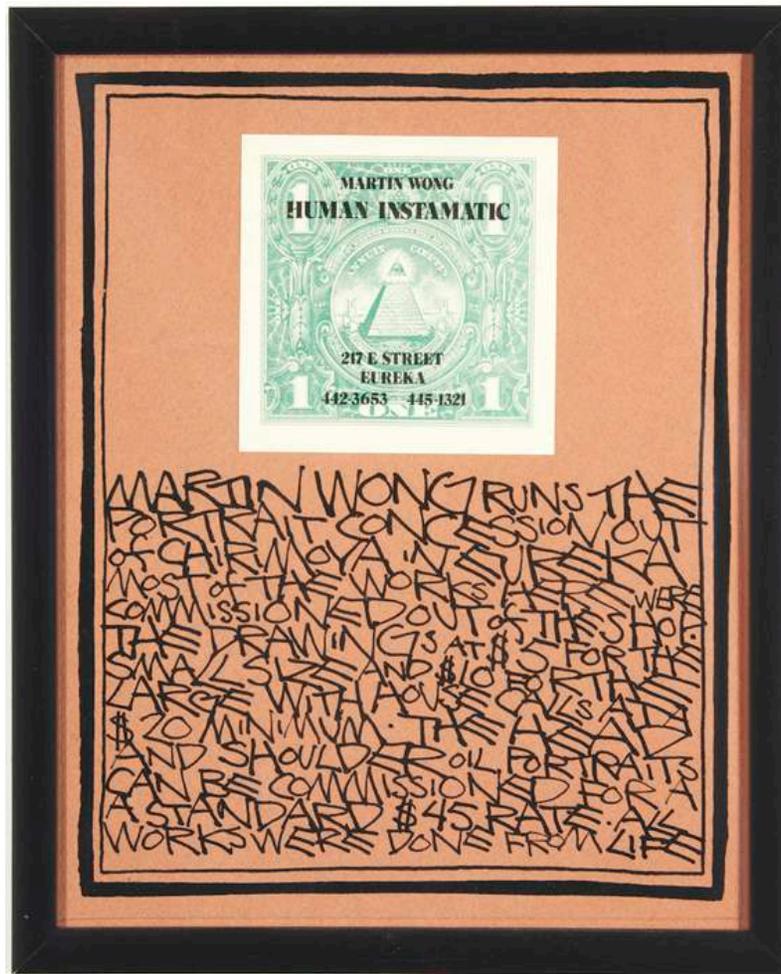


Series of self-portraits, early 1960s

Acrylic on canvas

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the Estate of Martin Wong and P.P.O.W, New York



*Untitled (dollar-poem)*

11 3/4 x 8 3/4 inches

Courtesy of the Estate of Martin Wong and P.P.O.W, New York



*Self-portrait*, 1993

Acrylic on canvas

40 inches diameter

Courtesy of the Estate of Martin Wong and P.P.O.W, New York



*My Secret World, 1978-81, 1984*

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 68 inches

Private collection (Sharon, CT)



*Orion*, 1984

Acrylic on canvas

30 inch diameter

Private collection (Bethesda, MD)



*Sweet Oblivion*, 1983

Acrylic on canvas

84 x 108 inches

Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago



*Attorney Street: Handball Court with Autobiographical Poem*

by Pinero, 1982-84

Oil on canvas

35 1/2 x 48 inches

Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art



*Chinese Hand Laundry, 1984*

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 69 inches, 2 side panels, 20 x 12 inches

Courtesy of the Estate of Martin Wong and P.P.O.W, New York



*African Temple at 9th St., 1985*

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 96 inches

Private Collection



*La Vida*, 1988

Acrylic on canvas

96 x 114 inches

Collection of the Yale University Art Gallery