

Martin Wong  
*Malicious Mischief*  
16 June/17 September

Martin Wong, *Tell My Troubles to the Eight Ball*, 1978.  
Acrylic on canvas with hand painted frame, 91.44 x 91.44  
cm © Martin Wong Foundation. Courtesy Martin Wong  
Foundation and P.P.O.W Gallery, New York.



Camden Art Centre is delighted to announce *Martin Wong – Malicious Mischief* - a major survey exhibition of work by celebrated Chinese-American artist Martin Wong (1946–1999, US). Spanning the breadth of his practice including painting, drawing and ceramic sculpture, as well as presenting video footage of him at work in his studio, this will be the first solo exhibition of his work in a UK institution.

Martin Wong's practice draws on and merges various visual languages, including Chinese iconography, portraiture, landscape, urban poetry, graffiti and sign language. Recognised for his depictions of social, sexual, and political scenographies in the United States from 1970s to 1990s, he weaves together narratives of queer existence, marginal communities, and urban gentrification. Emerging as an important countercultural voice at odds with the art establishment's reactionary discourse at the time, his work offers an insight into decisive periods of recent United States history. In the role of an urban chronicler and a critical observer, Wong poetically portrays social realism while opening up spaces of beauty and inclusion. Within these spaces, the existing social relations of class, race, and sexual orientation can be reconsidered and reshaped.

*Martin Wong – Malicious Mischief* is presented in thematic rooms, guided by Wong's own artistic biography, including: Wong's multi-layered universe as seen through his early paintings, poems and sculptures made in the euphoric 1960s and early 1970s environments of San Francisco and Eureka, California, where he grew up as the only son of American-born Chinese parents; his iconic 1980s and 1990s paintings of a dilapidated New York City, made during his time on the Lower East Side; as well as his reminiscences on the imagery of the East and West Coast Chinatowns, made prior to his premature death from an AIDS/HIV-related illness. The exhibition is named after a series of significant eponymous works from 1991–98 that broadly represent the concept of the "outlaw," which Wong embraced and fetishised throughout his career, from the juvenile delinquents of Manhattan's Lower East Side (Loisaida) to the graffiti artists he befriended who operated under cover of night.

Initiated by KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin and produced in collaboration with Camden Art Centre, London; Museo Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (CA2M), Madrid; and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, this European tour is the first extensive international display of the artist's work outside of the United States.

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive publication, co-published with Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König.

*Martin Wong Malicious Mischief* is made possible through support from the Terra Foundation for American Art with the generous support of The Martin Wong Foundation, P.P.O.W, New York, KAWS, and Galerie Buchholz. The presentation at Camden Art Centre is also generously supported by Arts Council England, by our Lead Donors and by Members of our Martin Wong Exhibition Circle.

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive publication, co-published with Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König and funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation (Kulturstiftung des Bundes) and the German Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien).

The exhibition is curated by Krist Gruijthuijsen and Agustín Pérez Rubio and produced in London by Camden Art Centre.

#### Notes to editors

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#### Camden Art Centre

Camden Art Centre is a place for world-class contemporary art exhibitions and education. Situated in Hampstead, North London (charity number 1065829) Camden Art Centre is a place for art and artists; a place for the curious, the novice and the expert alike. It's a place to see, to make, to learn and to talk about contemporary art, whether in our building, attending off-site projects or via our digital forums. Founded by artists in 1965, the Centre continues to be a space for the most vital and diverse mix of practices and ideas and is dedicated to supporting artists at every stage of their careers.

#### Biography

Martin Wong (1946-1999) was born in Portland, Oregon and raised in San Francisco, California. He studied ceramics at Humboldt State University, graduating in 1968. Wong was active in the performance art groups The Cockettes and Angels of Light Free Theater before moving to New York in 1978. He exhibited for two decades at notable downtown galleries including EXIT ART, Semaphore, and P·P·O·W, among others, before his passing in San Francisco from an AIDS related illness. His work is represented in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Whitney Museum of American Art (all New York). As well as Cleveland Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among others. The exhibition *Human Instamatic* opened at the Bronx Museum of The Arts in November 2015, before traveling to the Wexner Center for the Arts in 2016 and the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive in 2017.



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