

Press Release

Martin Wong

Malicious Mischief

Berlin, 31 January 2023

KW Institute for Contemporary Art is pleased to present its Spring Program of 2023 with a focus on *interiority* and *exteriority*. These reflections on the physical and psychological conditions of architecture and city planning inform the work of **Martin Wong**, **Win McCarthy**, and **Karen Lamassonne**, in which notions of 'the self' are being constructed.



Martin Wong, *Tell My Troubles to the Eight Ball (Eureka)*, 1978–81. Courtesy of the Martin Wong Foundation and P.P.O.W, New York © Martin Wong Foundation.

Martin Wong***Malicious Mischief***

25 February – 14 May 2023

Curators: Krist Gruijthuijsen, Agustín Pérez Rubio

Assistant Curator: Sofie Krogh Christensen

Martin Wong (1946–1999, US) is recognized for his depictions of social, sexual, and political scenographies in the United States from 1970s to 1990s. Poetically weaving together narratives of queer existence, marginal communities, and urban gentrification, Wong stands out as an important countercultural voice at odds with the art establishment's reactionary discourse at the time. Heavily influenced by the artist's immediate surroundings, Wong's practice merges the visual languages of Chinese iconography, portraiture, landscape, urban poetry, graffiti, carceral aesthetics, and sign language. His work offers a valuable insight into decisive periods of recent United States history as told through its changing urban landscapes, unfolding hidden desires, and complexities. In the role of an urban chronicler and a critical observer, Wong poetically portrays social realism, transcending harsh realities 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 divided in thematic rooms, guided by Wong's own artistic biography: the exhibition reflects on Wong's multilayered 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 from his time as a citizen of a dilapidated New York City, 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 fetishized throughout his career, from the juvenile delinquents of Manhattan's Lower East Side (Loisaida) to his befriended graffiti artists operating at night.

Martin Wong – Malicious Mischief is the first international extensive display of the artist's work outside of the United States, initiated by KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin and produced in collaboration with Museo Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (CA2M), Móstoles, Madrid; Camden Art Centre, London; and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. 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. The publication and the exhibition at KW are funded by Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation). Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation) is funded by the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (German Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media). With the generous support of The Martin Wong Foundation, P.P.O.W, New York, KAWS, and Galerie Buchholz.

Press contact

Anna Falck-Ytter
Tel. +49 30 243459-134
press@kw-berlin.de

KW Institute for Contemporary Art

Auguststraße 69
10117 Berlin
www.kw-berlin.de

KW Institute for Contemporary Art is institutionally supported by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe, Berlin.

The exhibitions and projects within the Spring Program 2023 are in collaboration with and/or supported by:



Funded by the
German Federal Cultural Foundation



Funded by the Federal Government
Commissioner for Culture and the Media



Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung
für Kultur und Medien



Camden Art Centre
Arkwright Road
London NW3



Yorck
Kinogruppe



Titles and exhibition dates are subject to change