

Cantor Arts Center

Cantor Arts Center unveils three major exhibitions and convening as part of its Asian American Art Initiative, further establishing Stanford University as leading academic and curatorial center for Asian American art



(STANFORD, CA) – The **Cantor Arts Center** at Stanford University recently launched an initiative to promote curatorial and scholarly engagement with the work of Asian American and Asian diaspora artists by establishing the **Asian American Art Initiative (AAAI)**—a series of long-term installations, special exhibitions, research and education projects that operate in tandem with the museum’s ever-expanding collection of works by Asian American and Asian diaspora artists such as Bernice Bing, Isamu Noguchi, Nam June Paik, Roger Shimomura, Stephanie Syjuco, Binh Danh, Patty Chang and Toshiko Takaezu, which includes over **200 recent acquisitions** and the archival collections of **Stanford Libraries and Special Collections**.

After four years of research and planning, AAAI unveiled on July 5, 2022 the ***The Faces of Ruth Asawa***—an installation of 233 ceramic masks of family and friends that were formerly installed on the exterior of Asawa’s home in San Francisco—which marks the first of three major exhibitions of the AAAI and will remain on view indefinitely. This fall, the AAAI will further expand into the museum’s galleries with the presentation of two exhibitions that feature its growing collection: ***At Home/On Stage: Asian American Representation in Photography and Film*** (Aug 31, 2022–Jan 15, 2023), which examines how work by Asian American artists participates in conversations around identity and employ a range of strategies to not only redress negative representation but critique the idea of representation itself; and ***East of the Pacific: Making Histories of Asian American Art*** (Sep 28, 2022–Feb 12, 2023), a historical

and thematic survey showcasing 96 objects created between 1860 and 2021 that explores how Asian Americans helped shape the course of American art.

As a long-term institutional commitment dedicated to the study of artists and makers of Asian descent, the AAI was established by **Aleesa Pitchamarn Alexander**, Assistant Curator of American Art at the Cantor, and **Marci Kwon**, Assistant Professor of Art & Art History. Undertaking a cross-disciplinary approach to the historicization, preservation, and exhibition of important, and often overlooked, cultural narratives pertaining to the art of Asian Americans, the mission of the AAI is to prioritize a deep engagement with primary source materials, foster critical scholarship, produce public programs, and steward a future generation of art historians, curators, and leaders in the field.



In order to foster further engagement outside of exhibition spaces and classrooms, the AAI will hold its first convening titled **IMU UR2: Art, Aesthetics, and Asian America** (October 28-29), which brings together 35 artists, curators, and academics to rethink and reimagine the pasts and futures of Asian American art. Featuring keynote speaker **Cathy Park Hong** (author of *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*), the convening will include six panels taking place over two days that address a wide range of topics such as history, activism, race, gender and sexuality, and institutional interventions. This event will also serve as the official launch of the **Martin Wong Online Catalogue Raisonné**, which was created by AAI and **Stanford Libraries** in collaboration with the **Martin Wong Foundation**. Working collaboratively with the Stanford Libraries and its robust selection of archival holdings—such as the **Ruth Asawa papers**—the AAI and its varied projects further the Cantor’s mission to make vital educational and scholarly resources on Asian American/diaspora art and artists widely accessible, establishing Stanford’s role as a leading archival resource in the field.

The AAI co-founder and Cantor curator **Aleesa Pitchamarn Alexander** says: “Stanford is the ideal place for the AAI, especially when one considers the history of the Bay Area and the museum’s plurality of audiences. Our recent acquisitions not only fundamentally change the Cantor’s collection of American art—transforming us into one of the leading collections of Asian American art in the country—they are also poised to help change the history of American art as it has been written thus far.”

Marci Kwon, AAI co-founder and assistant professor in the Stanford Department of Art & Art History, adds: “The study of Asian American artists sheds light on the entwined histories of racism, settler colonialism, and capitalism, which have affected all ethnic groups in this country. Their work helps us see the myriad ways people of color have lived, struggled, and survived.”

Continues newly appointed Cantor **Director Veronica Roberts**: “I am honored to have joined the Cantor at this pivotal moment in its history and to work with the AAI founders on stewarding the museum’s collection toward a new and more equitable vision for the future. By spearheading a truly groundbreaking approach to the collecting, preservation, scholarship, and historicization of Asian American/diaspora art

and artists, the AAI is poised to lead the Cantor into a new and important chapter that will impact the field of Asian American/diaspora art around the world.”

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS:



At Home/On Stage: Asian American Representation in Photography and Film

August 31, 2022 – January 15, 2023

Curated by Maggie Dethloff, *At Home/On Stage* is premised on the idea that photography, film, and video are key mediums in considering histories of representation. Bringing together photographs of Asian Americans in their home lives, Asian American artist portraits, and conceptual projects re-appropriating found art historical and cinematic imagery, *At Home/On Stage* responds to the lack of positive representation of Asian Americans in mainstream American visual and performing arts in the past by highlighting the range of strategies employed by contemporary Asian American artists to redress negative representation as well as critique the idea of representation itself.



East of the Pacific: Making Histories of Asian American Art

September 28, 2022 – February 12, 2023

East of the Pacific, curated by Aleesa Pitchamarn Alexander, is the largest of the three inaugural Asian American Art Initiative (AAAI) exhibitions opening at the Cantor Arts Center in 2022. This historical and thematic survey showcases the Cantor's ever-growing Asian American art collection, featuring 96 objects created between 1860 and 2021, and offering a rare opportunity to engage with a vast chronological range of material made by historic Asian American and Asian diaspora artists. *East of the Pacific* argues that the continental United States' western coast was—and continues to be—fundamentally shaped by its interactions with Asia, which is especially evident in its artistic production.

ABOUT THE ASIAN AMERICAN ART INITIATIVE:

Based at the Cantor Arts Center, the Asian American Art Initiative (AAAI) is dedicated to the study of artists and makers of Asian descent. Founded by Aleesa Pitchamarn Alexander, Assistant Curator of American Art at the Cantor, and Marci Kwon, Assistant Professor of Art History at Stanford, and announced in January 2021, the AAI encompasses a range of activities, including: collecting and exhibiting works of Asian American and Asian diaspora artists; preserving archival materials; fostering undergraduate and graduate education; and cultivating community collaboration and dialogue through public programming.

The AAI aims to establish Stanford as a leading academic and curatorial center for the study of Asian American and Asian diaspora artists. Rather than a discrete identity category, the AAI approaches the term “Asian American” as a diverse and relational term that signifies the interplay of social inclusion, exclusion, and racialization, as well as connections among East, Southeast, and South Asia; the Pacific Islands; and the Americas. The AAI strives to foster innovative, interdisciplinary research into the work by Asian American and Asian diaspora makers.

ABOUT THE CANTOR ARTS CENTER:

Serving the Stanford campus, the Bay Area community, and visitors from around the world, the Cantor Arts Center provides an outstanding cultural experience for visitors of all ages. Founded when the university opened in 1891, the historic museum was expanded and renamed in 1999 for lead donors Iris and B. Gerald Cantor. The Cantor’s collection spans 5,000 years and includes more than 41,000 works of art from around the globe. The Cantor is an established resource for teaching and research on campus. Free admission, tours, lectures, and family activities make the Cantor one of the most visited university art museums in the country.

IMAGES: **Ruth Asawa** with life masks on the exterior wall of her house. Photography by Terry Schmitt. Artwork: *Untitled (LC.012, Wall of Masks)*, c. 1966–2000. Ceramic, bisque-fired clay. © 2022 Ruth Asawa Lanier, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy David Zwirner. **Martin Wong** (American, 1946-1999) *Chinatown Dragon*, 1993. Acrylic on canvas. Cantor Arts Center, Gift of The Martin Wong Foundation. **Gloria Wong** (Canadian, born in 1998). *Ngan*, 2020. Archival pigment print. Cantor Arts Center, Gift of the artist in support of the Asian American Art Initiative. **George Matsusaburo Hibi** (American, born in Japan, 1886–1947), *Three Muses*, 1930. Oil on canvas. Cantor Arts Center, The Michael Donald Brown Collection, made possible by the William Alden Campbell and Martha Campbell Art Acquisition Fund and the Asian American Art Initiative Acquisitions Fund.

VISIT THE MUSEUM:

Cantor Arts Center
328 Lomita Drive at Museum Way
Stanford, CA
T: 650-723-4177
<https://museum.stanford.edu/>

Wednesday – Sunday
11:00am – 5:00pm
FREE ADMISSION

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