Asian American Art History

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“a distinctly Asian American culture and sensibility”—“arose out of a perception that, despite differences in background, Asian groups shared common struggles to establish themselves in this nation, in the face of histories too often marked by discrimination, racism, and economic exploitation.” (Machida, 257)

“Beginning in the 1970s, a significant body of foundational scholarship and critical writing on Asian American visual artists and issues were generated by community-based and ethnic-specific cultural organizations….Besides acting as incubators for new generations of artists, those institutions have typically served as an interface with the majority culture, making the art and ideas visible and intelligible to wider audiences.” (Machida, 257)
Kearny Street Workshop (KSW) founded as an artists’ collective in 1972 in the International Hotel on San Francisco’s Kearny Street. The founders -- Jim Dong, Lora Joh Foo, and Mike Chin -- and early leaders were involved with the Asian American movement. They were evicted from the I-Hotel, along with the building’s elderly Filipino tenants, in one of San Francisco’s longest and most contentious development battles over low-income housing. KSW continues today with programs (poetry r& play readings, music, gallery exhibitions), namely, the annual Asian American Jazz Festival and the emerging artists festival APAture.
Political Posters: Nancy Hom
“Cinco de Mayo”
ARTS AND CRAFTS WORKSHOPS
ARE HAPPENING FOR THE FALL SESSION

CLASSES IN JEWELRY, GUITAR,
CERAMICS, PHOTOGRAPHY,
SEWING, LEATHER, ETC.

SIGN UPS AT KEARNY STREET WORKSHOP
854 KEARNY ST. BEGINS DURING OCT.

KEARNY ST. WORKSHOP
ASIAN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY CLASSES

Beginning Photography  Thu. 7:30  starts Apr. 7  staff
Photography II        Tue. 7:30  starts Apr. 5  student
Photo Journalism & Projects Wed. 7:30  starts Apr. 6

Sign up at Kearny St. Workshop - 854 Kearny St.
$6 lab fee - Dr info call 982-7425
KSW community event & arts exhibit posters

Left:

**URBAN RENEWAL**

and the Destruction of Nihonmachi

A COMMUNITY FORUM

- SATURDAY JUNE 21, 1975 7:30 pm
- MORNING STAR SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
  Octavia & Pine Sts.

PROGRAM: slide shows, panel discussion
photo exhibit, songs, speaker from CANE

Sponsored by an Asian-American Studies class at San Francisco State University

Right:

**ANGEL ISLAND**

An exhibition of the Chinese experience at the Immigration Station.

Jan 10 – Mar 2, 1976
Jackson St. Gallery 565 Jackson St. S.F.
Murals:
Bring art into the public sphere
Due to the size, cost, and work involved, muralists must often be commissioned by a sponsor. Often local government or a business
Work gets a wide audience
Can have a dramatic impact whether consciously or subconsciously on the attitudes of passers by

“The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of City” (Diego Rivera) (right)
Murals: Megan Wilson
“Tax the Rich” (Clarion Alley, San Francisco)
Murals: Johanna Poethig
“People Power” (Alemany Street, San Francisco)
Murals: Johanna Poethig
“International Hotel”
Carlos Villa (1936-2013) was a Filipino-American visual artist, curator and faculty member in the Painting Department at the San Francisco Art Institute. Villa created multimedia he called "Actions," often group collaborations which dealt with multicultural topics.

In 1976 curated a multidisciplinary exhibition named *Other Sources: An American Essay*, and showcased work by artists of color. This exhibition recontextualized and showcased contemporary Bay Area art by featured people of color and women.
**Basement Workshop** (1970-1986): Asian-American political and arts organization in New York City active from 1970-1986. It was created during the Asian American Movement and acted as an umbrella organization to writers, visual artists, dancers and choreographers, and activists. It published *Bridge* Magazine and sponsored exhibitions and after school programs. Artists such as Tomie Arai, Fay Chiang, Larry Hama, Arlan Huang, Jessica Hagedorn, Jason Kao Hwang, and Chris Iijima were involved. Basement pawned numerous other organizations, including the Asian American Dance Theater, Asian American Arts Centre, Godzilla Asian American Arts Network, and Museum of Chinese in America.
Tomie Arai (1949-present): an Asian American artist and community activist who was born, raised, and is still active in New York City. A third generation Japanese American, her parents are from Hawaii and California and her grandparents were farmers who settled in the country in the early 1900s. Her experiences growing up Asian American in New York City deeply color her work as an artist, as many of her works deal with the urban experience and attempt to make connections to her family and community through art. She joined the Basement Workshop in 1972 and there, learned about Asian American activism and making art along with other Asian American artists, including Arlan Huang. In the 1980s, Arai began to focus on printmaking.
Framing an American Identity (Mixed media, silkscreen, glass, wood, twine, dimensions variable) 
Godzilla (1990-early 2000s): an arts collective and support network for Asian Americans. In first newsletter published in Spring 1991, the group described its mission: ‘Our goal is to establish a dynamic forum that will foster information exchange, mutual support, documentation, and networking among the expanding numbers of Asian American visual artists across the United States.” (Chang, 45) By 1997, it had a membership of 231 artists (with 166 members on the mailing list). “The newsletter was a vital part of the group, not only for communication, but as historical evidence of its existence.” (Chang, 44)

Their strategy: to work within both established and alternative art world institutions to promote and exhibit Asian American artists
Allan deSouza (1958-present) currently lives and works in San Francisco, where he is an Associate Professor in the Department of Art Practice at the University of California, Berkeley. Born in Nairobi, Kenya, to parents originally from Goa, India, deSouza moved to London, England when he was seven, and was educated in both the UK and the United States. A traveler and member of an increasingly cross-national, global culture since birth, deSouza engages with issues of migration, relocation, and international travel in much of his work. The inheritor of the ideas and issues of colonialism and postcolonialism, his photoworks, texts, and installations re-examine historically-fraught meanings of geography, culture, and personal and communal identity.
The Redactions series (2010, C-prints, 55” x 40”) The Redactions series consists of erased, or redacted reproductions of paintings by Paul Gauguin and Henri Rousseau. The two artists were chosen for their fantasies of colonial escapes, with Gauguin constantly on the move, and Rousseau never having left France. The color of each redaction is selected from the “furthest” point in the painting, usually near the horizon if it is an exterior view, or a back wall if it is an interior. The redactions are carried out digitally, in a process that falls somewhere between the accumulation of a rubbing—where the textures and contours of a surface beneath are “rubbed” onto a surface above; and a rubbing out, or an erasure.
“While the term Asian American was imbued with empowerment during the post Civil Rights era of the mid-70s and mid-80s, the term’s conscious appropriation was reflected in the term ‘Asian American art.’ But slowly in the ‘80s, the term was again reincorporated into mainstream categorization through the institutionalization of multiculturalism. By the early ‘90s, there was already a backlash against multiculturalism as evidence by the controversial process of the NEA’s awarding of a grant to artist Mel Chin.” (Chang, 58)
**Giant Robot**: bi-monthly magazine that ran from 1994-2011. Started by Eric Nakamura and Martin Wong. The publication grew from its original format—a small, photocopied zine, folded and stapled by hand—to its current full-color format. Giant Robot was one of the earliest American publications to feature prominent Asian film stars such as Chow Yun-fat and Jet Li, as well as Asian musicians from indie and punk rock bands. The coverage later expanded into art, design, Asian American issues, travel, and much more.
“Cat & Carm” (2008)
(gold leaf & oil on wood)
“Candace & a Forty” (left) (colored pencil & glitter on paper)
“Sandy & Siouxsie (right) (colored pencil & glitter on paper)