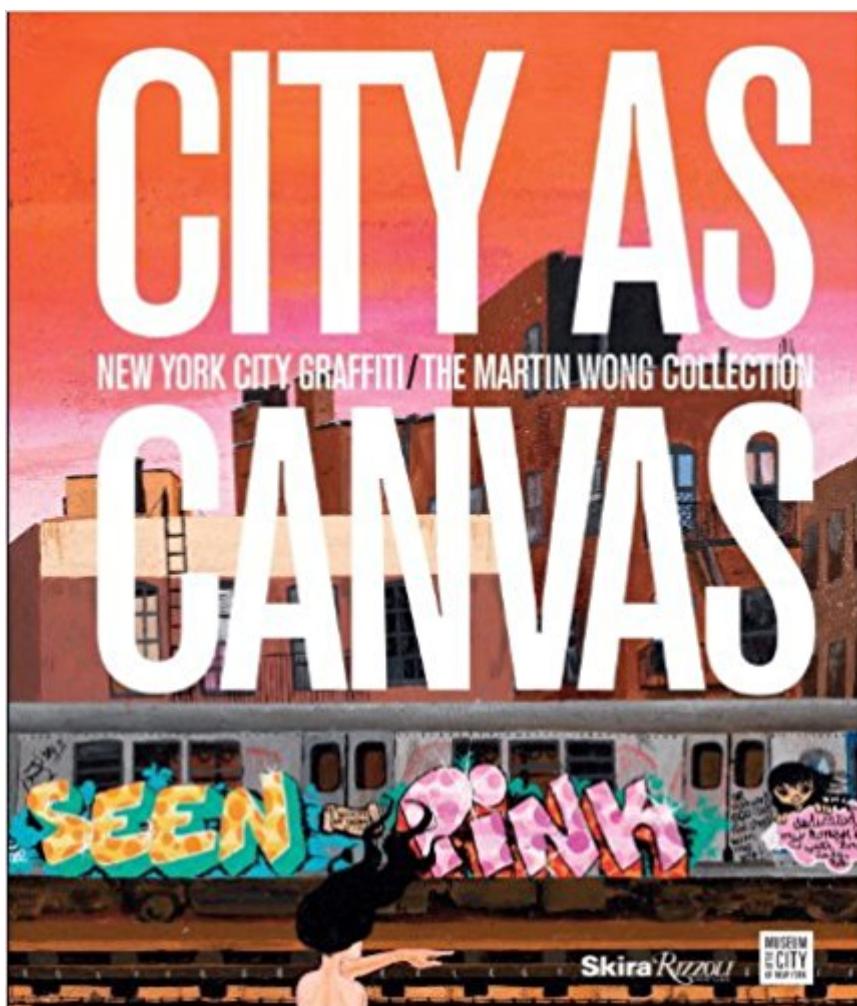


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# **City As Canvas: New York City Graffiti From The Martin Wong Collection**



## Synopsis

A visual account of the birth of graffiti and street art, showcasing as-yet-unseen works collected by preeminent artist Martin Wong. Referred to by the New York Times as an artist "whose meticulous visionary realism is among the lasting legacies of New York's East Village art scene of the 1980s," Martin Wong (1946–1999) was firmly entrenched in the NYC street art world of the late 1970s and 1980s. *City as Canvas* chronicles the most important chapter in the street art movement and the artists involved. Showcasing Wong's enormous graffiti art collection, the book contains artwork, photographs, black books, letters, postcards, posters, and flyers made by Wong and his artist friends. The book contains previously unpublished art by famous street artists such as Futura 2000, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Christopher "Daze" Ellis, LA II, Lady Pink, and Keith Haring, to name only a few. *City as Canvas* traces the origins of urban self-expression and the era of "outlaw" street art in New York, which primed the floodgates for graffiti art to spread worldwide. Exhibition Schedule: Museum of the City of New York: Opens October 2013

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Street art books are easy to find but ones like *City As Canvas* are rare. Offering authentic history & deep context, it chronicles the crucial first chapter of the emergence of graffiti & early street art. Werd "Dwelling in the resplendent squalor of Wong's apartment is precisely the experience the curators Sean Corcoran and Carlo McCormick recreate in *City as Canvas*, an accounting of Wong's huge personal trove and its place in history, with

reflections on the man by his artist friends." ~The New York Times

Writer and curator Carlo McCormick is the author of numerous books on contemporary art and artists. His writing has appeared in Art in America, Art News, Artforum, Spin, Tokion, and Vice, among other publications. He is the senior editor of Paper magazine. Sean Corcoran is the Curator of Prints and Photography at the Museum of the City of New York. Sacha Jenkins is a journalist, author, and TV producer. His writing has appeared in Vibe, Spin, Rolling Stone, Complex, and Mass Appeal. Christopher "Daze" Ellis is a street and studio artist. Lee Quinones is a street artist and actor.

Got this for my street artist nephew who said it was great. He was with us on vacation and I did notice him looking at it a lot. He said it was very interesting and a great resource!

Cool Book. As a collector of artwork of friends and peers, I appreciate how the collection has an opportunity to be enjoyed by the public.

cool book for a gift

An excellent catalog of an important exhibit for anyone interested in graffiti art.

Very few graffiti pictures, some nice pieces don't get me wrong. But the majority of it is Street Art. :(

What happens when artists that had done art that wouldn't last do permanent art? How do self taught outsider artists adapt public art for galleries? What happens when a downtown NYC artist is introduced to collecting art from the graffiti art movement? Are the sketchbooks belonging to and passed around important? It's all answered in this book. Martin Wong [a downtown NYC artist building his career with both photorealism documentation of the Lower East Side and words written with sign language hands] spent years collecting important works of art from the graffiti art movement. This collection was started in the early 1980s, and continued until it was donated in 1994. The work dates from 1970 to 1994 at the latest. This book takes the movement back to the roots, and shows how the roots grew. The pieces and drawings in this book are key in the history of the art movement. I won't mention the artists by name, there are too many to mention. There are about 3 dozen that shouldn't be left out. Yes, that many are important. Martin had a great eye for

what is important. The book includes martin's history, and graffiti art history. The book has graffiti art masterpieces by some of the most important writers. It also has part of the best black book sketchbook collection. As a bonus there are some of Martin's paintings. If you are reading this review, you are someone who needs this book. It's a key book that should make any list of books important to the graffiti art movement. Page One

Legendary painter Martin Wong loved all things graffiti, especially the artists. He voraciously collected their work at a time when commercial interest had waned and money was scarce. Truth be told, Wong knew the people better than he knew graffiti and collected everything. In baseball if you strike out seven out of ten times , you're a .300 hitter and a shoe-in to make the All-Star team. Wong amassed a collection of 55 black books and more than twice as many canvases depicting the beginnings of street art and graffiti. Wicked Gary's tag collection (1970-1972) documents the signatures of the earliest writers to ever uncap a marker and Chi Chi 133's black book from 1974 captures the baddest of the bad during the masterpiece era. Most of the work collected , generated in the 80's captures many of the artists during their peak. Rare in it's duality Wong's collection contains works by Haring, Kenny Scharf who helped establish street art in NYC as well as A.One, Rammel Zee , Toxic and Koor who gained notoriety predominately from the gallery world. Wong had a great attitude about the duds he collected, always turning lemons into lemonade. When he discovered that a drawing he purchased by Phase 2 was a clever forgery by Delta 2 he remarked: "It may be a fake Phase , but it's still a real Delta." Wong donated his collection to The Museum of The City of NY in 1994 after learning he had AIDS. It took two decades for the political climate in graffiti's Mecca to cool to the point where the collection could finally be shown. The efforts of art historian Carlo McCormick and MCNY's photo curator Sean Corcoran are responsible for City as Canvas and the celebration of the labor of love that Wong's collection represents. Corcoran, immersed himself in graffiti culture, reaching out to as many of the artists as he could to learn about Wong, graffiti and ask for permission to reproduce their work in this masterpiece of a book. Corcoran's efforts reaped big dividends the visual result , an informed filtering of the collection, that gives the reader a beautiful snapshot of art making its transition from rebellion to legitimacy. My favorite drawings include works several years apart by Tracy 168 that show his evolution as an artist, one of the greatest the culture ever produced, though he might argue that he produced the

culture. Other gems include super early work from style architects Phase 2 and Riff 170 and selections from an all Death Squad book that includes evidence as to why the culture coronated the late great Kase 2 , the King of Style. Especially poignant are the essays by Lee Quinones , who shared an apartment with Wong for a short time, Chris ÅfÅcÃ ¸ Ä“DazeÅfÅcÃ ¸ Ä“ Ellis and Aaron ÅfÅcÃ ¸ Ä“SharpÅfÅcÃ ¸ Ä“ Goodstone. Wong collected their work and drew them into his inner sanctum like moths to a flame. Martin Wong was one of my best friends and the best painter IÅfÅcÃ ¸ Ä“ Å„cve had the pleasure to know. If you are in NYC you have the rare opportunity to view 150 works from his collection at The Museum of The City of New York. If not , buy this book. Or better yet, do both. The best thing I can say to the authors is that I think Martin Wong would have loved this book. Thank you for honoring his memory.

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