

GALLERY CONTACTS:

LISSA CRAMER
Exhibitions Coordinator
lissa.cramer@tufts.edu
617.627.3088

AMY I. SCHLEGEL
Director
amy.schlegel@tufts.edu
617.627.3505

Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera

January 21-May 22, 2016



Tseng Kwong Chi, *New York, New York (World Trade Center)*, 1979, from the *East Meets West* series. Gelatin silver print, printed 2005. Courtesy Muna Tseng Dance Projects, Inc., New York.

MEDFORD, MA - The Tufts University Art Gallery at the Shirley and Alex Aidekman Arts Center proudly presents **Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera**, from January 21 through May 22, 2016. This exhibition is the first major museum retrospective of works by Tseng Kwong Chi (1950-1990), a prolific artist and key documentarian of Manhattan's downtown scene in the 1980s. In combining photography with performance, personal identity with global politics, and satire with farce, Tseng created a compelling body of work whose complexity is belied by its easy humor and grace. A public opening reception will take place on January 26, from 5 to 7:30 pm.

Performing for the Camera features over 80 photo-based works alongside archival materials by the Hong Kong-born artist, who died in 1990 at the age of 39 from AIDS-related complications. In addition to works from the artist's best-known *East Meets West* and *Expeditionary* series and nine images of his close friend Keith Haring's drawings in New York city subways, **Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera** presents over 60 examples from less well-known bodies of work.

For his landmark *East Meets West* series, begun in 1979, Tseng adopted the identity of a visiting Chinese official, wearing a deadpan expression and a "Mao suit." Describing himself as both an "ambiguous ambassador" and an "inquisitive traveler," he assumed the role of a dedicated tourist crisscrossing the globe, always an outsider in a foreign land. These strikingly formal yet performance-based images feature the artist posing before popular tourist sites, such as the Brooklyn Bridge, the Eiffel Tower, or Mount Rushmore, and in magnificent natural settings in the Canadian Rockies and Grand Canyon. By embarking on his own version of a Grand Tour, Tseng was determined to find and identify what was quintessentially American. In another guise, he was an eager and reliable witness to his time, documenting not only his friend Keith Haring's subway drawings but also downtown New York's lively art and nightclub scenes of the 1980s.

Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera is organized by the Grey Art Gallery at New York University and the Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA. The exhibition was conceived and curated by the late Amy Brandt, Ph.D., McKinnon Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Chrysler Museum of Art, and is presented in her memory. This exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated publication featuring four essays that illuminate the many facets of Tseng's work, his all-too-brief life, and his influence on younger artists.

The Tufts University Art Gallery is a recognized player in the active contemporary art scene in the Boston metropolitan area and an unparalleled campus resource for fostering visual literacy and critical thinking skills. The Gallery's mission is to animate the intellectual life of the greater university community through exhibitions and programs that explore new, global perspectives on art and art discourse.