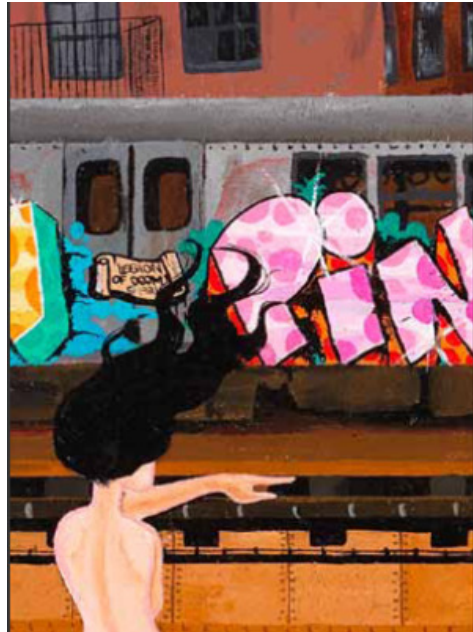


And if art
is a crime,
Let GOD
forgive all



CITY AS

GRAFFITI ART FROM THE MARTIN WONG COLLECTION

CANVAS

EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR MIDDLE
AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

MUSEUM
OF THE
CITY
OF NEW YORK

Frederick A.O.
Schwarz
Children's
Center



The Keith Haring Foundation Inc.

Introduction

This guide is intended to be used as a resource for teachers either preparing to visit the Museum of the City of New York's *City as Canvas: Graffiti Art from the Martin Wong Collection* or to use in the classroom following a class visit.

During the gallery tour of the *City As Canvas* exhibition, students will view highlights from the Museum's rich collection of 1970s and '80s graffiti art in New York. By analyzing the drawings, paintings, photographs and blackbooks collected by Martin Wong, students will learn about New York City artists known as "writers", like Keith Haring, Lady Pink, Lee Quiñones, and Daze, and the historical context in which their work was created. Students will be able to elaborate on the multiple perspectives surrounding street art, discuss the various styles represented, and will respond creatively to the pieces by drafting their own sketches.

The information and activities in this guide correlate to the guided tour, but may also be taught as stand-alone lessons utilizing the text, images, and suggested activities. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the information to the grade level and ability of their students. For further information or to schedule a visit to the Museum of the City of New York, please email the Frederick A.O. Schwarz Children's Center at schoolprograms@mcny.org.

Included in this guide:

- Curriculum Connections
- Key Terms
- Background Information on the Exhibition
- **Suggested Activity – Middle and High School:**
 - **Gallery Review**
 - **In the Voice of the Artists**
 - **Debate it! Finding Space for Street Art**
 - **Write Your Own Exhibition Text**
- Artist Spotlights: Keith Haring, Wicked Gary, Daze, Futura and Lady Pink
- Bibliography

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

The following activities may be completed before, during, and/or after a visit to the *City as Canvas: Graffiti Art from the Martin Wong Collection* exhibition.

Introduction to the exhibition: Gallery Review and In the Voice of the Artists

Museum exhibitions are often reviewed in newspapers and online. Below is a link to a *New York Times* review of the exhibition.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/07/arts/design/graffiti-art-at-the-museum-of-the-city-of-new-york.html?_r=4

Distribute copies of the article (or excerpts of it) to your students as a preview of the exhibition. Ask students to consider the following questions:

- Why does the author describe the 70s and 80s as the “golden age of graffiti”?
- The author writes “Few works in “City as Canvas” hold up to such extended scrutiny. These artists were more oriented to the commercial aesthetics of graphic design and illustration, and it shows in facile technique and the prevalence of extroverted style over personal substance.” What is the author’s opinion about the works of art on display?
- The article concludes with “Graffiti thrived in the 1970s and early ’80s because the nearly bankrupt city government lacked the resources to stop it. With the city’s return to solvency the golden age ended, and it’s probably just as well that it did. It was bound to flag as the original writers aged. I’m probably not the only New Yorker thankful for today’s clean, unmarked subway cars. But I still treasure my recollections of the time when graffiti roiled the town.” What is the author’s point of view on graffiti? What words lead you to your conclusion?

After students visit the exhibition or look at the works contained in the packet or on the Museum’s Collections Portal, ask students to write their own review of the show or reflect on the artwork shown in the classroom.

Visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=F4ZKcBj0nz0 to preview the exhibition through the voices and narratives of the artists represented.

Consider these questions as you review the clips:

- Who was Martin Wong and what was his impact on street writing in New York City?
- Why is his name included in the title of the exhibition?
- Why were black books important?
- What do you think artist Lee Quiñones meant when he said “It’s a great feeling of arriving”?

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Suggested Activity: Debate it! Finding Space for Street Art

Introduction:

Even though the exhibition focuses on a historical time period, graffiti is still present in New York City. Students will read a *New York Times* article discussing a contemporary issue.

Textual Analysis:

Once students have read the introductions included in this packet or visited the exhibition, students should read Cara Buckley and Marc Santora's article "Night Falls and 5Pointz, a Graffiti Mecca, is Whited Out in Queens", *The New York Times* (Nov 19, 2013).

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/20/nyregion/5pointz-a-graffiti-mecca-in-queens-is-wiped-clean-overnight.html?_r=0n

Distribute the following questions or choose a few to write on the board for students to consider. Students should read individually before sharing their answers in pairs or in small groups prior to a larger classroom discussion.

Questions for consideration:

- What is the 5 Pointz? What were the origins of the 5 Pointz, and how did it evolve over time?
- How is the 5 Pointz different from other sites where street art exists?
- What is the plan for new development of this site, and what have been people's reactions? Please comment on the spectrum of responses.
- How have changes in the neighborhood, Long Island City, contributed to the new development plans for this site? What was different about the neighborhood 40 years ago that allowed for the 5 Pointz to grow?
- Are there any connections between how city institutions have responded to the controversy over the 5 Pointz, and how the city government had responded to graffiti in the 1970s and '80s? What is similar and different about both scenarios?
- What is the point of view of the authors who wrote this article? And what evidence in the text gave you this information?

Statement Writing:

Once students have responded to the questions for considerations ask them to write a statement piece clarifying their own responses to 5 Pointz. Distribute the guiding question below:

What do you think about this recent controversy over the 5 Pointz? In your mind, what would be the ideal outcome?

Invite students to take a stand and debate their individual perspectives as a class.

Conclusion:

Ask students to consider the trajectory of the street art movement and to comment on what has changed and what has remained the same since the 1970s and '80s. For this question, students can recall information they learned from the tour of the exhibition or from previous classroom discussions about the artists. Create a diagram charting then and now to illustrate the students' responses.

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Suggested Activity: Write Your Own Exhibition Text

Introduction:

As seen in the *City As Canvas* exhibition and in the Artist Spotlights included in this packet, graffiti often has an ephemeral quality, which is why artists like Martin Wong have worked diligently to collect and document the work. This exercise will introduce students to contemporary public art in their own neighborhoods.

Public Art in New York – Online Review:

The three websites listed below include spots to view public art. Review the websites to find legendary public art sites near your school.

- <http://www.timeout.com/newyork/art/street-art-top-ten-spots-to-see-street-art-and-graffiti-in-nyc>
- <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/graffiti-artists-turn-new-york-city-canvas-article-1.1508451>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/30/arts/design/graffiti-art-of-the-city-from-the-bronx-to-brooklyn.html> (Note: 5 Pointz is currently being torn down for new development projects)

Before visiting one of these sites, do some research on the internet to learn more about the artist(s) who created the site, when they created it, and then describe the style or message conveyed in the work. Ask students to consider if the artist(s) style is similar to any of the works they recall seeing in the work displayed in the *City As Canvas* exhibition or on the Museum's Collections Portal.

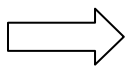
Public Art in New York – Site Visit:

Once students have researched a site close to their school, prepare students for a visit. Students should bring either sketchpads or paper on clipboard and pencils. Once at the site, discuss with students their impressions and how it feels to be in close proximity to a work of art created specifically for a public audience. How does this experience differ from viewing art in a museum? Following the discussion, students should sketch elements of the mural that impacted them.

Mural making:

Once back in the classroom, ask students to consider what they would include in a mural depicting their neighborhood or school. Begin with an individual brainstorm, where each student quietly comes up with a theme he or she would present to the class. Students can either sketch their own mural plans individually or a large sheet of paper can be used to integrate each student's idea as a whole.

The final work – the large mural or the individual pieces – can be hung in the classroom.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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