

CARROLL AND SONS

450 HARRISON AVENUE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02118

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Tseng Kwong Chi: Ambiguous Ambassador 1979 – 1989

January 8 – February 27, 2016

Opening reception Wednesday, January 27th 5:30 to 7:30



Carroll and Sons is pleased to announce the opening of *Tseng Kwong Chi: Ambiguous Ambassador 1979 – 1989*. The fifty-two photographs in the exhibition touch on the breadth of work created over Tseng's brief

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career. In both black-and-white and color photographs, the exhibition includes a selection of work from Tseng's iconic series *East Meets West* along with his collaborative work created with the artist Keith Haring and dancer/choreographer Bill T. Jones. This is the second exhibition of Tseng's work in Boston organized by Joseph Carroll and is timed to coincide with the presentation of the traveling retrospective *Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera* at the Aidekman Arts Center, Tufts University, Medford, MA.

Tseng moved to New York City in 1978 and donned a second-hand suit of the type worn by Mao Tse-tung to join his visiting parents for lunch at Windows on the World; his sartorial choice meant simply to satisfy the dress requirements of the restaurant. Having fled communist China, Tseng's parents were not amused by his attire, yet all were astonished by the deference and special treatment the uniform earned from the restaurant staff. The diplomatic treatment the suit received, a result of the heightened American interest in China following Nixon's visit in 1972, became a leitmotif of Tseng's photographic adventures in the role of the "ambiguous ambassador." Dressed in the Mao suit, dark sunglasses, and name badge, Tseng traveled the United States photographing himself against iconic backdrops of the American cultural landscape. With his father's Roloflex on a tripod, he composed the image, posed and released the shutter. The simplicity of his means (in the era before photoshop, smartphones and selfies) contrasts with the results; photographs that magically capture Tseng standing in a field just as lightning strikes in the distance, both conceptually and compositionally brilliant.

Tseng was an integral part of the 1980s New York art and club scene – documenting the parties at Studio 54, crashing an opening at the Costume Institute, and photographing the paintings and antics of his close friend Keith Haring. The exhibition includes two portfolios of work, "Costumes at the Met" and "Keith Haring Pop Shop Tokyo," rarely seen vintage color photographs of Haring's Subway murals and selenium prints of Tseng's late photographs of the American West.

Tseng Kowng Chi was born in Hong Kong in 1950 and immigrated with his family to Vancouver, Canada, in 1966. After completing high school in Canada, Tseng studied photography in Paris at the Ecole Superieure d'Arts Graphiques before moving to New York in 1978. New York City was his home until his early death at age 39, in 1989. His work has been included in many exhibitions including *Performing for the Camera* organized by the Grey Art Gallery and the Chrysler Museum of Art; *This Will Have Been: Art, Love and Politics in the 1980's*, ICA, Boston; *Dance/Draw*, ICA, Boston; *Conversations: Photographs from the Bank of America Collection*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; *Hide/Seek: Difference*

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and Desire in American Portraiture, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC, among others.

Tseng Kwong Chi: Ambiguous Ambassador 1979 – 1989 is on view at Carroll and Sons through February 27, 2016. For further information please contact Joseph Carroll at 617-482-2477 or Joseph@carrollandsons.net. The exhibition is organized with the cooperation and support of Muna Tseng and the Estate of Tseng Kwong Chi. All images are © Muna Tseng Dance Projects, Inc., New York.

Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera is on view at the Aidekman Arts Center, Tufts University, through May 22, 2016 (artgallery.tufts.edu/exhibitions).

Catalogs for *Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera* are available at both Carroll and Sons and the Aidekman Arts Center.