



MEDIA RELEASE

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Tobias Wong's cheeky art/design comes home

Museum of Vancouver to hold first solo exhibition of the forerunner of conceptual design

(VANCOUVER, BC) – Opening this September 19, 2012, the Museum of Vancouver (MOV) is pleased to present the first time solo exhibition of internationally acclaimed, Vancouver-born artist, Tobias Wong in *Object(ing): The art/design of Tobias Wong*.

Wong has been lauded as “contemporary design’s most nimble provocateur” by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and is considered a forerunner of conceptual design. He appropriated, manipulated, manufactured, mass-produced, and re-issued everyday objects — pouring new meanings into them in the process. From candlesticks and dollar bills to box cutters and neon signs, like many pioneers, his art both seduced and upset.

“Tobias’ work and artistic trajectory are fascinating,” explains Viviane Gosselin, senior curator and project lead at the MOV. “I view Tobias as a poet who didn’t play with words but with objects; most of the time, familiar ones. He took the mundane, the utilitarian, and turned it into incredible sculptures. Most of his pieces are highly accessible; you ‘get it’ because it’s funny or it makes reference to popular culture and current events. However, when you look closely, you can see all these clever references to the history of art/design.”

Although Wong was a ‘Vancouver boy’, his work is better known internationally than in his hometown. Leaving when he was 20 to study architecture in Toronto he eventually moved to NYC to attend the sculpture program at Cooper Union School of Art in 1998. His career soon took off in a big way provoking responses from globally recognized designers Alessi, Philippe Starck and Karim Rashid and brands including Burberry. Wong kept close ties with friends, family, and collaborators in Vancouver. He came back regularly and worked with people here.

The show will feature over 50 pieces, including well known items like *Bulletproof Quilted Duvet*, the *Ottoman*, the “*I Want to Change the World*” book, and *This is a Lamp*. Some items have been re-issued specifically for this project (based on documentation and assistance of original collaborators). Reissuing will allow new audiences to see the works *Room Partition*, the *Anus* sign that hung in the window of his East Village apartment, *Chocolate Wood* by Chocolate Arts , and a series of candies from Papabubble, a high end candy store based in NYC.

Wong passed away suddenly in 2011 at age 35 in his home in New York City. The MOV has been incredibly fortunate to work with close friends, collaborators, family and guest curator Todd Falkowsky in making the exhibition of his work a reality. The exhibition has mobilized the participation of over 50 collectors, curators, and artists from Vancouver, NYC, San Francisco, UK,

and elsewhere, including pop culture commentator and artist Douglas Coupland and senior curator of design from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Paola Antonelli.

"I no longer worry about what title people give me,
I'm happy being whatever fits the context.
I don't draft or create models/prototypes,
I don't problem solve,
and I definitely don't make things to make life easier."
— Tobias Wong

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Large format images of Tobias Wong and his work are available on request.

***The Museum of Vancouver** is an independent non-profit organization which holds a mirror to the city and leads provocative conversations about its past, present, and future.*

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Viviane Gosselin / MOV Curator of Contemporary Issues, Co-curator

Gosselin is most recently known for her Canadian Museum Association award for Best Exhibition in the Education Category for the Bhangra.me exhibition, shown at the MOV in 2011. She has led exhibition teams in museums for the past 15 years while serving on peer review committees with the Canadian Museum Association, Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts. In 2011, the British Columbia Museum Association recognized her leadership in the museum field. Her work received awards of excellence with the Canadian Association of Science Centres (2007) and the Canadian Museum Association (2012). She has published in national and international publications and has recently been elected on the board of ICOM-Canada, the national body of the International Council of Museums.

In addition to her work at the MOV, she is an Associate Researcher with the UBC Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness. She is particularly interested in the intersection between urbanity, material culture and the changing role of museums.

Todd Falkowsky / Co-curator of Object(ing): The art/design of Tobias Wong

Todd has design experience spanning the United States, the Netherlands, Italy, France and Canada. In his work, he blends research and creative together to generate rich experiences and solutions. He has worked on projects with General Electric, Citibank, Adbusters, McDonald's, Ferrari and IKEA. In addition to his professional work, he has produced influential exhibits/research projects including the Canadian Design Resource, Cut, Copy, Paste, This Year's Colour, PennySmash, and Cabin. He has collaborated with The Royal Ontario Museum, Design Within Reach, the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Felissimo, Harbourfront Centre, and Platform 21. His work has appeared in The New York Times, The New Yorker, The Washington Post, The Walrus, Wallpaper, Dwell, and Core77.