

Cantor Arts Center

Archive Room: Amalia Mesa-Bains & Archive Room: Irene Poon and Charles Wong

— Both exhibitions open August 6, 2026 —

*Intimate single-gallery presentations drawn from the Special Collections at Stanford Libraries
illuminate the practices of seminal Bay Area artists*



Left: Portrait of Amalia Mesa-Bains. Image courtesy of the artist. Right: Charles Wong, *The Lovers*, 1956, silver gelatin print. Image courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries

(June 11, 2026—STANFORD, CA) — The **Cantor Arts Center** at Stanford University is pleased to present two solo exhibitions foregrounding the lives and oeuvres of three major Bay Area artists: **Amalia Mesa-Bains** (b. 1943, Santa Clara, CA), and **Irene Poon** (b. 1941, San Francisco, CA) and **Charles Wong** (b. 1922 - 2024, Belmont, CA).

Archive Room: Amalia Mesa-Bains, curated by Cantor Curatorial Assistant **Jorge Eduardo Sibaja**, and ***Archive Room: Irene Poon and Charles Wong***, guest curated by Stanford art and art history doctoral candidate **Ivy Kim Vuong**, bring together artworks, texts, correspondence, ephemera, and other materials, illuminating the life and work of artists who have profoundly shaped Chicano and Asian American art histories, respectively.

Marking the third iteration of the museum's ***Archive Room*** series, these intimate, single-gallery presentations draw from the rich art historical resources of the **Special Collections at Stanford Libraries** to deepen understanding of each artists' life and practice. Mesa-Bains's presentation explores the artist's foundational scholarship, motivating beliefs, and how these were shaped by and took shape in her artistic practice, while the dual presentation dedicated to Poon and Wong foregrounds their lesser-known experimental works capturing reflections, windows, and quiet interiors whose deeply familiar settings range from a bustling Chinatown storefront to an intimate living room. The exhibition also charts,

for the first time, the intergenerational artistic dialogue and eventual partnership that unfolded between the two.

ARCHIVE ROOM: AMALIA MESA-BAINS

The Mesa-Bains *Archive Room* presentation further contextualizes the artist, curator, and educator's role in shaping Chicano and Latino art history over the past half century.

Through her artistic practice and scholarship, Mesa-Bains has helped define the intellectual and aesthetic foundations of Chicano art history while developing a deeply influential body of work centered on collective memory and the political potential of art.

Drawing from the traditions of Mexican domestic altars, Mesa-Bain's large-scale installations transform intimate rituals of daily life into sculptural environments, giving form to new systems of knowledge, integrating spirituality, ancestral knowledge, feminist and decolonialist frameworks, while generating space for new ways of thinking and relating.

Selections from Mesa-Bains's archive, including recent print works and objects spanning multiple decades of her oeuvre, are presented alongside hand-drawn installation studies, journal entries, photographs of the artist at work, and personal correspondence, including a love letter to her husband.

ARCHIVE ROOM: IRENE POON AND CHARLES WONG

The dual presentation of Irene Poon and Charles Wong sheds new light on each artist's practice, foregrounding experimental photographic explorations in reflections, windows, and quiet interiors, while situating both figures within the broader development of Asian American art history in the Bay Area.

The exhibition also formalizes for the first time the artistic partnership and personal relationship between the two, tracing their evolving connection over several decades, from peers, to collaborators to – decades later – life partners.

An artist, educator, archivist, and community organizer, Poon played a critical role in advancing Asian American art history via exhibitions, publications and scholarship. Wong, who trained under Minor White and Ansel Adams at the California School of Fine Arts, gained recognition early in his career for photographs documenting San Francisco Chinatown during the 1940s and '50s. Brought together in the 1990s at the encouragement of photographer Imogen Cunningham, Poon and Wong collaborated on the landmark publication *Leading the Way: Asian American Artists of the Older Generation* (1991), developing an exchange that later grew into a romantic partnership that continued until Wong's passing in 2024.

The presentation features photographic prints from both artist's archives, alongside their correspondence, personal pictures, Wong's writings on Poon's photography, as well as a sound piece featuring music from the Metropolitan Opera that Poon listened to while working in her home darkroom.

ABOUT THE CANTOR ARTS CENTER:

Serving the Stanford campus, the Bay Area community, and visitors from around the world, the Cantor Arts Center provides an outstanding cultural experience for visitors of all ages. Founded when the university opened in 1891, the historic museum was expanded and renamed in 1999 for lead donors Iris and B. Gerald Cantor. The Cantor's collection spans 5,000 years and includes more than 40,000 works of art from around the globe. The Cantor is an established resource for teaching and research on campus. Free admission, tours, lectures, and family activities make the Cantor one of the most visited university art museums in the country.

VISIT THE MUSEUM:

Cantor Arts Center
328 Lomita Drive at Museum Way
Stanford, CA
T: 650-723-4177
<https://museum.stanford.edu/>

Monday: 11:00am – 6:00pm
Thursday: 11:00am – 8:00pm
Friday: 11:00am – 6:00pm
Saturday & Sunday: 10:00am – 5:00pm
FREE ADMISSION

PRESS CONTACT:

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