

Mia Magazine feature, Martinez Gallery by Lorie Caval – 1997



The Martinez Gallery will open on October 18, 1997 at 41-10 34th Street, NY NY 10018
www.martinezgallery.com
Lorie Caval

to me) HUGO MARTINEZ

Hugo Martinez calmly reprimands me for incorrectly calling his life's passion 'Grafitti'.

"Call it writing, call it aerosol art... call it anything but *that*."

According to Hugo, the term "Grafitti" is the media's intentionally degrading terminology for this artform. Being politically correct is not entirely what Martinez is about, although he does have a political streak. As a student at Queens and Manhattan Colleges in the early 1970's, he became particularly interested in politics and eventually became involved in community workshops that brought together rival NYC gangs. During this period, he was exposed to a new kind of artwork that was being cultivated in the streets and subways via markers and spraypaint... aerosol art. Hugo started his own mission looking for these fugitive artists, basically by scouring the subway system. He had found himself at the gateway of a new artform--"Probably the only artform created in the United States." And he was probably one of the only people who recognized it as such, at that time. The forums that Hugo Martinez had once held for gang members soon turned into exclusive workshops and organizations for the master writers of that time. During the 1980's, when the 'legitimate' artworld got crazed for urban art, Martinez became their dealer and their shows traveled to many galleries and museums. Today, 25 years later, Hugo Martinez still fosters the art of those who pioneered aerosol art from 1970 through 1973, through his own art gallery.

"Any art form is only defined by it's inception. In other words, if you have a gallery of impressionists you don't show anyone from the 1950's...you don't show anyone who's not important. You show the founders...period."

Never actually putting brush to canvas (or spray to wall) himself, he has not only a spot in his heart for this artform, but a spot in his life.

"We have a lot of bonds between us. I put up with them and they put up with me for 25 years." Martinez now represents artists the likes of Coco, Blade 1, Phase Two, Mico, Pistol and Bamamrl, all of whom are still writing.

"They invented one movement and they are constantly in a state of reinvention," says Martinez.

"When somebody paints what they want, it is a celebration of a culture."