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Free and Priceless

A N O T H E R K I N D O F

Beauty Queen



Kristina as Fannie Wong

"Fannie! The answer to every beauty myth, feminist dilemma and April Fool's."

— Kristina Sheryl Wong

Some might say that Kristina Sheryl Wong is asking to get her ass kicked.

In May 2000, Wong launched what has been her most prolific art project, www.bigbadchinesemama.com, a mock mail order bride site that set out to purposely intercept the traffic of the whitest of white oppressors hunting for Asian porn. The sections of her spoof mocked actual sections of real mail order bride sites including a "Harem of Angst" complete with not so exotic brides and their aggressive bios. The site created heated reactions from viewers who would write her with monikers like "Neo Nazi Skinhead" and "Angry White Male" who threatened Wong. But that didn't make her want to take her site down.

"I was tired of going to Asian American art events where performers would preach their agendas to the converted. I wanted to see what would happen if I put their agendas that I don't always agree with up to the most challenging audience of all."

Wong says she likes creating work that has a subversive, prank-like element. She's inspired by Michael Moore and his old TV show, *The Awful Truth*. "That show was awesome, he would basically stage these crazy stunts in public and make an ass of government officials, the NRA, or big business. It was like street theater."

Last year, she began to make "celebrity appearances" of the laughable "Fannie Wong, Former Miss Chinatown 2nd Runner up" character in public. Fannie Wong is the whisky-drinking, lapdance-giving, Brooklyn-accented, not-so-ladylike counterpart of the more "refined" women who compete in the Miss Chinatown pageant. Wong has performed Fannie Wong at art openings, onstage, at fundraisers, and has made appearances at the actual Miss Chinatown pageant and other places where real Miss Chinatowns reign (though removed several times by security).

"Fannie Wong is the exaggerated persona of who I would be had I run for this Miss Chinatown pageant. I would be the very not so perfect, life of the party, awkward beauty queen who despite fitting in so poorly was still proud of who I was."

Wong also adds that when she performs Fannie Wong, people stare in shock. Others laugh. And sometimes, people treat her like a real Miss Chinatown. "I love being this drag queen except I'm a woman dressed as a woman – just awkward."

Wong has two solo shows under her belt. Her first show, *Miss Chinatown 2nd Runner Up*, looks nothing like the Fannie Wong performance and draws on the shame connected to exploring sexuality. Her latest show, *Free?*, makes fun of didactic spoken word among critiques of freedom, interspersed with an auction of items from Wong's life.

Kristina challenges gender and ethnic stereotypes, reaching out to the not-so-common-viewer. This, perhaps, makes her vulnerable to an ass kicking. But maybe people are too busy laughing at how she has subversively tucked her political agenda into her art to really want to hurt her. Or maybe, she's the one kicking ass.