

# The Feminist Art Project

TFAP@CAA DAY OF PANELS

## Performing Identity as Intersectional

College Art Association Annual Conference 2016

Saturday, February 6, 2016, 9am-4:30pm

National Museum of Women in the Arts

### ABSTRACT

## **Panel: Women and the Sexual Other in East Asian Art and Visual Culture**

**Chair: Jongwoo Jeremy Kim**, University of Louisville

This panel explores women's encounters with sexual otherness or queerness in the modern and contemporary visuality of East Asian. Works by Japanese artists, Korean TV shows, and other loci of East Asian visual culture, emergent in a multi-causal social mix, will be topics of feminist analysis.

### **Papers**

**CHARLOTTE EUBANKS**, PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

#### ***Exotic Body, Proletarian Body, Atomic Body: The Visual Performances of Akamatsu Toshiko/Maruki Toshi***

Like twentieth century Japan, the artist, activist and memoirist Akamatsu Toshiko (1912-2000, married name Maruki Toshi) performed a life in three acts. In Act I, set in the Japanese Imperial Mandate in Micronesia in 1940, she is a fledgling sketch artist, using her pencil to capture the sensual lines of colonial Yapanese bodies. In Act II, set during the American-led Occupation circa 1950, she is an artist-correspondent for socialist newspapers covering the War Crime Tribunals. And in Act III, set in the global protest culture of the 1960s, she collaborates in the production of wall-sized murals showing the irradiated bodies of atomic blast victims. Chameleon-like not only in terms of ideological and temporal setting, Toshi also inhabited the bodies she sketched, undressing herself to perform an exoticized and eroticized Pacific islander Other, wielding a wrench and donning a kerchief as a butch Socialist worker, and stripping herself entirely to perform the bare life of the atomic survivor. In this paper, I examine Toshi's artwork as a series of visual performances that excavate the various intersecting identities available to Japanese women in the transwar era (1930s-1960s) and that seek to plumb, collectively, the agency of politics as aesthetic embodiment.

**NAMIKO KUNIMOTO**, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

#### ***Katsura Yuki and Bodies of Resistance***

This presentation examines the work of Katsura Yuki (1913-1991), a Tokyo-based painter and assemblage artist. Katsura enacted political resistance by representing contentious issues such as self-sacrifice in times of war, the United States Castle Bravo nuclear test, the representation of gay lovers, and the status of women in Japan. This presentation will focus specifically on her illustrations of the James Baldwin novel, *Another Country*, that were featured in the *Asahi Journal* in the 1960s.

By experimenting with the visibility and invisibility of the body, I argue Katsura enacted what Jacques Rancière terms political "dissensus." Rancière sees genuine art and politics as those that create new relations between the visible and the invisible, liberating bodies from their assigned

places and breaking with the 'natural' order of the sensible. Similarly, by experimenting with the visibility of the Othered body Katsura reoriented aesthetic-political sensibility and opened up a space for a wider discourse on gender, sexuality, and race in Japan.

**SASHA WELLAND**, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

***Queer Temporality in Shi Tou's Performative Oeuvre: Artist, Actor, Activist***

The Chinese artist Shi Tou was one of the first women to move into the Yuanmingyuan artist village on the outskirts of Beijing, an unofficial collectivity that contributed to post-1989 artistic experimentation. She is arguably more well known for her public role as a tongzhi (comrade/queer) activist. She was the first lesbian who came out and discussed same-sex relationships on national television. She played a leading role in Li Yu's *Fish and Elephant* (2001), China's first lesbian feature film. Shi Tou blurs art and activism in works such as her films *Dyke March* (2004) and *50 Minutes of Women* (2005) and recent paintings and photographic work. In this paper, I build on Fran Martin's analysis of cinematic aesthetics in *Fish and Elephant* as an expression of critical presentism that breaks from the "backward glance" or mournful paradise lost memorial frame that characterizes filmic and literary representations of Chinese female same-sex love from the early twentieth century on. How does Shi Tou queer straight progress narratives of movement toward liberal, Western-style identity politics through her Yuefenpai poster series? In these photographic stagings, she and her partner Mingming re-perform the paired modern girl beauties of commercial calendar posters from 1920s and 30s Shanghai. How does her blurring of performative public roles, artistic media, and dis/identificatory connections across time and space open a queer feminist horizon beyond binaries of art-activism, East-West, male-female, queer-straight?