



Asian Studies Notes

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亞細亞學研究

Art in a Changing Hong Kong Creating Cultural Identity

by Minglu Gao, Assistant Professor of Art History

During the summer of 2003, I gave a series of lectures in the Hong Kong Art Center and at the same time was invited to join a panel of judges for the Hong Kong Art Biennial 2003 exhibition. I also had the opportunity to visit various art institutions, such as Hong Kong University, the Asia Society at Hong Kong, Asian Art Archive as well as the Macau Museum of Art, giving lectures and exchanging views with artists, students and the public. It was my second visit to Hong Kong after my curated exhibition "Inside Out: New Chinese Art" was presented there in the 1990s. This tour enabled me to gain further understanding of the state of Hong Kong art.

Compared to the artistic activities in the mid-1990s, I feel that contemporary art in Hong Kong is now free of the commotion that preceded Hong Kong's reunion with China. At that time, numerous exhibitions were held one after another, reminiscent of the various art movements in the Mainland in the past. These days Hong Kong's contemporary art scene looks placid and more

diversified, in a way representing more individualistic cultivation on the part of artists. When compared to the Mainland, both in terms of social meaning or art style, there are no dominant mainstream or trendy movements. Hong Kong artists enjoy greater freedom to select media and concept.

However, among cultural and art communities in Hong Kong, the issue of cultural identity and the status of Hong Kong art in the global context remain a hot topic for debate among artists and critics, although in many cases the issues are not apparently addressed in their works. Already in the 1990s, I came to know the impact of these issues on the development of Hong Kong art. The 1997 handover forced Hong Kong people to emerge from colonial rule and acquire national identity as Chinese. In the early 21st century, the cultural identity of Hong Kong has become a more sophisticated issue. Hong Kong has

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Asia at Noon November 21

Ashwill to Speak on Vietnam

Dr. Mark Ashwill will speak at Asia at Noon on November 21 on the subject of "Vietnam and America: Overcoming the Past." Students, faculty, and community folk are welcome to this final brown bag gathering of the semester from 12:00 to 1:00 in Park 280. The convener of the event is Prof. Jack Larkin of the Department of History.

Dr. Ashwill is director of the World Languages Program of the Department of Linguistics. He is also the campus Fulbright Program Adviser. Long active in UB educational programs in Vietnam, he is the executive director of the US-Indochina Educational Foundation, a non-profit organization supporting students and business leaders from Southeast Asia in educational and training programs in the United States.

Earlier this year, Ashwill became the first American to be awarded a Fulbright Senior Specialist grant to Vietnam. He spent January as a visiting scholar at the Department of Applied Linguistics at the National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities in Hanoi.

In his Asia at Noon presentation, Ashwill will speak about differing perceptions of the Vietnam War in both countries and recent advances in relations between the two countries on both the governmental and grassroots levels.

The Asia at Noon event originally scheduled for November 7 is cancelled. The Asian Studies program invites suggestions and proposals for the Asia at Noon schedule for the Spring '04 Semester.

IDENTITY (cont. from p. 1) stepped onto the international platform through various channels, such as participation in the two recent Venice Biennials and the growing voices requesting the locating of an international scale Biennial in Hong Kong. Therefore the identity of Hong Kong culture is not only placed in the national context of China, but also in the world context. In other words, Hong Kong art has to find its position in this dual cultural context.

With the reunion with China in 1997, the cultural identity of Hong Kong gradually has lost its advantages of transience between the East and the West, as well as between China and the outside world. This 'freedom', as defined in the connotation that Hong Kong is a bridge between eastern and western cultures, is in fact a utopian privilege. Such a culture of transience between the east and the west has never been formulated, and is simply represented by certain superficial cultural phenomena. Although this kind of freedom is receding from people's minds, reality (the reality to be encountered during active cultural pursuit and review rather than the reality imposed upon in the past) has become eminent. Emergence of such reality not only comes from the fact that Hong Kong must face China and communicate with her, but also from the realistic consid-

eration of how Hong Kong should maintain and enhance her position as an international city.

Hong Kong's future and further development, including its regional economy and political bearing, are closely related to timely changes and political transformations in the region. This is not only an issue for the future, but also an immediate issue. This issue forces Hong Kong people to review the city's significance as a region. In recent years, there are increasing debates on the future direction of development of the Great Pearl River Delta region and the roles to be played by Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. These debates reveal that Hong Kong is no longer an outlying place and Hong Kong people are no longer by-passers on this island. Compared to the past, Hong Kong artists now care more than ever about the relationship between their own being and their surroundings. In such a way, the regional character of Hong Kong in terms of art and culture has become more apparent. It is a kind of character change over time. It carries a historical bearing that is neither abstract nor unbearable, and is visible on streets and districts of the locality.

On the other hand, I feel that art theorists in Hong Kong have become more pertinent, specific and diverse in addressing Hong Kong culture and her products. For in-

stance, the theory of "post-colonialism" becomes more precise and relevant than in the days before 1997. It seems to me, Hong Kong writers and artists have never been so passionately and objectively involved in searching for their regional identity. Yet, I also have the feeling that the development of Hong Kong identity that originates from these changes does not bring any sense of supremacy to Hong Kong artists. Rather they appear to be more disciplined and introspective. Some critics and artists even try to marginalize their artistic orientations in curating exhibitions and creating artworks. Such an attitude in retreat towards self-identity marks a departure from the previous notion of the identity of Hong Kong art, or serves as a protest against any cultural discourses indicative of hegemony and 'Great China' nationalism. When we examine it from the perspective of cultural strategies that counteract any form of 'colonization', the extreme personal, delineated and deconstructed individualistic memories in a historical context are actually counter-attacks against any definition of the history of Hong Kong art from the outside world. Therefore in my personal view, this course in search of cultural identity is at the same time a project to create a cultural identity.

A/ASGSG Lands Grant

The Asian/American Studies Graduate Students Group was recently awarded \$1000 by the College of Arts and Sciences to support their

activities as a Graduate Student Group. The Group holds meetings where members report on their research and visiting writers and

scholars present their work. Stony Brook philosopher Gary Mar was hosted by the group on October 9.

ASIAN STUDIES DIRECTORY

Thomas W. Burkman, Director (burkman@buffalo.edu)

Karen Forster, Office Manager (foster3@buffalo.edu)

Zhen Li, Graduate Assistant (zli5@buffalo.edu)

714 Clemens, University at Buffalo, NY 14260/ Tel: (716) 645-3474 / Fax: (716) 645-3473

NYCAS Conference A Success

On October 17-18, some 180 Asian specialists from around the state, the Northeast region, southern Ontario, and UB gathered at the University Inn & Conference Center for the annual meeting of the New York Conference on Asian Studies. Seventy-seven UB graduate and undergraduate students were among the conferees. Forty UB faculty and graduate students made presentations.

Attendees chose from 40 panels and roundtables on a wide variety of Asian research topics. Plenary



lectures were delivered by James Watson, Harvard anthropologist and president of the Association for Asian Studies; and Ayesha Jalal, noted South Asian historian and Professor of History at Tufts University.

The Center for the Arts contributed greatly in the event, providing a lecture/demonstration of Beijing Opera on Friday night and an opening reception for a Chinese modern art exhibition, "Chinese Maximalism," curated by Professor Minglu Gao of Art History. Charles D'Aniello of Lockwood Library coordinated a varied set of Publishers' Exhibits.

The theme of the conference was "Walls in Asia." Papers addressed the theme in creative ways. Even the Monkey King stories in Beijing opera bore the imprint of the theme with the performance title, "The Monkey Knows No Walls."

On October 29-30, 2004, the meeting will convene at Bard College on the Hudson River. The Asian Studies Program thanks all those at UB who enabled NYCAS '03 to satisfy a diverse and critical audience.



Noh Actors in Residency in January '04

In January, the Asian Studies Program, the Department of Theatre and Dance, and the Center for the Arts will host three *noh* actors of the Kanze school from Japan. The actors are Hatta Tatsuya, Fukano Shinjiro, and Yasuda Noboru.

Beginning January 26, the actors will conduct master classes and training sessions in Theatre and Dance. A Public Performance Workshop for area high school teachers and students will be held on

Saturday morning, January 31. The residency will conclude with two performances of the classic play, *Aoi no Ue*, in the Center for the Arts on February 1 and at the Irish Classical Theatre in Buffalo's Theater District on February 2.

The Asian Studies program is raising funds for the residency and already has several supporters lined up. Interested donors should contact Thomas W. Burkman, Director of Asian Studies.

Kappa Phi Lambda is one of several Asian-interest Greek organizations at UB. The sorority was first founded at Binghamton University in 1995, and established a chapter at UB in 1997.

In October, the sisters sold roses for Sweetest Day with proceeds going to Haven House for Battered Women. They participated in the Linda Yalem Run and Nite Out,

and have adopted a rosebed at Delaware Park. Upcoming philanthropy events include a puzzle picture sale and art nameplates.

The Kappa Phi Lambda president this year is Reintine Han, who may be contacted at wontonxbb@yahoo.com

OPPORTUNITIES, GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

2004 HARVARD KOREAN STUDIES GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE

Call for papers! The conference is open to master's and doctoral students specializing in any area of Korean studies. Individual papers as well as organized panels will be considered. Send abstracts as Microsoft Word attachments, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 500 word max., with "**your name, school - ABSTRACT**" in the subject line and your name, school, email, phone number and address in the text of your email to Aeri Shin, Conference Coordinator: ksgsc@yahoo.com

Selected conference papers will be published in the conference journal; one will be honored with the Edward Willet Wagner Prize. Deadline for abstracts is **December 1, 2003**. For more information, contact Aeri Shin.

CENTRAL AND INNER ASIA SEMINAR AT TORONTO

Call for papers! The Tenth Annual Conference of the Central and Inner Asia Seminar (CIAS 2004) will be held at the University of Toronto on April 15-17, 2004. The theme of this gathering will be "The Domestic Environment of Central and Inner Asia".

Proposals are welcomed for papers of 20 to 40 minutes' duration. Please include the title, a one-page summary and a short copy of curriculum vitae and send via email to Gillian Long, Administrative Coordinator for CIAS at gillian.long@utoronto.ca or to Professor Michael Gervers at gervers@chass.utoronto.ca. The deadline for submissions is **December 17, 2003**. For further information: www.utoronto.ca/deeds/cias/cias.html

Masked dance-play of Korea, November 21 Dongnae Yaryu

Dongnae Yaryu is a genre of dance-play that transmits folklore to country audiences along the Nakdong River in



the Kyongsang Namdo province in Korea. Its roots go back to the 10th century, and it became established as a distinct art form by the 18th century.

Dongnae Yaryu brings together dance, words, and body movement in a fully developed drama. Common themes are the resistance of the common people to the ruling class who hoard power and money; and the confrontation between the old man - the tyrannical head of a traditional patriarchal family - and his suffering wife. The confrontation scenes are rife with wit.

Each mask, with its exaggerated expression, is endowed with unique character.

The performance at the Center for the Arts, funded in part by the Korea Society, will take place in the Mainstage Theater Friday, November 21, at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$20 for the general public and \$10 for UB students at the CFA Box Office.

"THE WILL TO LIVE" ON SCREEN

A documentary entitled "The Will to Live: A Notebook about Love, Hate and Reconciliation" will be introduced by Chanrithy Him and Anne Gyrithe Bonne on Thursday, November 20th 7-9 p.m. in the screening room of the Center for the Arts.

This extraordinary film premiered in Copenhagen on September 8. It was made by Anne Gyrithe Bonne, a Danish filmmaker. One of her main subjects is Chanrithy Him, who wrote the award-winning memoir *When Broken Glass Floats: Growing Up Under the Khmer Rouge*. The other subjects are Desmond Tutu and Juan Almeyda (Honduras).

Roundtable on Human Rights in Kazakhstan, November 11

Five human rights activists from Kazakhstan will be visiting UB on the afternoon of Tuesday, November 11. The women are traveling in the United States through the sponsorship of the US State Department, visiting universities and agencies active in human rights and women's rights. Their host in Buffalo is Buffalo/Niagara WorldConnect. They are interested in discussing the role of NGOs and the media in combating trafficking in persons.

Asian Studies will sponsor a roundtable with the Kazakhstan visitors from 3:30 to 5:00 on November 11 in 145 C SU. Several UB faculty with interest in human rights and the problem of trafficking in persons will join in the discussion.

Co-sponsors of the roundtable are The Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, the Department of Women's Studies, and the Institute for Research and Education on Women and Gender (IREWG).

Asian Studies Calendar

November

- Nov. 11, Tue. 3:30 pm. **Roundtable on Human Rights in Kazakhstan.** Co-sponsored by The Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, the Department of Women's Studies, and the Institute for Research and Education on Women and Gender. 145 C SU.
- Nov. 14, Fri. 6:00 pm. **Korean Woodcuts Exhibition Opening Reception.** UB Anderson Gallery.
- Nov. 14, Fri. 8:00 pm. **Margaret Cho,** Korean American stand-up comedian. CFA Mainstage.
- Nov. 20, Thu. 7:00 pm. **"The Will to Live: A Notebook about Love, Hate and Reconciliation".** Introduced by Chanrithy Him and Anne Gyrithé Bonne. Screening room of CFA.
- Nov. 21, Fri. 12:00 am. *Asia at Noon.* **Mark Ashwill,** Department of Linguistics. "Vietnam and America: Overcoming the Past." Park 280.
- Nov. 21, Fri., 3:30-7:00 pm. **Southeast Asia Culture Show.** Sponsored by EIA-GSA, Vietnamese GSA, ELP-GSA, CCGE, AASGSG, ASEAN GSA, GSA, ASP, ISSS, Thai International-GSA. SU Theater and Lobby.
- Nov. 21, 8:00 p.m. **Korean Masked Dance.** *Dongnae Yaryu: Korean Masked Dance.* CFA Mainstage.



Ron Weeks of CFA gets a makeover from Beijing Opera Master Zhang during the NYCAS '03 cultural event.



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Asian Studies Program

714 Clemens Hall
Buffalo, NY 14260-4610
Tel.: (716)645-3474 Fax:(716)645-3473
Email: asian-studies@buffalo.edu
Homepage: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/asian>

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Zhen Li, *Editor*