Shu-Mei Shih on “From World History to World Art: Reflections on New Geographies of Feminist Art in Asia” (2012 Katz Distinguished Lecture)

CAITLIN PALO: Welcome to Going Public, a podcast from the Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington. I’m Caitlin Palo, Program and Events Manager at the Simpson Center.

This episode is part of a special series for 2023-2024 featuring some of our popular talks from the annual Katz Distinguished Lecture series. This month’s episode features Shu-Mei Shih’s talk from 2012 titled “From World History to World Art: Reflections on New Geographies of Feminist Art in Asia.”

Shih is Professor of Comparative Literature, Asian Languages & Cultures, and Asian American Studies at University of California, Los Angeles, where she holds the Irving and Jean Stone Chair in Humanities. She is the author of *Against Diaspora: Discourses on Sinophone Studies* published in 2017*, Keywords of Taiwan Theory* 2019, and *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (2007). She is also the editor of a special issue of PMLA on “Comparative Racialization” (2008). She was awarded a Yu-Shan Scholar Prize from Taiwan’s Ministry of Education for 2022-2025.

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KATHLEEN WOODWARD: Good evening. Hello to everyone. I'm Kathleen Woodward, director of the Simpson Center for the Humanities, and it is my extreme pleasure to be able to welcome you to the opening event of the conference, New Geographies in Feminist art China, Asia and the world. And what I know will be a wonderful keynote address for all of you by our visiting scholar, Shu-mei Shih, from UCLA.

This conference will continue over the next two days. This conference has been brilliantly conceived and structured by two of our faculty members here at the University of Washington. Sonal Khular, who is right here from our division of art history. And Sasha Welland from the departments of gender, women, and sexuality studies, and also anthropology.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you.

[LAUGHTER]

The conference is bringing together scholars, artists, and curators and others. Welcome to all of you who have come from around the world. And it's also bringing together people from the University of Washington, and from our community within the greater Seattle area. We're going to have an opportunity tomorrow to thank the many people who have helped make this conference possible. And that includes, of course, multiple organizations.

But I do want to add tonight that in addition to the very generous support, and I would say prestigious support from the American Council of Learned Societies, which is based in New York. It's quite a formidable challenge to receive support from this organization, so congratulations to Sasha and to Sonal. But in addition, many, many organizations and individuals at the University of Washington have contributed, as well as community organizations to make this possible.

And I do want to mention that in addition to the conference-- emerging from the conference will be a print book. And well, I will put it this way, also a digital book, the two will go together and they will diverge in interesting ways. So look for that. And also, imagine that contributing to-- the support of what has emerged from the conference as well, the conference are the deans of the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

How often are we able to say that all three of these wonderful divisions have contributed to an event? Also many, many of our centers in the Jackson School of International study, and many of our departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. The Henry Art Gallery, and the Gardner Center for Asian Art and Ideas of the Seattle Art Museum. I have witnessed intense intellectual excitement around this event, and it reminds me how precious it is that a University provides space for this kind of important work.

And it reminds me that I need to call on all of you to continue to advocate for the importance of the arts and the humanities in serving the mission of the University of Washington, both here, but globally. Globally.

[APPLAUSE]

Very important.

I know this evening is going to be, and the entire conference, intellectually and aesthetically exhilarating. That I fully expect. I want to thank the members of the executive board of the Simpson Center who named Shu-mei Shih a Katz Distinguished Lecturer in the humanities. That's our highest tribute in the humanities for leading edge work. I want to take this opportunity to just single out three people who helped orchestrate this event and conference to perfection, and that would be Miriam Barta, who is right here, and that would--

[APPLAUSE]

--and that would be Chelsea Schliever, who is right here.

[APPLAUSE]

And Caroline Hansen, who I believe is setting up-- helping to set up the reception to which I invite you all in the Walker Ames room afterwards to continue the discussion. We want you all to come. And now I want to introduce Sasha Welland, who is the author of a book forthcoming on Experimental Beijing, Contemporary Art Worlds in China's Capital.

Experimental Beijing. I love that title. She will introduce our guest to you all, and I want to again take this opportunity to thank both Sonal and Sasha for this conference, which is an intellectual gift to everyone. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you, Cathy, and I should just say that this project would also not have been possible without the intellectual and all kinds of other support coming from Cathy Woodward. It is my great privilege and pleasure to introduce Professor Shu-mei Shih, tonight's Katz distinguished lecturer and keynote speaker for the International Conference New Geographies of Feminist Art, China, Asia, and the world.

It is a challenge to do justice in a few minutes to her many publications and accomplishments. The depth of her theoretical interventions, and the scope and boldness of her scholarship, but let me try. Shu-mei Shih is Professor of Asian languages and cultures, comparative literature and Asian-American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Where she has taught since joining the faculty in 1993.

I want to emphasize from the outset that her a joint appointment in these departments indicates something much greater than a string of titles or juggling of teaching and administrative responsibilities, which in and of itself would be no small feat. Rather, these commitments mark the contours of a field of scholarship that Shu-mei Shih has bravely pioneered, often against significant odds and opposition at the conjuncture of disciplines whose methods and objects of study have traditionally been segregated.

In doing so, she has brought into question the political and institutional stakes that structure knowledge production. This is the risky part of the undertaking in ways that have enabled important new understandings of cultural production that challenge powerful and oppressive social arrangements of gender, race, class, nationality, to mention a few. And this is the realm of possibility that her scholarship has opened.

Shu-mei Shih's educational background gives some indication of the direction she might take in her career as a groundbreaking transnational and interdisciplinary scholar. Born and raised in Korea, she then received her BA in English from National Taiwan Normal University. Her MA in literature from the University of California, San Diego, and her PhD in comparative literature at the University of California, Los Angeles.

But it is her record of research, publication and program building that demonstrates the range and creativity of her unique intellect. Her first book, The Lure of the Modern, writing modernism in semi-colonial China, 1917 to 1937, was published in 2001, and it contextualizes Chinese literary modernism in the semi-colonial cultural and political formation of Republican era China.

Her consideration of the influence of both Japanese and Western colonialism, and modernism, the role of gender and literary formations and their mapping onto the particular locations of Beijing and Shanghai demonstrates her contribution as a literary critic and cultural historian. She also began to develop in this work, which is where I first encountered her scholarship as a graduate student, she develops in here her argument about the stakes of comparison in cross-cultural studies and as theoretical intervention.

When her colleague, Francoise Lionnet, who specializes in comparative and francophone literatures as well as African and African-American studies, joined the Comparative Literature faculty at UCLA, she and Shu-mei developed an extremely productive and long lasting collaboration. And I just want to note here that this is incredibly inspiring to me as someone who's just embarked into two years of a collaboration with Sunal, and so that it can bear such fruit and have such longevity is very inspiring.

Their collaboration has resulted in two edited volumes, Minor Transnationalism, 2005, and Creolization of Theory, 2011. Together, they have developed a theory of transnationalism that is not held captive to vertical majority, minority relations, but opens up a much more varied terrain of minority interactions with both majority cultures and other minorities. They have also supported a new generation of scholars in this growing and exciting field through their Mellon postdoctoral program in the humanities called Cultures and Transnational Perspective, which is housed at UCLA.

And I believe it's in the ninth year running now, which is also quite incredible. In her own scholarship, professor Shu has developed this collaboration into a form of inquiry-- has developed this collaborative form of inquiry into the concept of the sinophone. The study of sinitic language cultures on the margins of geopolitical nation states and their hegemonic productions.

She explores these ideas in her book, Visuality and Identity, Sinophone articulations across the Pacific, which was published in 2007. And in this book, she moves her cultural critique from literature to also visual cultural production, including film and the visual arts. This book served, in many ways, as the inspiration for our invitation to her to serve as keynote speaker for the new geographies of feminist art conference.

In this book, she has chapters that consider topics such as globalization and minoritization, feminist, transnationality, as well as particular chapters that focus on two of the artists that we were also very keen to invite to the conference, and those artists are Wu Mali, who is here.

And I also just want to mention that the cover of the edited volume, Minor Transnationalism, has the very beautiful image of Wu Mali's installation work called, Follow the Dreamboat, which helps-- in the midst of the different kinds of hegemonic powers and faultlines of power in the world, it helps us think about the possibilities as well, of how and where we can move.

And the other artists that she focuses on in one of the chapters of that book, who will be here, she has a solo show opening tonight in San Francisco, so she will be joining us tomorrow, and will be here at the artists roundtable on Saturday is, Hong Liu, who-- Shu-mei Shih is from Taiwan, so you can see the development of-- just in these two artists, the idea of the sinophone.

And Hong Liu, born and trained in Beijing, but has lived for almost the second half of her life, living and working out of the Bay Area in California. As someone, who myself, has always striven to work at interdisciplinary crossroads of ethnic studies and Asian studies across the humanities and the social sciences in my two departments of anthropology and gender, women and sexuality studies, Shu-mei Shih has served as both model, par excellence of the possibility of work that challenges disciplinary borders, an extremely generous mentor.

If any more evidence is needed of her influence on a new generation of scholarship, let me just mention that an incredible range of disciplines and research projects are represented among the graduate students who are currently taking the micro seminar focusing on her work that's being led by Ted Mack. Thank you for doing that.

And I think maybe just-- I don't have it scripted here, but one last thing that I'd like to say is that the kinds of theoretical interventions that Professor Shu has made in her work, I think, also really center the importance of the kinds of theoretical and creative work that are done in the realm of what we often think about the imaginative of literature, of Arts and the humanities, and the real bearing that that has, that those kinds of cultural productions have in shaping our world and also creating change and possibility in that world.

So let me end by just saying we are deeply grateful to Professor Shu-mei Shih for accepting our invitation to be here with us today, and to all of the colleagues and supporters who have made this event possible. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

SHU-MEI SHIN: Well, thank you, Sasha, for that incredibly generous introduction. If my talk does not live up to that introduction, it's really-- it's not her problem, it's my problem. Thanks to Sasha Walland and Sonal Khular and Kathy Woodward for this incredible invitation. I'm very happy to be here and I'm not an art historian, and so, what I can offer here-- and so on the one hand, I'm extremely honored, but I'm also very humbled by this invitation.

And what I can offer here is really some ways of thinking about World art, and as a way to sort of zero in on geographies of feminist art. So, I begin. The pressures of contemporary globalization on scholarship are perhaps the most notable in the expansion of its scope and the new awareness of the variation in scale, which have generated new fields of inquiry.

From economics of globalization, we now have transnational studies that looks at transnational migration as a sociological inquiry, and the transnational movement and formation of cultures for humanistic analysis. Diaspora Studies that examines dispersions of peoples across the world, empire studies that cover large areas of the world's lands and seas over several thousand years, and world history that looks at the entire world as an interconnected economic system.

This widespread impulse to account for the world in scholarship is specifically reflected in the emergence of what I call, world studies, which attempts to enlarge the scope and scale of scholarship from the scale of nation or region to the world. World studies is different from transnational studies in the sense that transnational studies really studies how an object of study exceeds the nation state boundary in its Constitution.

And it is also different from globalization studies, which studies how economic globalization has changed human societies. It refers specifically to those subdisciplines in both humanities and the social sciences that carry the world in their names. Yeah, pretty simple, such as world music, world cinema, world literature, world history and world art, which are presumed to somehow cover the study of the named scholarly object in the whole world, rather than a slice of the world, as has been the case in diasporic international, transnational, or trans-regional studies.

So as a literary and cultural studies scholar, again, not being an art historian, I see my modest contribution to the conference to be on the conceptual terrain. Here I hope to offer, I think, a new way of thinking about world art as I've recently been trying to do with world literature by taking a uniquely modified world historical perspective.

The conception of world art offered here is aimed to help situate the study of Asian feminist art in our increasingly intertwined world. I propose a conception of world art not as a particular type of art, but as a global network where artworks from across the world are enmeshed in complex and power infected relations.

I'll be coming back to this phrase many times and explain it in greater detail as it is impossible to ever account for this global network fully, right? How can you? It's too complicated. It's too much. I further narrowed the conception to the notion of what I call an artistic arc. Connecting as many and as few nodal points of artistic production, and then make meaningful sense without needing to account for the whole world.

So that's like a nodal point. Next time it rings, that will be the second one, and we're going to try to string them together into an arc, so that's the argument. So you heard the whole talk. OK. OK, so by allowing the minor-- and so what this conception of arc and the nodal points does is that in terms of how they relate, it doesn't have to be just the major sites that relate, right? Minor sites can also relate.

By allowing the minor sites of art to serve as nodal points equally as major sites. Here, I'm proposing a non centrist model of world art studies. So the first section is called World History and Relational Comparison. The models of world history I'm working with here is specifically in reference to what came after Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory.

In very broad terms, world system theory proposes that the world has become one integrated economic system since the late 15th century due to the rise of the West and the spread of global capitalism. Even though Wallerstein's intention is by no means Eurocentric, the implied presumption of European exceptionalism in the narrative of the rise of the West has led many self-styled anti-Eurocentric historians to offer counter narratives to that of Wallerstein's.

And integrated world history is a term some of these historians have used to mark their difference from Wallerstein. The thesis of integrated world history are that the world, as we know it, has been integrated economically and otherwise for much longer than the modern world system theory proposes, so much earlier than 15th century, and that the so-called rise of the West owed much to the more advanced East.

So the rise of the West is not exceptional. For some of these historians to consider the macro history of the world is to learn the interconnectedness of the world since at least around the sixth century. And what this means is that the ideology of East is East and West is West is as effective as it is false. Historical sociologist, Janet Abu-Lughod, identifies the existence of a polycentric world system in the 13th century, much before, the 15th century story.

What is of interest in her discussion of economic circuits in the 13th century for our historians is perhaps the references that some of the evidence she uses to illustrate the Constitution of economic circuits. These are the books I'm talking about. Economic circuits actually are-- in terms of the circulation of art objects such as celadon ware, Persian turquoise glazed bowls, and Egyptian furniture with complex inlays of silver and gold.

In the second book, Andre Gunder Frank, his explicitly anti-centric reorient global economy in the Asian age pays special attention to the structural relations, interconnectedness, and simultaneity in world events and processes during what he calls the Asian age, which he dates from 1400 to 1800. Even though he actually locates, in his other work, the existence of something similar to Wallerstein's world system backed by 5,000 years, not 500 years.

His main point in the book is to show how Europe, quote, "climbed on the back of Asia, then stood on Asian shoulder." End quote. And the third book I refer here is John M. Hobson's very tellingly titled book, The Eastern Origin of Western Civilization. You got the title, you read the book. It extends the argument further to say that the so-called rise of the West owes crucially to what he calls the resource portfolios from the Far East and the Middle East, which include actually everything.

Gunpowder, printing, navigational sciences, the creation of capitalist institutions, advancement in astronomy and mathematics, and the enlightened ideas of rationality. And nothing's left, really. [CHUCKLES] Historian, Michael Siegel, sums up, succinctly, what she considers to be the major emphasis of this type of world history as quote, "This is the crucial phrase for me, the complex global network of power inflected relations that enmesh our world." end quote.

To be sure not all parts of the network are equally affecting or evenly affected by the global system, but all parts of the network are constitutive of the system itself. And there is no hiding from an interconnectedness that is thoroughly infiltrated by the operations of power. This means the histories of empire, conquest, slavery, colonialism, and all forms of domination cannot in any way be disavowed when one does integrative world history.

After' all, another crucial conceptual point for me, power is a form of relation. To analogize for the moment, I would like to propose a conception of world art where artworks are enmeshed in a-- quoting the phrase, "Complex global network of power inflected relations."

The key word for me here is relation, which I partly draw from a Caribbean thinker, Edouard Glissant specifically his notion of relation or 'Relation' which he capitalizes, is self inspired by chaos theory as well as contemporary conditions of globalization. For Glissant relation is both a way of describing and understanding the globalized world of infinite interaction of cultures.

On the one hand, it is an act. He says that 'Relation' is an intransitive verb that changes all the elements that come into relation with each other. Relation is therefore as much a phenomenological description of the world as a movement or a process. As a description, it is akin to the perception of the dynamics of the world in chaos theory. As a movement, it is best exemplified in the worldwide and ceaseless process of creolization.

In other words, relation references the state of worldwide entanglements of cultures and peoples. The processes of seasonless creolization is a result of such entanglement, and crucially, it's something that we enter into and something we can do, right? Because it's a verb. It is a description of the dynamics in the world, a way of looking at the world, a way of being. Be it a person or an artwork in the world, and as a way to do research as a scholar.

This relation of doing research on world art in the context of world history is what I call relational comparison. In Glissant's thinking, relation also does not happen in a power vacuum. The Caribbean has a site like any other, where intense cultural entanglements have occurred throughout history is a site of colonialism, genocide, slavery and coolie trade.

Creolization takes many forms and involves irreconcilable elements, and lead to unpredictable consequences. As a ceaseless process, however, it keeps open the potentiality of something different and new out of even violent encounters. A relational view of world art and sees the art of the world to be mutually entangled in uneven terrains of power. Whether an artwork comes from minor or insignificant or marginalized sites or from major sites, they are all caught up in relation.

In this way, minor starts of art can be brought into relation. And histories of power are not displaced, but acknowledged and foregrounded. So in the next section, Totality Versus Arc. I wanted to show one more slide of Glissant.

There was a documentary about Glissant And this one is about conversations when he was still alive. He's passed away. But there's a wonderful documentary by Manthia Diawara that was done right before he passed away, and it's just absolutely powerful.

So let me now backtrack and give you a couple of quick examples from the discipline of art history, which has proven to be a bit challenging for me since I'm not an art historian. The best place to begin, I realized, is my high schooler son's advanced placement art history textbook, which is the one on the right. It went into 14th printings and it is extremely widely used. Yes? OK, good. Experts agree.

It did not take much probing on my part before my son complaining to me that they are learning very little about Asian art in this class throughout this textbook. He complains. He says, how can you learn China's 2000-year civilization and art in two hours? That's exactly what he said to me.

In the first chapter of the book-- in this book, that is titled What is Art History, which is supposed to introduce the readers, what art history is. It's a big title-- the author uses 19 images to illustrate his sweeping ideas about the global history of art. And of those 19 images, there was only one Asian image, which is Japanese.

I mentioned this Japanese image being singled out here to represent Asia, specifically to refer us back to the book on the left, The Art of The World From 1894. This book was printed on the occasion right immediately after the 1893 World's Fair held in Chicago, which is, of course, the precursor to world expositions that continue today.

In this five-volume catalog published about the fair in 1894, with the image of Christopher Columbus, as you can see, in Boston gold on the cover. These are actually huge books that are incredibly weighty because the quality of the paper is so excellent. And so they're very heavy.

I can't even carry the five volumes in my arms. I think they must weigh at least 20 pounds. And that's why they've kept so well.

And in this five-volume hundreds of pages, there's only one Asian artist represented and, again, a Japanese artist. Thanks to the popularity of Japonism in the West at this time, Japanese art received the token representation. It seems from 1893 to 2008, not a whole lot has changed.

In 1893, China was not present in the World's Fair. Instead, it was represented. It was placed on a Tableau as an opium den concession. China was object of ethnography, not an object of art history.

I will take a look at two more recent art history textbooks, which share an interesting commonality-- A World History of Art. And then the other one is A World View of Art History, which I have consulted. In both of these books, all non-Western art is specified with geographical or cultural markers. And so non-Western art.

It says Indian art, Chinese art, Japanese art, Egyptian art. And then those are the chapter titles. And then when it comes to Western art, geography disappears.

And so you have Renaissance art, Baroque art, late 18th and early 19th century, or romanticism to realism, impressionism to post-impressionism. Geography disappears. So talking about geographies of feminist art, they can disappear. When you have power, you can let them disappear.

And an exemplary recent attempted a non-Eurocentric conception of World art studies is the volume World Art Studies on the right, edited by Zijlmans and Van Damme and published in Amsterdam in 2008, with essays written by both European and American art historians.

The new concept of world art studies is said to have been pioneered by John Onians in 1996, and is simply defined as, quote, "the global and multidisciplinary examination of the arts." The premise of world art studies is that art is a pan-human phenomenon and a basic feature of our shared humanity.

And I've looked through this book, and I think it's obviously very productive to consider art to be a pan-human phenomena and using scientific approaches and other kinds of approaches to study art and so as to be more inclusive, and to consider world art to be an integrated and self-generated system. They also use Nicholas Luhrmann's system theory as Wallenstein did to talk about art so as to be able to account for the totality of world art.

What is lacking, however, in my view, in this model is the consideration of power relations. The discussion up to now from oral history to world art then allows me to formulate to repeat a conception of world art where artworks are enmeshed in a complex global network of power-inflected relations.

The task of the world art scholar then is to excavate and analyze these relations across an uneven terrain fractured by the operations of power. Simply put, doing relational studies means setting into motion and bringing into relation terms that have been traditionally pushed apart from each other due to certain interests.

I consider the excavation of these relationalities to be the ethical practice of comparison, where art from-marginalized locations can be equally brought to relations, as can Western and canonical art. Relational comparison is not a center periphery model, as the artworks form a network of relations wherever the artworks are created and circulated.

For instance, by the sheer imaginative and organizational feat of our conference organizers, Sasha and Sona, they have brought together all the artists and artworks discussed in this conference into a set of rationalities that otherwise would not have been possible. Relational work takes labor. It is work.

But it is, of course, impossible to map all the layers of interconnectedness of the art the world over. Instead of assuming that such as possible, so I offer here a more modest version of relational method, where a specific set of relationalities are traced on an arc rather than a totality.

Against the lures of systematization and totalization, I propose this notion of the artistic arc as a way to connect artworks, practices, spaces, events, and issues, or nodal points of meaning across a specific trajectory in world history. So for instance, apropos of our conference theme, Asian feminist art can be considered an arc, which constitutes a network of relations in uneven terrains in the context of world history. Asian feminist art is not a totality of world art, but a discrete trajectory with specific nodal points that will identify and bring into relation through the labor of work.

So next section is called Anterior Centric History and the Rise of China. And here the argument turns a little, or starts to critique anti-Eurocentric world history as constituting another sort of new configuration of power. The lessons of anti-Eurocentric world history that I have summarized and drawn from for history of world art has specific implications for considering contemporary feminist art in Asia in terms of the new power configuration in the world.

One of the unintended consequences of anti-Eurocentric world history is that in its valorization, indeed overvalorization of the civilizational and technological contributions made by Asia, especially China, right? Gunpowder, paper, compass. What else do we need for modern technologies?

It has unwittingly served as some sort of an apology or justification for the rise of China as a new major power on the world stage. Unwittingly, anti-Eurocentric history has been beneficial for the construction of a new kind of China centrism. Chinese intellectuals have actually read all these books, and they have been very self-consciously utilizing this historiography to make several arguments.

One, China has been an important, if not the most important, contributor to world civilizations. Two, the era of Western hegemony is over, and the rise of China is inevitable. Three, China will be at the center of the New World Order.

They draw two major supports from this historiography-- the existence of the tribute system since time immemorial, which is actually influenced from the work of Takeshi Hamashita, who is a Japanese historian who has done very important work on the tribute system. And his work has been influential to all the world historians that I have cited also. And he collaborated with people like Giovanni Arrighi and others in mapping the tributary or tribute system as a trade or economic system in imperial China. So that's one-- the tribute system as an evidence to support this argument.

And the second one is that China has never been a nation state. That is very different from European nation states that actually it's a civilization state, or what they call-- somebody calls it a multi-systemic state. How the new perception of China's importance in world civilizations led to a confident and proud self-perception within China can be found in the re-emergence of the discourse of all under heaven, tianxia in China.

A decade or so earlier, when the notion of all under heaven have been evoked, it was a limited reference to the geographical boundary of China itself. So here's a book that says All Under Heaven. And then subtitle is A Complete History of China. So China is all under heaven.

[LAUGHTER]

And then the next one-- I'm sorry, that's kind of cut out. But you can see All Under Heaven: The Chinese World. So the limit of reference of All Under Heaven is China. And this is the inside cover of that book. I just wanted to show you the Chinese characters for the term tianxia or all under heaven. OK.

But the discourse has begun to shift both in and outside China, such as this volume by a Korean historian on the left, Kim Hankyu NON-ENGLISH which is Korean for all under heaven nation. And here in the subtitle is East Asian World Order in the Traditional Period. In the traditional period, yeah.

I can say Korean.

[SPEAKING KOREAN]

All right, here, All Under Heaven is extended to east Asia. I apologize for the quality of the maps, but the All Under Heaven, and especially in this map, starts to extend far beyond China. China is a little red blob right in the middle. I'm sorry I couldn't get a very good map. But this is actually a 19th century Korean map.

Traditionally, the concept involves the emperor in the center as the son of heaven, [NON-ENGLISH], with the mandate of heaven, or [NON-ENGLISH], rules over the realm under heaven, [NON-ENGLISH].

All Under Heaven evinces a concentric structure with the son of heaven at the center or apex, emanating its domination over inner subjects, outer subjects, tributary states and barbarians in all four directions of north, south, east, and west.

The renowned psychologist sinologist John King Fairbank, who wrote about this concept in 1966. And he translated tianxia, or all under heaven, as the Chinese world-- again, it's limited to China-- and explained that this Chinese world may reach beyond the borders of China, but only in, quote, "gradually decreasing efficacy as parts of a concentric hierarchy," unquote.

Fairbank noted that unlike the theoretical the theoretical equality presumed by European ideology of nation states, the Chinese world order, quote, "was not organized by a division of territories of sovereigns of equal status, but rather by the subordination of all local authorities to the central and awe-inspiring power of the emperor," unquote. Its organizing principle is, he says, super ordination-subordination. So that's his characterization.

What is striking in this graph of the tianxia, or all under heaven, when I showed it to you, and I read Barbarians-- I heard some of you kind of smiling or grinning-- is the reference to the others as barbarians. Southern barbarians, [NON-ENGLISH] [NON-ENGLISH] means barbarous.

Northern barbarians [NON-ENGLISH]. [NON-ENGLISH] has animal radical, beast radical on the left in the-- actually, a lot of these names only in the 20th century have lost their beastly qualities and so forth. In other words, what you can see here in this map, the concept of all under heaven is imbued within it the barbarization and primitization of the other.

The concept undergoes a radical transformation in the work of Zhao Tingyang, who is a professor of philosophy at People's University in Beijing, and who has made the concept very popular. All under heaven, Zhao proposes, is an acceptable empire.

And it is also an ideal form of empire, a perfect empire. These are his terms. He's written actually those articles in English himself. And so I can quote them without thinking that they're translation errors.

The term includes three meanings. First, the title is called The All Under Heaven System. I have it there. The term includes three meanings. First, the whole world under heaven; and second, the hearts of all people, or the general will of the people; and third, a universal system of the world, a utopia of the world as one family.

Aspects of such empire can be seen in ancient empires of China, especially in the ancient Zhou dynasty and specifically in the tribute system. Again, the tribute system comes up again and again as the justification for how Chinese form of empire is the benign, the good one because the tributary system was voluntary.

He argues that the system of all under heaven is superior to democracy because democracy, quote, "represents misled minds much more than the independent; the false want much more than true needs; and elusive advantages much more than real goods and virtues," unquote. As history has shown, he contends, quote, "The masses always make the wrong choices for themselves through a misled democracy," unquote.

In the preface to this book, he notes that the recuperation of this concept is necessary for China. Since China is now a major economic power, China must also must become, quote, "A major nation for the production of knowledge," unquote. This is a project of what he calls rethinking China so that Chinese knowledges become an important basis for the world knowledge system.

Since China is a major part of the world, thinking about China must develop into thinking about the world. And thus, quote, "The fundamental goal of rethinking China is rethinking the world," unquote. Here through a series of rhetorical substitutions, somehow, China becomes the world.

So this discussion of All Under Heaven by Zhao Tingyang has come under a little heat, not a whole lot, but a little heat in China, including a scholar who is an international relations scholar. His name is Su Zhenghe, who notes that the all under heaven system is actually a form of hierarchical China centrism, and that the tribute system was humiliating to many of the peripheral peoples to whom extreme prejudice has been expressed.

The rise of China gives substance and cause to the rise of the discourse of All Under Heaven. And this discourse in turn justifies the complete denigration of socialist values, even as China presumes itself to be putatively socialist. Such socialist values as autonomy of national minorities are daily tested. And the global 1960s solidarity of people of color around the world is largely overthrown by such practices as Chinese expansionism in Africa.

So the next section, the Arc of Feminist Cosmopolitan Art. This is a war of art. This is our world historical moment in thinking about Asian feminist art along the varying scales of China, Asia, and the world, where the hegemony of Eurocentrism is seriously challenged, but where anti-Eurocentric easily flips into Chinacentrism.

In this context, an attention on minor and minoritized artists and their work becomes particularly meaningful. In the remaining time, I will trace an artistic art that I will call feminist cosmopolitanism. Feminist cosmopolitanism is different from feminist transnationality or transnational feminism, where feminist values may offer grounds of translatability or solidarity among women across national boundaries.

Rather, here feminist values can dare to become cosmopolitan values. Here, feminism is not just about women, but about the world. It is the basis for a relational view of the world. And as we shall see, a kind of ethical practice where the gendered and minoritized subject overcomes her presumed and assumed victimhood positionality and identity, and theirs to articulate a certain kind of universal vision, considering such universal vision not as a source of pride or a position of importance, but as a kind of ethical demand.

The four artists I showcased here have gone through a thematically feminist phase, where feminism was a set of themes, where issues of femininity, gender, and sexuality were prominent in their works. But they have all somehow moved from feminism as theme to feminism as an ethical position. And that is expressed through medium, form, and action, articulating a feminist cosmopolitanism in surprisingly powerful and affecting ways.

Oh, I wanted to show an image of an art book actually that says New World Order in talking about Chinese art. So you can see even in art history circles, this has happened.

Patty Chang-- the beautiful and terrifying work of Asian-American performance artist and video artist Patty Chang shows how women's bodies are shaped, stitched, clamped, hooked, squeezed, and dismantled into femininity. And she dramatizes this via passionate interaction, she calls, with animate and inanimate objects.

So the big image on the left, she has a melon on her breast. And she cuts into the melon. And she actually takes out the melon with her hand and eats it. And these are-- so that one is called melons. And then the one on the top is called contortions. And the one in the middle is shaved. These are all very disturbing pieces. And then the one on the bottom right is-- she has eels inside her shirt.

More recently, however, she has started to explore issues of representation and translation in a more philosophical way. In this piece, called Shangri-La, the American self-- she goes to southwestern China where a couple of villages were competing to become named as Shangri-La. And she actually goes to the town that got named.

And then she built this glass mountain or mirror. You see, you have a cellophane and then the mirror mountain. And then she put it on this truck. And then just in the video, you can see the truck traveling through landscape.

So if we say that this mirror mountain is in some ways a metaphor for the American self, built of mirrors, moving through southwestern China, the legendary site of Shangri-La, capturing passing images, but only for a fleeting moment. And the images disappear, leaving no traces behind.

It reflects. It is empty or blank. Images of Shangri-La are mere reflections of the empty or blank self. Consider this work alongside Trinh T. Min-ha, the Vietnamese-American artist-- video artist who discussed, for instance, in her work using Luce Irigiray's notion of speculum of the other woman in terms of women as reflections of various desires, especially masculine and patriarchal values and so forth. And they're not fully themselves, but they're mirror reflections.

And she uses a box of mirrors. So if you are a woman inside a box of mirrors and all the reflections and some ways darting back and forth and reflecting against each other. And where is this woman's self?

So if you think alongside Trinh T. Min-ha and her discussion of the female self in terms of box of mirrors, we can see how gender concerns have become a philosophical interrogation into the representation of the other and reflectionism.

Another piece entitled, Chinese Out of the Old West. I couldn't get a still because my technological ability is too limited. It's a video work. So in this piece called Chinese Out of the Old West, she stages translators who conduct impromptu oral interpretations of the work, an essay by German philosopher Walter Benjamin, who actually wrote an article about Anna May Wong.

And another recent video piece entitled Minor, set in western China, obliquely comments on the ethnic conflicts between the Uyghurs and the Han Chinese in Urumqi, while dealing with universal themes of communication, landscape, and movement. As a minority person in the United States, Patty Chang's reaching out to the Uyghurs is a minor-to-minor relationality that has profound implications.

In some ways, we can see her work as coming out of the genealogy of such Asian-American video and performance artists as Theresa Cha who explore such themes as blindness and insight, speaking and silence, voice and voicelessness in other most complicated paradoxical ways.

So here then is the unorthodox genealogy of feminist cosmopolitanism of Asian America Theresa Cha Trinh T. Min-ha, Patty Chang.

So the next artist I talk about is Shu Lea Cheang, who though born in Taiwan, has been working in New York and Paris in the last few decades. She makes films, but mostly considers herself a multimedia and net-based artist.

Her earlier works deal with sexual politics, queer affinities, and other similar feminist themes. But she notes that-- and she makes a wonderful statement about how feminism is actually a medium, not content. She says, "The medium I choose for each project I'm engaged in is itself a feminist statement," unquote. That it is not just the theme, but the medium that is feminist, be it net-based installation dealing with e-trash, viral love, compost and warm action, transgender, and ethnic identity, or what have you.

This series, called Baby Love, started in 2005 and exhibited around the world in different cities show cloned babies in teacups that spin around and crash into the teacups. They're like those teacups that you get into in amusement parks.

The public is invited to sit on the teacups. So you can see some kids are sitting on the teacups on the left at the Chelsea Museum. And the human clone interaction invites viewers to explore the implications of cloning for the future of humanity. Each cloned baby is installed with a Mac Mini with Wi-Fi that serves as sound processing unit.

The public can set up the teacup movement from auto mode to manual mode. There is a dial inside. And the left or right movements also shuffle the MP3 files back and forth and in various speeds. The altered soundscape is therefore produced by the human baby interaction.

The public can also upload love songs on the website for the baby's data, which is called Memory Emotion Data, ME Data. Each time a cup clashes with another, a signal is sent to the web server, and the baby-- and the baby.

And babies swap MP3 files and produce their own mix. I actually tried this online. You can go to the website. Just Google "Baby Love." You can try it. You can upload a love song and then do the crashing and all that. OK. Then the crash data is recorded and streamed on the web.

Marine Ky produces artworks that cannot be more different from Shu Lea Cheang, but equally evinces a kind of feminist cosmopolitanism. These early etchings deploy signs and symbols of traditional iconography from Cambodia, constituting part of her gendered memories of Cambodia, which she left with her family as refugees due to the Khmer Rouge. First to Macau, then to France, then to Australia.

As you can see, a profound sense of melancholia prevails in these etchings. Traditional iconography appears to be like scars, signifying fragments of scarred memories as potential means to access lost memories, even if only as scarred remains. So this is a very different way of using cultural material, that's what I'm trying to say. It's not cultural material as raw material to get people's attention.

In year 2000, she actually decided to return to Cambodia. And now she splits her time between France, Cambodia, and Australia. One of her recent works is called L'epidemie de La Terre, The Skin of the Earth. And installation work using-- so the three works-- the top two and then the left one, they're there from the bottom left, they're from The Skin of the Earth.

And installation work using materials from nature, such as natural dyes from rocks and plants to explore questions of impermanence of life, healing properties of plants, and how to live a life that embraces human qualities of patience, forgiveness, imminence, introspection, openness, acceptance. And to me, very importantly, responsibility.

Some of the motifs and pieces from this piece went into the installation work on the bottom right called "Receptacle," which was exhibited in Singapore where three rooms are set up with these hanging textiles. And they're supposed to be spaces of invitation to share experiences of peace.

Finally, Wu Mali whom I have written about and who graces us with her presence in the front row here. And like Marine Ky she has returned to her hometown, in this case Taiwan. Or rather, she has never left even when she was traveling and exhibiting in different parts of the world.

In her early work as well, feminist themes were explored in explicit ways, as you can see, such as these early work. Epitaph 1997 concerns the elision of women's history, or herstory, in the commemoration of 1947 massacre in Taiwan.

Stories of Women from Xinjiang concerns the elision of women workers' stories in textile manufacturing as Taiwan vied to become a player in the international division of labor under global capitalism. And what she did was that these women's stories are literally stitched into the fabric. You see in the back, in the background, there are actually characters stitched, weaved, into the fabric that they produce.

Lower left, "Formosa Club." In the international division of labor-- I don't know whether this part of the history, but Taiwan provided some crucial help, which is prostitution. Formosa is the Portuguese name for Taiwan.

And so during the Vietnam War, for instance, American GIs frequented Taiwan as the-- it's almost like the sex safari sites, and including Japanese tourists and many and others. So Wu Mali was ironizing how prostitution becomes a path to economic success in Taiwan.

More recent work, where you see that it is no longer actually individual work as much as community work. These two events are installations on the left, "Landscape Under Skirts" And on the right, "Empress New Clothes" where lay women, regular housewives and mothers, gathered together and produce artwork, which are actually fascinatingly beautiful.

And then this piece, art as community action, and where she involves local people in small towns where they produce interesting artwork.

And this piece called "Taipei Tomorrow as a Lake Again," which is a reflection on global warming. And this piece of "Art As Environment," a cultural action on Plum Tree Creek, which lasted from 2010 to 2012, explores the possibility of creating an eco village.

Here, you can see feminism is no longer about content but also about medium and action. It is a way of practicing art as action. Feminism then becomes method but I want to end my talk with this installation piece from Formosa Club. It's also inside of a prostitution house. Some of you who can read the characters, you can laugh if you like. On the plaque I explained. And this image is also on the conference website.

The plaque on the right wall is a phrase derived from a remark by Confucius, recorded in the classic Confucian text, The Book of Rituals. The phrases made famous-- it reads Tian Xiaowei Gong. And I explained what it means. But the phrase is made famous by the founder of the Republic of China, the father of Republic of China, Sun Yat Sen. And this is his actual calligraphy.

And so you can see it is the actual calligraphy right there by the founding father of modern China and hanging in a prostitution house. And the phrase means-- you can translate in a couple of ways, but something like equality of all under heaven or available for all under heaven.

So in Wu Mali's ironic rendering, the same phrase comes to suggest that Taiwanese prostitution is for the service of all under heaven, and the ideal state of one world is reached by prostitution. The word gong, the last character Tian Xiaowei Gong Gong in the phrase, besides meaning all in public, also implies equality or shared, so shared by all. So the implication is further that prostitution is equally available to all, and in this way, Taiwan contributes to the equality of the world.

I think we can view this work as a cautionary tale to remind us to be suspicious of any such and all deployments of this discourse of all under heaven, as you can see. In the context of competing centrisms, eurocentrism and China centrism, critique of eurocentrism is not enough.

The feminist cosmopolitan art that I tentatively discussed here traverses actual geographies and their interrelations-- Taiwan, Cambodia, US, France, China, more usefully. I hope I've been able to show that these artworks constitute meaningful nodal points in a relational arc that traces the transformation of feminism as content to feminism as an ethical practice and a method to tackle some of the most fundamental issues in our vastly changing and interconnected world.

Between feminism and cosmopolitanism as Maxine Hong Kingston said in one of her novels, "They translate well." Thank you.

MODERATOR: We have time for questions and discussion. And what we would like to do is, say, take three questions and then have them just answer. So I'm going to ask you to [INAUDIBLE] introduce yourself as [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: I have one question about Chinese art, ancient Chinese art and archaeology. Two questions. One is, since we have the authors here, I wonder the fourth character, the last one, besides equality to share-- because-- do you have a husband in mind?

[LAUGHTER]

SHU-MEI SHIN: Has to be. Excellent. Excellent. Yeah. Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Gong--

SHU-MEI SHIN: Lao. Gong lao. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

AUDIENCE: And this amazing husband-- [INAUDIBLE]

SHU-MEI SHIN: Oh. That's fantastic, actually. In Taiwan, husbands are called lao gong-- the old gong which is the character gong, the Tien Shan Pai Gong, the fourth character. So it's very funny. The whole world is my husband.

[LAUGHTER]

AUDIENCE: My second question is more serious. I'm very glad you showed us the two survey books by Kuttner [INAUDIBLE] and Fleming. I like [INAUDIBLE] Fleming better. But what kind of survey books do you have in mind if you were to write [INAUDIBLE] it is not organized overall regions-- when you have regional studies?

SHU-MEI SHIN: Mm-hmm.

MODERATOR: Another question?

KATHLEEN WOODWARD: Please, would you stand up? Thank you.

AUDIENCE: Hi. I'm Tin Yao. [INAUDIBLE] But I really [INAUDIBLE] I was wondering if you have artists that I found have [INAUDIBLE].

MODERATOR: One more.

AUDIENCE: So you used the word-- my name is Herbert Blau. I have taught here in English and [INAUDIBLE]. You use the word relational as human. But is there a dynamic in the word relation between East and West? How would you think of that? I have seen some of the art that you showed. There's a narrow feminist and it seems to be worldwide. One can think of antecedents preliminary to that or even say, Western happenings-- body art and things of that kind.

Although that can go back years before even into ancient times. We think into Eastern ritual sacrificial practices. So how do you see that dynamic between relation, between East and West in your that we talked about.

SHU-MEI SHIN: Great. Well Thanks for those wonderful questions. The homonym of gong is husband, is indeed a very provocative one. I don't know whether the artist agrees. Did you think about that when you were--

SUBJECT 2: No, because-- it's a kind of-- in the [INAUDIBLE]

SHU-MEI SHIN: In the--

SUBJECT 2: In the [INAUDIBLE].

SHU-MEI SHIN: In the [INAUDIBLE].

SUBJECT 2: [INAUDIBLE].

[LAUGHTER]

SHU-MEI SHIN: Well thank you for that--

SUBJECT 2: It's always a problem.

SHU-MEI SHIN: Yeah. Yeah. OK. So in terms of what kind of survey books would I write, would I recommend, I haven't seen these books. But I think of course, the most immediate issue is the use and not using geographical markers. And so for instance, for most of these books, non-western art is predominantly represented in the pre-modern period-- ancient art and so forth.

And as soon as you enter the 20th century, forget it, as if there is no Asian art from the 20th-- no 20th century art from the rest of the world. And so 20th century would move from either art movements or periods and organize accordingly. And a more-- I guess, non-eurocentric organization would be marking all the geographies equally, marking all the periods in its inclusiveness. I understand it might be humanly very difficult. That's why we love collaborative work. People write these books together.

I don't know actually that this big art history books are written by one person or they're written by two people or they're written by a group of scholars. Yeah. Because nobody can be an expert. So it's simply taking the work, doing the work of representation. So that's in some ways a rather simple response to, I'm sure, much more complicated question. And the second question about how some of these artists don't themselves call feminists. So can we understand them as feminist artists?

This is a perennial problem having to do for Asian feminists, Asian women, or Asian-American feminists. Asian-American feminists perhaps less so. But of course in the US context, now we've moved to the post-feminist phase. But as we understand the word post means many different things. Post means what comes after, but post also means what it is in-- what is ineluctably connected to. Otherwise, you don't need the word post.

So post means many different things. It actually means the word that comes after post is still alive. Otherwise, the term doesn't even have to show up. So post-feminist is a complicated formation and that pays tribute to feminism as much as it tries to mark itself as after feminism. So I'm a literary scholar, so I really like to pay attention to the language, to the play of words. And so in that sense, perhaps, we can understand the Asian-American feminist here.

But in Theresa Cha for instance, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, who was also a writer, she wrote a fantastic uncategorizable book called Dictée, in which she writes a lot about critique of Korean patriarchy, critique of actually Catholicism as a form of patriarchy. Very interesting critiques and critique of linguistic colonialism of French and and Japanese. And it's filled with charts and images, video clippings. It's a fantastic book. And you can see there are a lot of very explicit feminist concerns.

I think equally, as you can see, the artists-- the artworks that I have shown, whether they call themselves feminist or not is in some ways besides the question. You ask many Asian women, even though they write like feminists, but they will refuse the name. Because feminism is associated with the West. And so by saying that I'm a feminist, they're afraid of two things. One, they're no longer local or loyal to their locality. Two, they're man haters. So that they cannot work with men.

And so in Taiwan for instance, the feminist movement has taken a new term, which is called New Feminism. And New Feminism, very, very specifically translated not as-- feminism can be translated in two ways in Mandarin. One is, [SPEAKING CHINESE], women's rights movement. Meaning, rights or power actually. And then the other one is [SPEAKING CHINESE], womanism.

It's very similar to, of course, some of the discussions that we've been having in the US with Alice Walker and others, women of color feminism. And the kinds of conversations are in some ways similar. Or Native American feminist, Sandy Grande, whom I referred to yesterday in the colloquium. She calls you know feminism white stream feminism. And she rather not use feminism. She prefers womanism or any other woman of color form of feminism.

And so not calling themselves feminists has multiple implications. And it doesn't mean that they're not feminists in the sense that we understand them and their work. And the third wonderful question about relation between East and West. And I think the examples you have given, the example you gave about performance art being Western, and then it can be traced back to the East is a perfect illustration of what I was trying to say about the interconnectedness of all these art forms, all these artwork themes and ideas and practices.

And another way to also destabilize it, you know that East and West is that actually Asian-Americans are Westerners. They're not Easterners. They're Westerners. I'm a Westerner. So which is a novel concept in some ways.

[LAUGHTER]

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

SHU-MEI SHIN: Yes. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Next. Yes, please.

AUDIENCE: Excuse me. I'd like you to elaborate on the arc. Is it a curving arc? Is it a radiating arc? Can you explain it a little more, efficiently maybe?

SHU-MEI SHIN: Yes. Yes. Yes.

MODERATOR: We're connecting. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Would you stand up please?

AUDIENCE: I'm [INAUDIBLE] from the University of Washington. A couple of questions. The first one is about your twinning of world history with world art.

SHU-MEI SHIN: I knew I would get this from historian.

[LAUGHTER]

AUDIENCE: As a card-carrying oral historian.

SHU-MEI SHIN: Yes.

AUDIENCE: What's different about world history than world art, that the whole basis of world history is organized around the idea that before a certain time, afroeurasia is a single mass in which there is extensive interactions. So that immediately gives it a very different kind of perspective. Then the binary that you use, which is sort of my second question, what would your argument be different if you let a--

SHU-MEI SHIN: What do you mean by the binary that I used?

AUDIENCE: Sinocentrism versus--

SHU-MEI SHIN: OK.

AUDIENCE: Eurocentrism. So do you let 100 centrisms blossom or [INAUDIBLE] your argument be different?

SHU-MEI SHIN: That's beautiful.

MODERATOR: One more.

AUDIENCE: Hi, my name is Jenny Lin. I'm also from UCLA.

SHU-MEI SHIN: Yes.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] I'm wondering about the way in which you select the including your project aside from the link that they're all by Asian or Asian-American human artists. Is there links in the artworks themselves and the artists producing it?

SHU-MEI SHIN: Well, I thank you for a second set of questions. About the arc, visually, I'm imagining to be like a line. But the line can be crooked, can be-- it can go from place-- from location to location or it could be abstract geography. So through certain themes or practices or forms that they form a certain arc. The attempt here is that to think about arc instead of a circle.

So that in a given work that we do, we don't presume to account for the totality or the wholeness of the world or wholeness of the world of art or a world of history or and so forth. And one of the critiques of world history is that they actually really lack empirical-- real strong empirical data. That for instance, in Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation, I know that book I criticized that the empirical data is not very solid, that he didn't really know a lot of the things that he was talking about.

So when you try to account for the whole world, it's going to be sketchy in some ways. And so I think, some of the work, the concrete work that we can do as scholars is that we can actually talk about what we know but with the proviso that we also feel the ethical demand that these artists feels, that we also need to be responsible with what we do. In literary-- in scholarly work, I often talk to my students or my colleagues about the politics of citation.

Who do we cite in our work matters a lot. If we keep citing the same old white male theorists, they will be the ones always read by everybody else, and they become the focus of conversation of all of us. Because that's the shared reading that we have. But if we cite others, if we talk about-- if we pay attention to minoritized artists, minor artists-- in the case of Taiwan, I wrote a-- I did a special issue on Taiwan for postcolonial studies and call it and call it the globalization and the insignificance of Taiwan. Because nobody thinks Taiwan is important.

And this is not this is not just Taiwan. All those smaller nations, how do you study small nations? And this is where Glissant talking about in the video that Manthia Diawara did, he says, this is so beautifully. And I hope I can just take it as a point of faith. He says, and I will. He says complexity begins in small places. And then they spread. Many of you are nodding. Yes? I'll take it as a point of faith.

And especially of course with islands where all the peoples come through and their points of economic circulation and transit and their places of transport, their ports and yet also things are transported. You can do a lot of interesting analysis of islands and oceans and so forth. And I like to think in terms of the Caribbean. And the Caribbean and the Southeast Asia and the South China Sea, very interesting comparative potentialities but done in a relational way.

And so Anand, so the arc, I'm actually happy to take suggestions and comments on how I might further elaborate this concept. Because I'm developing this into a book project. And so each chapter of the book-- its own literature, but each chapter of the book will trace the literary arc. And so far I have finished two chapters. One of them is on post-plantation coolie trade. And significant event in world history.

And I moved from the Caribbean, which is the West Indies to the East Indies. Very smart, because those are the colonial tropes-- from the West Indies to the East Indies. Very easy. And the coolie trade went through that route. So that's the historical conceit that I use to talk about literary works about post-plantation coolie narratives as a kind of arc.

And then another piece that I'm finishing up is on the global 1960s, the global decolonial period and looking at how revolutionary ideas are developed in or narrated in literatures from different parts of the world. So that's another one. And with this artistic arc, I'm really not an expert. I'm a visual studies scholar, but I don't have the kind of training to analyze art in the way that the next two days will here.

And I'm very-- I'm anticipating and I'm hoping and I'm sure I will be learning a lot. And so that's in some ways a response to the third question about-- but what you see, the link here, is what I call the move from feminism a theme to feminism as a method and becoming-- and so evincing a kind of feminist cosmopolitanism, that these are not contradictory in terms. Feminists can be cosmopolitanism or actually there's a very unique compounding effect that happens with this relational concept.

And to your question Anand, of the-- I mean, we're very happy to borrow the idea of Afro-Asia as a single mass. All of us are very happy to borrow that premise for world literature and in world art. So thanks for that. And then about this binary of eurocentrism and China-centrism, again, I very specifically use the term China-centrism, rather than Sinocentrism for as a specific reference to the polity that is China. So I think it's very important that we don't mix culture and language with the polity.

Because they're all variously-- we always need to variously calibrate these categories, because they don't coalesce. Right? OK. So and I love the idea of 100 centrisms and maybe 1,000 centrism and maybe a million centrism. And that is precisely I think what I'm hoping to articulate is the idea of when every-- know the point is a center, there are no more centers. And then they all connect in interesting relational ways, and we can connect these points, connect these centrisms without all the politics of recognition sitting in, all the pitfalls of how recognition works, how it doesn't work in politics of that, all that. Thank you.

MODERATOR: So we're going to take one more question. And then we'll break for the reception where there's more time for discussion and talk. Please.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. I'm [INAUDIBLE]. I'm [? visiting ?] from New Delhi. I was just wondering, on one hand you are valorizing this whole idea of multiple local centricity and so on, plural way of mapping, cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, your metaphor, which is the [INAUDIBLE] an art seems to be very simple. Because it seems to indicate that one direction that can take. So just wondering, isn't that a bit of a contradiction?

SHU-MEI SHIN: Actually, multiple centrism is not my term. So I actually will not use the term centrism. I will perhaps use nodal points or points or sites or practices or events and so forth. And you're right. I think it's impossible-- let's say, if we just visually imagine the world to be a flat circle. And then there are all these points. And all these points that we can potentially connect. But it's impossible intellectually and physically and otherwise for one person to map the whole interconnectedness.

But what is possible is perhaps, it's like one of those games you play on a piece of paper with all the dots and you connect the dots. I play and then when you connect three, it becomes-- you have a triangle, and you win a point. I don't know whether you've played that game. I played that game growing up in Asia. But anyway, so it's a piece of paper with all the dots, and then you just connect them. And the person who gets to complete a triangle-- so it's a full triangle, wins a point.

And then whoever person wins the most points makes the most triangles, because it happens to be your turn to be able to complete that last line, then you win. So on that sheet, it's a very two-dimensional image. But on that sheet, you can be making certain connections of the dots. And the arc-- I know arc is kind of like this. But what if it goes like this?

So but I'm-- but I'm hoping that the idea of arc could encompass all of those ways in which we can connect those dots, connect those sites, and let emerge the minor articulations that otherwise would be lost in big art history books. They talk about major movements, major themes, major sites. So for instance, on Asian art is usually represented now by ancient Chinese art. And the other Asian countries and in India, and then the other Asian countries is nothing or yeah.

But hopefully, this concept of the arc allows for making other kinds of dots connect. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Before we thank you, I want to mention that if you want to know more about the conference, pick up one of these cards. The website is noted right in here. It will begin tomorrow at 1:00 in the auditorium in the Henry Art Gallery. And now, thank you so much for this rich--

SHU-MEI SHIN: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]