exposure

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I am
100% Black
and 100%
Japanese

Shades of Brown & Yellow

Asian Visual Representation in the American Construct

Benjamin Sloat

Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they have. Its history has no unity. It is flickering across a field of institutional spaces. It is this field we must study, not photography as such.[1]

Fraught with issues of power regarding the subject and the camera, the representation of Asians in the United States is interconnected with the history of the social, political, and economic relationships between the U. S. and Asian peoples. The great variety of Asian cultures, histories, and bodies in the American consciousness has served only to complicate this representation: Asians are cultured intellectuals as well as ethnic natives, grave physical threats and ignored invisible creatures, economic forces and the colonized and exploited, the U.S.'s allies in war and its enemies, insulated outsiders to be feared and assimilated model minorities to be praised.

How Asians have been *seen* relates directly to who is doing the *seeing*. Theorist Rey Chow regards the photographic image as "the site of possible change" while locating the image as "implicitly the place where battles are fought and strategies of resistance negotiated."[2] In accordance, the photograph reflects increasingly complex cultural manifestations and agendas imposed upon Asians not only *being* in America, but *becoming* Americans. Stuart Hall sees this "becoming" as a vital step of the transformative cultural identity, which he regards as "not an essence but a *positioning*."[3] With Asian identity in the U.S. developed to an increased degree by World War II, the visual depictions of Asians become increasingly multifaceted, revealing contradictions, disconnections, and evolutions in Asian representation. The emergence of Asian-American photographers in the 1970s constructs a new dialogue, refreshes the visual associations surrounding Asians in the U.S., and even confronts the notions the American consciousness has of itself.

In the nineteenth century, China's economy was severely shaken after losing two Opium Wars to the British and other Western powers in the 1840s and '50s and being forced to pay war reparations. With the discovery of gold in California in 1849, waves of Chinese prospectors came to the state in the 1850s to find their riches before they returned to China (San Francisco translates to "Gold Mountain" in Chinese). As the gold rush waned, up to 70,000 Chinese stayed in California, becoming the first major population of Asians in the U. S. Allowed only the most menial jobs, many were recruited for the dangerous task of building the transcontinental railroad through the West's mountains and deserts, eventually making up two thirds of the project's workforce. Photographs of the Chinese railroad workers reveal a meaning "perpetually displaced from the *image* to the discursive formations which cross and contain it."[4] Regarded as little more than technology itself, the Chinese men are shown as a series of bodies without history and a vague place of origin called "China." Upon the culmination of the railroad, the Chinese workers became invisible. Though an eight-man Chinese crew was given the honor of preparing the "laying of the last spike" ceremony completing the transcontinental railroad in Promontory, Utah, in 1869, the Chinese went unrecorded photographically. Of the many photographs taken during the ceremony, virtually none include the Chinese workers. Within the parameters of the photographic record of this historic moment, the Chinese would be forever absent.

Opposite: Kip Fulbeck, Tate, 2006, C-print, 11" x 14", courtesy of the artist

Used as leverage against other workers to undercut wages (paid on average only 60% of what white workers were paid), Chinese laborers fueled resentment among white workers in the West.

Denied the ability to own land, work in certain professions, get an education, intermarry with whites, become citizens, or even testify against a white person in court, the Chinese were easily scapegoated for numerous crimes and for the economic downturn in California in the 1870s. Furthermore, with low numbers of Chinese female immigrants (the female population was comprised of mostly wives or women tricked into prostitution), the 100,000 Chinese in the U.S. were more than 90% male, a "bachelor society."[5] With many of these men finding work as cooks, in laundry services, or as personal servants, Chinese men became seen as sexless bodies doing women's work. Their slim builds, long *queque* hairstyles, and lack of opportunity to have families (and demonstrate virility) only reconfirmed their supposed lack of masculinity. Already a racial "other," the Chinese-American man became a non-gendered being with "mysterious" characteristics of culture, customs, and physical appearance.[6]

As the tide of sentiment against the Chinese grew, racial violence and anti-Chinese riots became increasingly common, strange laws such as the "queque tax" were established (returning to China without a *queque* was punishable by death in the Qing Dynasty), political cartoons demonized the Chinese presence, and increasing political pressure called for the restriction of Chinese immigration. Labor leader Samuel Gompers, himself an immigrant, stated, "the superior whites had to exclude the inferior Asiatics, by law, or, if necessary, by force of arms."[7] Enacted in 1882, The Chinese Exclusion Act, which limited immigration from China to only 105 persons a year, passed in Congress through an agreement between the Southern states and Western states, who, in turn, voted for the Jim Crow laws. The Chinese Exclusion Act was not repealed until 1943.

Due to the range of laws limiting Chinese occupation, civil rights, and ability to own property, many Chinese lived in ethnic

Above: Harper's Weekly, *"Taking The Consequences," September 1879, reproduced with permission from HarpWeek, LLC*

Opposite: *Arnold Genthe, "Mandarin with Bodyguard," 1895–1906, gelatin silver print, California Historical society, Genthe No. 7: FN2352-A*

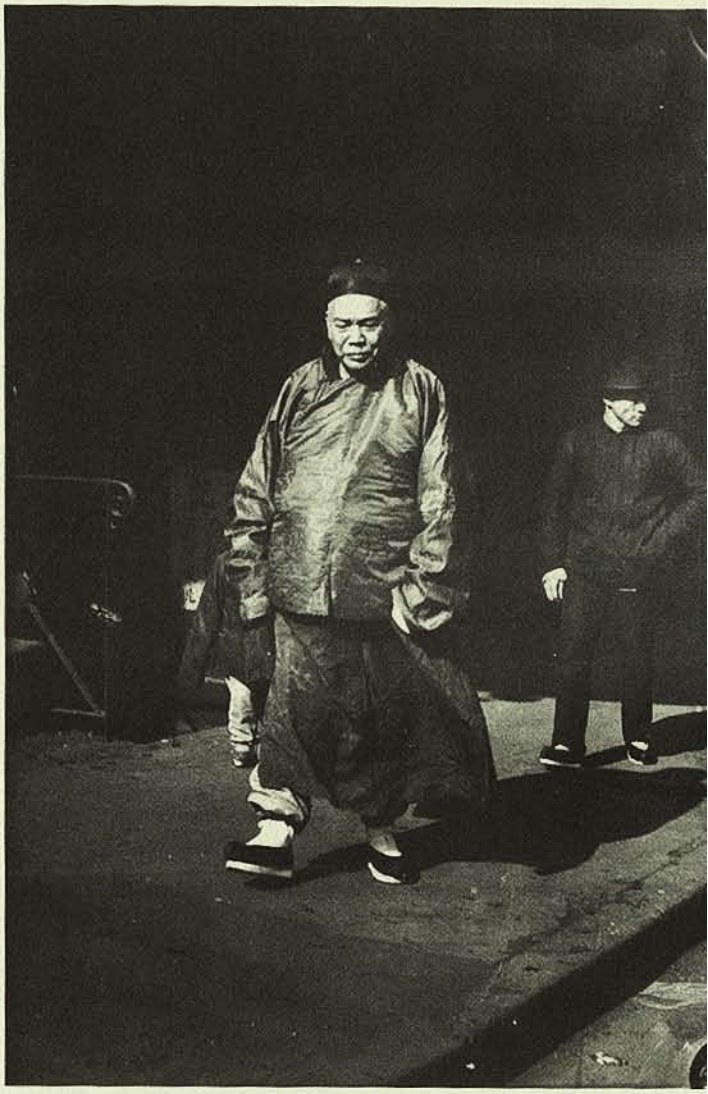
enclaves that became known as Chinatowns. By the 1880s, half of all Chinese in the U.S. lived in San Francisco's Chinatown (the first of its kind in the country), becoming a physical location of interaction, identity, and community. In 1896, Arnold Genthe, who had immigrated the previous year from Germany with doctorate fresh in hand to work as a private tutor, began the first extensive photo documentation of Chinatown in San Francisco. Teaching himself photography and using a hand-held box camera, Genthe imagined himself as a tourist on his days off, an explorer in the heart of the city. In his autobiography, Genthe states:

> There was a vagabond streak in me which balks at caution. As soon as I could make myself free, I was on my way to Chinatown, where I was to go again and again, for it was this bit of the Orient set down in the heart of a Western metropolis that was to swing my destiny into new and unforeseen channels. A city within a city, it occupied only eight blocks which ran in fours up Grant Avenue and Stockton Street from California Street. Yet within it throbbed the pulse of China.[8]

Genthe affords the modern viewer an unusual insight into the scenes of daily life in nineteenth-century Chinatown, but his outsider's eye with its "vagabond streak" speaks not only to himself as an expatriate, but to his subjects as well. Despite a number of well-made portraits of subjects gazing directly into the camera, most of his hundreds of photographs demonstrate the painful space between the casual observer and the distant subject, an unrequited communication infused with the imbalance of power between photographer and photographed. Many Chinese in the neighborhood called Genthe's camera the "black devil box,"[9] and Genthe had a series of images of Chinese fleeing from his camera. Genthe's overall inability to include himself as a familiar and active member of the community is a revelation demonstrating the very opposite condition: the social and physical barriers that exist preventing the Chinese in America from inserting themselves into the society at large. Nevertheless, Genthe's photographic contributions display the curiosity and fascination of "new and unforeseen channels" within America itself, that a complete and virtually separate society could be created within the metropolis of San Francisco. [10]

Genthe's efforts were first reproduced in a local magazine, *The Wave*, in 1897 and 1898, then as two popular books on Chinatown in 1908 and 1913, when Genthe had already moved to New York to open a photo studio. Only a decade later, Toyo Miyatake would establish in Los Angeles one of the first major photographic studios of an Asian American photographer.

The first decades of the twentieth century saw greater immigration by a variety of Asians. The policies of the first three decades of the twentieth century demonstrated tensions toward



Asians as an economic threat and Japan specifically as a rising military power. The term "yellow peril," coined by Kaiser Wilhelm in 1895, racialized American and European tension towards Asians at a time when Western colonial authority was decreasing, and once-colonized Asian countries were increasingly autonomous. Japanese first came to the United States in greater numbers in the 1890s, settling in Hawaii and California as sharecroppers. Enjoying success in the early 1900s as they began to purchase farmland, "aliens ineligible for citizenship" (i.e., all Asian immigrants) were prohibited from owning land by the California Alien Land Law of 1913. Subsequently, the Immigration Act of 1924 was passed, banning all immigration from East Asia and South Asia. Filipinos,

coming from a U.S. territory and sharing the same rights as U.S. citizens, came to the United States beginning in 1903, some as invited scholars to receive a U.S. education in order to work in government service in the Philippines, many others as agricultural workers working in the Western states. Filipino immigration continued until the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1935 recategorized the Philippines as a Commonwealth (undermining the citizenship of Filipino-Americans), and limiting Filipino immigration to only fifty per year. The following year Congress passed the Repatriation Act, encouraging return to the Philippines, even with financial incentives. In essence, Filipino-Americans were paid by the U.S. government to return to the country of their birth.

HOW TO TELL JAPS FROM THE CHINESE

ANGRY CITIZENS VICTIMIZE ALLIES WITH EMOTIONAL OUTBURST AT ENEMY

In the first discharge of emotions touched off by the Japanese assaults on their nation, U. S. citizens have been demonstrating a distressing ignorance on the delicate question of how to tell a Chinese from a Jap. Innocent victims in cities all over the country are many of the 75,000 U. S. Chinese, whose homeland is our stanch ally. So serious were the consequences threatened, that the Chinese consulates last week prepared to tag their nationals with identification buttons. To dispel some of this confusion, LIFE here adduces a rule-of-thumb from the anthropometric conformations that distinguish friendly Chinese from enemy alien Japs.

To physical anthropologists, devoted debunkers of race myths, the difference between Chinese and Japs is measurable in millimeters. Both are related to the Eskimo and North American Indian. The modern Jap is the descendant of Mongoloids who invaded the Japanese archipelago back in the mists of prehistory, and of the native aborigines who possessed the islands before them. Physical anthropology, in consequence, finds Japs and Chinese as closely related as Germans and English. It can, however, set apart the special types of each national group.

The typical Northern Chinese, represented by Ong Wen-hao, Chungking's Minister of Economic Affairs (*left, above*), is relatively tall and slenderly built. His complexion is parchment yellow, his face long and delicately boned, his nose more finely bridged. Representative of the Japanese people as a whole is Premier and General Hideki Tojo (*left, below*), who betrays aboriginal antecedents in a squat, long-torsoed build, a broader, more massively boned head and face, flat, often pug, nose, yellow-ocher skin and heavier beard. From this average type, aristocratic Japs, who claim kinship to the Imperial Household, diverge sharply. They are proud to approximate the patrician lines of the Northern Chinese.

Chinese public servant, Ong Wen-hao, is representative of North Chinese anthropological group with long, fine-boned nose and scant beard. Epicanthic fold of skin above eyelid is found in 85% of Chinese. Southern Chinese have round, broad faces, not as massively boned as the Japanese. Except that their skin is darker, this description fits Filipinos who are often mistaken for Japs. Chinese sometimes pass for Europeans; but Japs more often approach Western types.

Japanese warrior, General Hideki Tojo, current Premier, is [illegible] told, with flat, blob nose. An often sounder clue is facial ex[illegible] shaped by cultural, not anthropological, factors.

Chinese journalist, Joe Chiang, found it necessary to advertise his nationality to gain admittance to White House press conference.

An expression of the "yellow peril" threat can be seen the character of Fu Manchu, part of "that most inscrutable mysterious race, the Chinese," who personified many characteristics frightening to the American consciousness. Sax Rohmer published twenty-two popular books and stories between 1913 and 1940 starring Fu Manchu, with "[...] a face like Satan, all the cruel cunning of the entire Eastern race, all the resources of science past and present [...] the yellow peril incarnate in one man."[11] The anxiety of the white population against the "yellow peril" was embodied by the intentions of Fu Manchu, who plots the overthrow and destruction of the entire white race.[12] Mysterious, sinister, crafty, cruel, relentless, and resourceful, Fu Manchu employs "seductively lovely" Asian female agents (reaffirming stereotypes of Asian women as "dragon lady" vixens), and strange, "ancient" methods of murder. Seen also in comic books, cartoons, a television series, and nearly a dozen films, the live action Fu Manchu, like the goofy and ostensibly benign Charlie Chan, was always played by a white actor in "yellowface" makeup, allowing the fantasy, but not reality, of an Asian male lead.

Above: *"How To Tell Japs From The Chinese,"* LIFE *magazine, December 22, 1941, private collection*

Opposite: *Ansel Adams, "Toyo Miyatake and his family, Manzanar Relocation Center," 1943, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division*

As an event, World War II created a cognitive and visual dissonance regarding ideas of the "yellow peril" and the representation of Asians in the U.S. Japan was a mortal enemy, having been the first country to attack American soil since the British in the War of 1812, but due to military and political circumstances, China became an ally. Consequently, the initial act of distinguishing visual notions of "yellowness" brought a palpable confusion to Americans. On December 22, 1941, two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, *LIFE* magazine published an article with an accompanying chart, "How To Tell Japs From The Chinese." In determining facial characteristics, this chart depended on the antiquated notions of physiognomy advocated by discounted methods of social anthropology. Represented by a "Chinese public servant," an occupation reaffirming his passivity and harmless nature, the Chinese man, Ong Wen-hao, stares at the camera meekly, with eyes directed at the viewer without a trace of confrontation. His physical characteristics of "parchment yellow complexion," a "higher bridge" on his nose, and "more frequent epicanthic fold" above his eyelids highlight some positive characteristics associated with recognized modes of whiteness.[13]

An "earthy yellow complexion" is attributed to the Japanese individual, a nod to his indigenous body, which inscribes him closer to nature, the primitive, and the uncivilized. Described in the chart as a "Japanese warrior," an emblem of his aggressive savagery, he is identified as General Hideki Tojo (then Prime Minister of Japan). Staring above the camera coldly and without expression, he is aloof, impudent, and sinister, the fearsome true-to-life incarnation of the "yellow peril." The other characteristics he holds serve only to distance him ever more from whiteness, including his "flat, blob nose," "shorter face," and "Mongoloid" ancestors. This chart has a more conceptual than physical use. Too absurd as a visual reference should the *LIFE* magazine reader actually need to distinguish a Chinese person from a Japanese person, its greater goal was in revealing the specificities and reshaping attitudes of particular Asian ethnicities. During the war, Chinese Americans were said to embody familiar American traits; the results from a 1942 Gallup opinion poll characterized the Chinese as "hardworking, honest, brave, religious, intelligent, and practical."[14] At the same time, the "warrior" Japanese were to be identified and, like wild animals, contained.

"Yellow peril" became hysteria and discrimination toward the Japanese took a tangible form with the signing and implementation of Executive Order 9066. Signed into law in February 1942 and its constitutionality upheld by the Supreme Court in the *Korematsu* case in 1944, Executive Order 9066 denied Japanese Americans civil liberties through confinement without trial to internment camps for an indefinite amount of time, accordingly, the length of World War II. Over 110,000 Japanese Americans were forcibly interned, losing their jobs, their houses, and most of their possessions. In the midst of an official apology in 1988 for the internment, President Reagan admitted that "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership"[15] were the cause of the internment policy, as German and Italian Americans were spared imprisonment.

Whereas the *LIFE* magazine chart distinguishing Asian ethnicities spoke to one mode of visual and cognitive dissonance regarding the representation of Asians in the U.S., the

documentation of the Japanese internment produced yet another, and more complex, visual conflict. Initiated in San Francisco, from April to July 1942 Japanese Americans were evacuated to

the Santa Anita racetrack (to await the opening of the Manzanar internment camp in the Nevada desert). Dorothea Lange, working for the San Francisco Regional Office of the War Relocation Authority, documented this process. Known for her poignant images of dispossessed farm families taken for the Farm Security Administration during the Great Depression, Lange would give up a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1941 in order to photograph the internment of Japanese Americans.

Working again for the United States government, Lange photographed with an incriminating eye; her subjects appear as courageous and patriotic victims of severe conditions beyond their control: little girls saluting the American flag, bewildered elderly being fingerprinted, tender moments between family members boarding a forbidding train. With titles such as "Interrupted Lives," "Salute to Innocence," and "The Japanese Exodus," Lange's images were effectively censored by the War Relocation Authority and not widely seen until the 1972 exhibit *Executive Order 9066* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Interned at Manzanar was photographer Toyo Miyatake. Upon opening his Los Angeles studio in 1923, Miyatake became a successful studio portraitist as well as a photographer of community events in Little Tokyo, near downtown. Smuggling a camera lens along with a film holder and film, Miyatake commissioned a fellow internee to make a camera box for him out of wooden planks. While secretly documenting his experience, camp authorities discovered Miyatake's homemade camera. Ralph Merritt, Manzanar's director, eventually allowed Miyatake to photograph but only if a white person pressed the shutter.[16] Thus Miyatake's intentions were supervised by a white hand, and his agency as a photographer could be effectively censored. As the photo "assistants" left their positions, Merritt hired camp administrators' wives as photo chaperones, but finally allowed Miyatake free reign to photograph Manzanar's 550 acres with his once-confiscated view camera and tripod.

Amassing more than 2,500 images of camp life, and shooting prolifically for the high school's annual yearbook, most of Miyatake's images record the daily activities of the internees, but several speak directly to imprisonment. "Boys Behind Barbed Wire" is perhaps Miyatake's most well-known image: three faces of young boys framed with snow-capped peaks in the distance and lines of barbed wire crossing in front of their faces. Evoking a similar patriotic innocence as Lange, this image adds another provocative element—the implications surrounding the moment of the photograph's production. Either the three subjects or the photographer, all prisoners, are on the unenclosed side of the barbed wire fence, a situation perhaps more resonant than the image itself. In this case, it was the photographer, emulating freedom, but only for a moment.[17]

Producing a more mainstream visual dissonance was a profile in *LIFE* magazine of the interned Japanese Americans at Tule Lake (a high-security internment camp) in March 1944. Photographed by Carl Mydans (himself imprisoned in a Filipino internment camp by the Japanese army for twenty-one months), the images reproduce the family iconography the magazine promoted in other photo essays on American life. A mise en scène of the Manji family at Tule Lake, which includes happy daughters laughing together at a table with younger brothers and parents quietly reading nearby, is disrupted by the caption, "all classed as disloyal." A headline on the final page reads, "They Have Everything Except Liberty," and is accompanied with images of nurses with newborns, eager schoolchildren in a classroom where an American flag flies, and high school drum majorettes practicing outdoors in front of a barbed wire fence. Exhibiting none of the qualities of the "warrior Japanese," the images destabilize notions of the alien morality of the racial "other," identified here as "they." Having "everything" (American values and identities), the internees are a mirror of expressed American qualities familiar to the reader, except for the very foundation of the American experience: liberty, and in accordance, equality. The contradictions of the textual

Above: *China News Agency, "President Nixon meets Chairman Mao", February 1972, Nixon Presidential Materials, U.S. National Archives, Identifier 194759.*

promotion of disloyalty and the visual support of recognized characteristics produces a slippage in Asian representation that would carry through into post-war America.

Representations of the Chinese and Japanese would flip-flop again after World War II as democratic Japan recovered and rebuilt with Allied support, and the Communist regime of the People's Republic of China was formed in 1949, contributing to the "Red Scare" of the Cold War. Among the initiatives from the Cold War is the Korean War[18] (with both Asian enemies and allies), where China threw its support behind North Korea and against American efforts, but Cold War hysteria reached its peak in the 1960s and '70s with the Vietnam War. Having undertaken the First Indochina War against colonial France in the 1940s and '50s, the stage was set for Vietnam's involvement in the Second Indochina War, also known as the Vietnam War. Supporting the South Vietnamese and the French armies financially and with military training in the mid 1950s, the United States became directly involved militarily in the early 1960s. Fearing further expansion of communism into Southeast Asia (and undermining American influence), President Kennedy stated: "Now we have a problem in making our power credible and Vietnam looks like the place."[19]

As the Vietnam War continued through the 1960s, America opened its borders to immigration from Asia with the Immigration Act of 1965, passed overwhelmingly through both houses of Congress and signed by President Johnson. Striking down quotas enacted from previous laws such as the Immigration Act of 1924, the newly opened borders allowed the development of vibrant Asian communities in the United States. From the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s, Asians would constitute nearly 40% of new immigrants to America.[20]

Saigon." The prisoner was Nguyen Van Lem, head of a Viet Cong assassin squad who had just executed thirty-four relatives of South Vietnamese officers. Adams, who won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for his photograph, lamented its effect:

> The general killed the Viet Cong; I killed the general with my camera. Still photographs are the most powerful weapon in the world. People believe them; but photographs do lie, even without manipulation. They are only half-truths. What the photograph didn't say was, 'What would you do if you were the general at that time and place on that hot day, and you caught the so-called bad guy after he blew away one, two or three American people?'[21]

An image that involves two Asian bodies gains its power from the implied American responsibility with regard to its political policy and military intervention. Edward Said describes the sense of "manifest Orientalism" as when the "imaginative geography and history...helps the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the difference between what is close to it and what is far away."[22] In this sense, the American viewer is affected by the reverse—not only the historical immediacy of the Adams photograph, but the personal and political intimacy of the photograph's context.

A second defining Vietnam War image from 1971 is by Huynh Cong (Nick) Út of children running from a napalm bomb in Trang Bang with seemingly impassive American soldiers nearby, which also won the Pulitzer Prize. Only twenty-one years old at the time, the Vietnamese Út photographed for the Associated Press, and began photographing the war at sixteen. As a native Vietnamese photographing the war for an American public, Út represents the beginning in a shift in access and voice for Asian photographers. His image captured the imagination of the American public to such

The contradictions of the textual promotion of disloyalty and the visual support of recognized characteristics produces a slippage in Asian representation that would carry through into post-war America.

By the late 1960s, the Vietnam War had become a massive and contentious subject in the American psyche, exaggerating President Kennedy's statement of America's "problem in making our power credible." Footage from the conflict would serve only to exacerbate the problem. In 1968, Eddie Adams made the iconic image, "General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong prisoner in

a degree that President Nixon wondered about its authenticity, musing in private, "I'm wondering if that was fixed."[23]

In 1972, the same year Út won the Pulitzer, Nixon traveled to the People's Republic of China, initiating a dialogue with a country having no previous diplomatic relationship with the United States. Known as a zealous anti-communist, Nixon was immune

to right-wing criticism and his new affiliation softened perceptions of China and its leaders. Staged as a massive media event, Nixon "opened" China to the America media, and was seen on television

and in photographs conversing with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong. Later that year, Andy Warhol made a screen print, *Mao*, of the iconic photograph, recasting him from feared communist tyrant to a one-name cult-of-personality figure along the lines of previous Warhol subjects such as Elvis and Marilyn.

The 1970s also marks the beginning of Asian-American artists being recognized as having the authority to represent their own identities. Hong Kong-born Tseng Kwong Chi moved to New York City in the late 1970s, having lived his adolescence in Canada and attended art school in France. A photographer by trade, Tseng's major photographic effort in America was the documentation of the public work and art activity of his friend and lover, Keith Haring, amassing an archive of more than 50,000 images before their respective deaths in 1990.

In 1979, Tseng bought a Maoist-era Communist uniform at a thrift store to wear for a formal family dinner and discovered that the outfit garnered a wide variety of responses, from curiosity to deference to contempt. Reimagining its performative qualities in the art world, he found that he was mistaken for a Chinese diplomat by an undiscerning public and given access to the upper echelons of art society, including major openings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Describing the attitude of the art world as having "the pervasive ignorance of Westerners regarding Asia generally and China specifically,"[24] Tseng developed a conceptual photographic project addressing the conflation of the synthetic awareness between himself and the West. To further provoke, Tseng wore a crew cut, dark sunglasses, and an official looking I.D. badge, clipped to his breast pocket, with his image and the title emblazoned, "SlutforArt." Any person attempting to identify him as an individual through the action of reading the badge would immediately recognize the performative situation in which they were now participating.

Conflating parallel modes of perception, Tseng began a project that same year, *Ambiguous Ambassador*, photographing himself in the Maoist uniform at various Western landmarks. Traveling to the Grand Canyon, the World Trade Center, Notre Dame, and the Tower Bridge, Tseng is a relentless tourist, making self-portraits without expression, creating tourist photographs with none of the formulaic enthusiasm. His is a dry wit, revealing the banality and incongruity of clashing visual tropes with no mode of dialogue or means of understanding. His camera's gaze upon these iconic

Above: *Tseng Kwong Chi, Disneyland, California, 1979, from the Expeditionary Self Portrait Series, 16" x 20", gelatin silver print, © 1979 Muna Tseng Dance Projects, Inc., New York*

landmarks is analogous to the gaze upon his costumed body, a symbolic exterior for assumed cultural values.

Perhaps his most memorable image is a double portrait with Mickey Mouse at Disneyland. Mickey faces one direction with his rigid wide-eyed smile, Tseng faces the other, steadfastly expressionless behind sunglasses. Both are trickster figures in uniform, jaunting about in a humorous fashion, provoking the somber absurdities of the Cold War world. Mickey, however, is the archetypal liberated American individual, who, according to Walt Disney, "speaks to that deathless, precious, ageless, absolutely primitive remnant of something in every world-racked human being."[25] Tseng *is* the prototypical world-racked human being, the faceless Chinese anti-individual everyman—save for the clenched fist that holds the end of the long shutter release cable.

Nikki S. Lee's *Projects* began in 1997 as an investigation of the numerous social groups and their respective behavior in New York City. Once an actress in her native Korea, Lee came to the United States in 1994 and chose a new first name from a list her friend compiled of names appearing in *Vogue* magazine. Consequently, the model Niki Taylor became the source of her new name, the initiation into a new mode of self-identification.[26] Through observation of certain social groups, Lee adopted particular manners of dress, ways of interaction, personal interests, and relationships to the camera as a means of constructing herself as a viable member in the photographic record. Her ability to blend into the scenes grants enough credibility for the photographic result to *seem* authentic, but the photographs are silent—Lee controls their limited dispersal of information. In the image "Schoolgirl Project (22)," 2000, Lee sits on a bench dressed in a Japanese schoolgirl uniform of a gray pleated skirt, black stockings, and blue jacket. Surrounded by three other girls in similar uniforms, Lee punches numbers into a cell phone while looking over at another girl doing the same. A third girl sits sideways on the bench talking on her phone. The scene is unremarkable save for the fact that Lee was thirty years old at the time, seamlessly merging into a situation with others half her age.

Lee assumed a variety of guises including a punk, a yuppie, a lesbian, a skateboarder, a Latina, a Japanese hipster, and a tourist, and had herself photographed engaged in activities within the group. Taken with an ordinary snapshot camera by a friend in the group, each image bears the imprint of the date in the corner, reaffirming its vernacular context and record of casual moments. Seen as a singular image or as a specific series, the photographs present a precise historical moment for people within a particular social niche. When the different series are grouped together, it is Lee herself who becomes the thread between the photographs. Culture in America becomes a performative gesture in the midst of the wide varieties of social orders. Lee is performing, but the fluidity of changing social groups and the specific visual definitions of each particular group are accessible to her as an Asian-American female in photographic terms. Lee is able to *pass* and seem genuinely included within the frame of the photograph, no matter how awkward and disconnected her actual experiences may have been. Even within a racial parameter, Lee as an Asian female adjusts her appearance to *seem* Latina or black, retaining her facial features but adjusting her skin tone to associate herself visually among defined minority groups. Perhaps exposing the anxiety of many Asians who emulate races not their own, Lee's *Projects* ultimately expose a greater theme: the *failure* of self-definition and the *lack* of a cohesive identity.

The Hapa Project, begun by Kip Fulbeck in the early 1990s, engages the experiences of multiracial Asians, a young population with exponentially increasing numbers in the U.S.[27] Derived from the Hawaiian term *hapa haole*, originally a semi-derogatory phrase describing someone of part Hawaiian, part-Caucasian ancestry, the term has since been embraced by people of partial Asian/Pacific Islander ancestry as a source of pride. *The Hapa Project* consists of more than one thousand portraits of Asians and Pacific Islanders across the U.S. with hybrid racial compositions. Shot head-on, the portraits reference I.D. photos. Accompanying each portrait is a short, handwritten textual response to the question, "what are you?" This question, one that is faced often by multiracial individuals, is not "*who* are you?" in terms of character, but "*what* are you?" in terms of composition, implying an alternate aspect of humanity, one that is innate, palpable, and easily questioned against the physical state of hybridity. When asked by an individual it can also be taken to mean, "how can your *otherness* become relatable to me?"

Confronting existing norms and static definitions of race in America, the multiracial Asian individual not only expands personal explanations of identity, but overall cultural classifications as well. Swirling around the historical, political, and societal overtones of race are general questions of "what does *Asian* look like?" or even more specifically "what does *American* look like?" Race, in this regard, can be taken to mean a series of exchanges between one person projecting one notion of race and another responding to it. The multiracial Asian individual, being an amalgam of two or more races, physically undermines visual associations of race when mistaken for racial groups outside of personal compositions, or when embracing racial identities not thought to be existent. One Fulbeck image is of a male looking straight into the camera, his response to the "what are you" question: "I am 100% Black and 100% Japanese." (see page 32)

Self-identifying as a race in terms of color, as well as a nationality and cultural heritage, the *hapa* individual compresses modes of identity once thought to be mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the identification of *hapa* further expands notions of being Asian as Fulbeck has united a group of people with diverse and disparate Asian (and non-Asian) backgrounds, a people with no history, no land, no modes of belonging save for the union of their mixed origins. In a sense, a new visual community comes into existence, one of dialogue and shared experience, where a physical community is not possible.

America finds itself at yet another crossroads in representing Asians. Political, economic, and cultural shifts are occurring on the Asian continent. Asia now includes the next global superpower (China), a rogue nation (North Korea), the largest Muslim country in the world (Indonesia), and the poorest country in the world (East Timor), further complicating its relationship with America. Asian Americans, currently the second fastest-growing minority group in America, are commonly regarded as a "model minority," a title racist in connotation. Alluding to the presumed disappointment of minorities in general, the patronizing colonialist notion of "pleasing" the white constituency, and the satisfaction of the well-behaved "other," the phrase also creates competition and resentment between minority groups within a framework not of their choosing.

Methods of seeing the Asian body continue to evolve as the unique and individual notions of what "Asian" is develop and become constantly redefined. The consequence of the ongoing histories of representation and stereotypes in American culture are played out daily, in media portrayals, in cultural attitudes, and in exchange among individuals. Race, in this regard, can be seen as a dialogue, a constant communication with evolving characteristics and shifting voices.

Born in New York City, Benjamin Sloat received his undergraduate degree from U.C. Berkeley in 1999, and his graduate degree from Tufts University/School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 2005. His work has been shown nationally and internationally, and has been reviewed in The New York Times *and* Boston Globe. *He was a conference speaker at the SPE National Conference in Portland, Oregon in 2005, and has lectured at UMass Boston, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Coker College, The University of California, Santa Cruz, and at Rhode Island School of Design. He has taught at Tufts University, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts College of Art, and will be teaching at the Art Institute of Boston for the 2006/2007 school year. His collaborative project with Steve Aishman, Professor of Photography at the SCAD, can be seen at* ***www.halfasian.us.***

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[1] John Tagg, "Evidence, Truth and Order: Photographic Records and the Growth of the State," *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, London: MacMillan Education (1988), 63.

[2] Rey Chow, "Where Have All the Natives Gone?" *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press (1994), 126.

[3] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in M. Dear and S. Flusty, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell (1994), 395.

[4] Victor Burgin quoted in Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography* Cambridge: MIT Press (1997), 5.

[5] Ron Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore*, London: Little, Brown (1987), 123.

[6] Even in contemporary portrayals, the Asian man (whether a martial arts expert or comical sidekick), is commonly portrayed as emotionless and sexless, never the object of desire nor subject of virility.

[7] Stanford M. Lyman, "The Chinese Question and American Labor Historians," *New Politics* (2000), 139–142.

[8] Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember*, New York: Reynal and Hitchcock (1936), 32–36.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Playing upon outsiders' fascination with Chinatown, after the 1906 earthquake much of Chinatown was reconstructed to be more tourist-friendly.

[11] Sax Rohmer, *The Insidious Fu Manchu*, New York: A.J. Burt & Co. (1920), 10.

[12] Rohmer would later admit, cheerfully, "I made my name on Fu Manchu, because I know nothing about the Chinese." Rohmer, Introduction.

[13] "How To Tell Japs From the Chinese," *LIFE* 11:25 (December 22, 1941), 81.

[14] Gallup Poll News Service, Poll # 274, 1942.

[15] Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry H. L. Kitano, eds., *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, Seattle: University of Washington Press (1986), 194.

[16] Jasmine Alinder, "Toyo Miyatake's *Boys Behind Barbed Wire*: Photography in the History of Japanese-American Internment," *The Journal of The International Institute*, 16:1 (Fall 1998), 4.

[17] Miyatake eventually returned to Los Angeles and reopened the Toyo Miyatake Photo Studio that still exists today, first run by his son, Archie, and now his grandson, Alan.

[18] The Korean War technically continues, with a cease-fire agreement signed in 1953.

[19] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, New York: Viking Press (1983), 247.

[20] 1997 INS Annual Yearbook, 28.

[21] Nguyen Ngoc Loan moved to Virginia in 1975 to open a pizza parlor, and was a community outcast (despite being an American ally) when his former identity was discovered in 1991. Nguyen Ngoc Loan obituary, *The New York Times*, July 16, 1998.

[22] Cited in Hall, 399.

[23] "Nixon, The A-Bomb, and Napalm," CBS News, February 28, 2002.

[24] *Portrait of the Art World*: A Century of ARTnews photographs, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, online exhibition, http://www.ngp.si.edu/cexh/artnews/ (cited July 2006).

[25] John Grant, *Encyclopedia of Walt Disney's Animated Characters*, New York: Disney Press (1998), 224.

[26] Conversely, Tseng Kwong Chi, known during his adolescence in Canada as Joseph Tseng, reverted back to his birth name when moved to America.

[27] Recent population statistics reveal that half of all Japanese-American women marry non-Japanese-American men. Larry Hajime Shinagawa and Gin Yong Pang, "Asian American Panethnicity and Intermarriage," *Amerasian Journal* 22 (1996), 127–152.