

The Twilight Girls Go East!

The Twilight Girls are 2 collaborative artists, Jane Polkinghorne and Helen Hyatt-Johnston who have been involved in an ongoing project, covering, amongst other things identity, taste, popular icons and the dichotomy of public/private personas.

What we propose to do at Gallery 4A, via digital imaging and photography, is rework and restage Asian characters from films that are portrayed by western actors. For instance Bette Davis as the inscrutably ruthless Madame Sin, Peter Sellers' stylised Fu Manchu, Shirley Maclaine's disguise as a geisha girl in order to get her a role in a film her husband directs so she can win back his love, Sean Connery as James Bond going undercover with a plastic Asian eye fold in order to infiltrate enemy lines and even Tura Satana's memorable/mamorable performance in *Attack of the Astro Zombies*, which was later lampooned in *Double Take's* over dubbing of the movie where Tura was renamed Tits Ang Lo. Tura probably got that gig after she displayed her karate skills in Russ Meyer's *Faster Pussy Cat Kill Kill*.

Inevitably, there is that Western assumption that if you are Asian you are already a martial arts expert and there has been a plethora of films generated with just that in mind. *Shogun Girls in 3D* has the girls all fighting back after being suitably humiliated only to all get killed in the end as there is no such thing as an Asian Amazon! Kurasawa's *Hidden Fortress* is one of the few to portray a female with mannish tendencies where a stroppy young princess has to be rescued after her entire family has been wiped out. But even then she had to keep her mouth shut throughout most of the film pretending to be a mute. This character was the inspiration for Princess Leia in *Star Wars*.

We are interested in the west's take over of the kung-fu film. Even blaxploitation got into the act, with Jim Brown starring in several of his own films as well as alongside Bruce Lee in *Enter the Dragon*. People (I don't think we can go as far as calling them actors) like Chuck Norris and Jean-Claude Van Damme have taken over where Bruce Lee left off, only these films are grossly westernised, with none of the quasi and real historical and spiritual overtones of many Hong Kong kung-fu films. Even Jackie Chan has gone Hollywood, with his films having less to do with kung-fu and more to do with western style action films with car chases and explosions.

By using a combination of photography, digital manipulation and photo retouching, we will achieve a result that is evocative, rich and/or painterly. This project will be of a psychological nature evoking east meets west via Hollywood, and the theft of influences that continues today with the likes of Quentin Tarrantino pilfering entire plots from Hong Kong action movies. Inserting ourselves into the western version of eastern film history both visually and literally, our intention is to subvert NOT Asian representation in western film, but western interpretations of the East.