

Human Ecology
200 Savage Hall / Hybrid

May 10-11,
2023



BIOPHOBIA

A Symposium on Transnational Korean Studies

5/10, 7-9pm: Keynote speech by Jinhee Chohan

Voices against the Hatred and Discrimination against Sick Bodies:
The Civic Theater Project, *We Are Not Sorry for Being Sick*

5/11, 10:30am-12pm: Keynote speech by Rachel Lee (UCLA)

Biophilia Now: Time for Imagining Alternatives to Techno- and Bio-Orientalism

5/11, 1-2:30pm: Session 1 "Sensoria"

**5/11, 3-4:30pm: Session 2 "Transnational and Transmedial
Approach to the Body Issues"**



5/10, 7-9 pm: Keynote speech by Jinhee Chohan Voices against the Hatred and Discrimination against Sick Bodies: The Civic Theater Project, *We Are Not Sorry for Being Sick*

Neoliberalism turned “good health” into something to beef up one’s resume and a booty that one should work hard to attain. In South Korean society, the conditions of teeth and skin have long worked to stratify people into different social classes. The bodies that don’t meet the criteria for the “standard body” or “normal, healthy body” have often been subject to hatred, reproach, and shaming. On the other hand, the lived experiences of the people with diseases and disabilities are often not told anywhere but subsumed to the discourse of “cure,” which is circumscribed by the power dynamic of medical institutions; social discriminations and hatred against the sick bodies. I started the civic theater project *We Are Not Sorry for Being Sick*, first, to tackle the problems in how medical personnel and experts interpellate, control, and substitute the lives of sick bodies and, second, to divert the leading framework from “the colonized bodies” to “the bodies that speak for themselves.” Moreover, this project seeks to create “the language within the world of disease” as a language of resistance against the society that hates, discriminates against, and excludes the bodies with diseases, and to secure “the right to be sick justly.” In this presentation, I will explain the theater project’s production process, effects, and potential to challenge the discriminatory social structures against people with diseases and disabilities.



5/11, 10:30am - 12pm: Keynote speech by Rachel Lee (UCLA) Biophilia Now: Time for Imagining Alternatives to Techno- and Bio-Orientalism

The title of this lecture draws inspiration from what feminist historians call the Wages for Housework movement. Despite their express slogan around “wages,” the utopian desire carried forward by Selma James and Maria dalla Costa involves less the free-market payment for raising kids, caring for the elderly, tending to the sick, preparing food, etcetera, and more an almost unimaginable “time for what we will.” This “time for what we will” is not already blocked out for usefulness—e.g., to serve one’s side hustle—or even for rest and recovery from the depletions of neoliberal capital. Rather, it bespeaks an unassigned time to fritter away, to dally and daydream, and to fantasize about what might happen in the idyll of becoming (non-pejoratively) idle. Significantly, Wages for Housework construed this “time for what we will” as what is owed to—rather than simply granted to or contractually specified as compensation for—reproducers (aka reproductive laborers). The danger for the status quo in this demand—this “time for what we will”—lies in its holding space to proliferate plural and counterfactual (i.e., postwork) imaginings of present society. Humanities scholar Rachel Lee points to artwork choreographed around smelling, singing, and sensorily dwelling in and around loss, grief, and toxic landscapes as, counterintuitively, positive sketches for types of actions that might be indulged in—and which might save lives—if we could entertain and flex our daydreaming (rather than doom-scrolling) muscles. Rather than ask how do we heal from resurgent biophobia and its catalyzing of anti-Asian violence, this talk proposes the plural and oftentimes conflicting imaginings of Chang Rae Lee, Anicka Yi [and possibly also “the Daniels”—aka Kwan & Scheinert) as hopeful alternatives to the toggle between techno-orientalism and bio-orientalism characterizing our post-/still- Covid-19 moment.



Image Caption: *In Love With The World* 2021, by Anicka Yi
Plastic, helium, electronics, thermal camera, positioning system, artificial life simulation, fragrance, overall dimensions variable. Exhibition view, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, 2021. Photo by Will Burrard-Lucas/© Tate 2021

Thursday, 5/11, 1-2:30pm

Session 1 “Sensoria”

- **Katie Yook (Curator, NY):** “Sensoria: Evoking the Intangible”
- **Se Young Au (Artist, CA):** “Olfaction, Embodiment, and Perception”
- **KimSu Theiler (Artist, NY):** “ORIENTALLY CHALLENGED”
- **Jette Hye Jin Mortensen (Roskilde) (Artist, Copenhagen):** TBD
- **Jung Joon Lee (Rhode Island School of Design, Society for the Humanities fellow at Cornell University):** discussant

Thursday, 5/11, 3-4:30pm

Session 2 “Transnational and Transmedial Approach to the Body Issues”

- **Walter Byongsok Chon (Ithaca College) :** “Theatricalized Bodies on the Post-Dramatic Stage”
- **Bonnie Chung (Cornell University):** “The Songs of Two Islands of East Asia: Collaborative Listening and Counterarchival Impulses in *Green Island* (2016) and *The Mermaid from Jeju* (2019)”
- **Abel Song Han (Cornell University):** “Healing with Poison and Metaphor: On Bio-mimesis Horror”
- **Paul McQuade (Cornell University):** “A Dreamed Biology: Soni Kum’s ‘Morning Dew’ and Jayro Bustamante’s ‘La Llorona’”
- **Jomy Abraham (Visiting Scholar, Cornell University):** “Walking with Their Dead: Biophobia and Public Protests of Farmers in India”
- **Jun Matsuda (Visiting Scholar, Cornell University):** “Police/Military Violence and Biophobia: The Intersectionality of “Asian Bodies” and Colonialism”

A Clearing, multi-sensory installation, 2021, by Se Young Au
Habatoi silk, scented materials, diffuser, floor elements

