

MULTICULTURALISM IN AMERICAN ARTS

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U.S. Embassy Jakarta Mission Statement

Based on mutual respect and shared values, the U.S Mission works with Indonesia to strengthen democracy, sustain the environment, promote prosperity, enhance understanding and ensure security for our people, our nations, and our region.

Shirley Geok-Lin Lim



Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, internationally acclaimed poet, novelist, critic, educator and memoirist, was born in Malacca, Malaysia, as one of ten children of a Hokkien Peranakan. After receiving her Bachelor's Degree from Kuala Lumpur's University of Malaya in 1967, she went to the U.S where she earned a PhD in English and American literature from Brandeis University in 1973.

Shirley is also recognized as a creative writer. Her first collection of poems, *Crossing the Peninsula* (1980), received the Commonwealth Poetry Prize.

She has also published six other volumes of poetry: *No Man's Grove*, *Modern Secrets*, *Monsoon History*, *What the Fortune Teller Didn't Say*, *Listening to the Singer*, and *Walking Backwards*; three books of short stories; two novels (*Joss and Gold* and *Sister Swing*); a children's novel, *Princess Shawl*, which was

translated into Chinese and published in Taiwan in 2009; and most recently a volume of her selected short stories and poetry, *The Shirley Lim Collection*. Her memoir, *Among the White Moon Faces*, received the American Book Award for non-fiction.

She has published two critical studies, *Nationalism and Literature: Writing in English from the Philippines and Singapore* and *Writing South East/Asia in English: Against the Grain*, and has edited/co-edited many critical volumes, including *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*; *Approaches to Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior*; *Transnational Asia Pacific*; *Power, Race and Gender in Academe*; *Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits*; *Asian American Literature*; *Tilting the Continent: An Anthology of South-east Asian American Writing*; *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* which received the 1990 American Book Award; *Writing Singapore*; and other volumes; and she has edited/co-edited issues of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*; *Ariel*, *Tulsa Studies*, *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, *Concentric*, and others.

Her critical work has appeared in critical journals such as *New Literary History*, *Feminist Studies*, *Signs*,

MELUS, *ARIEL*, *New Literatures Review*, *World Englishes*, *American Studies International*, *Pedagogy*, and *American Book Review*.

She has served as chair of Women's Studies, Chair Professor of English at the University of Hong Kong, and currently is Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Among her honors, Lim was awarded the Multiethnic Literatures of the United States (MELUS) 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award, the UCSB Faculty Research Lecture Award, and the Chair Professorship of English at the University of Hong Kong, as well as the University of Western Australia Distinguished Lecturer award, Fulbright Distinguished Lecturer award, and J.T. Stewart Hedgebrook award.

She has taught at the City University of New York, State University of New York, the University of Hong Kong, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, National University of Singapore, National Institute of Education of Nanyang University, and the National Sun Yat-Sen University.

Read more about Shirley Lim and her publications at: <http://goo.gl/BBhxB>
<http://goo.gl/1f40s>
<http://goo.gl/9k8Ds>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Shirley Geok-Lin Lim	1
America Opens to Outside Ideas and Innovations	2
Did You Know?	2
You Asked: What is American Culture	2
More Resources	3
About the IRC	4



America Opens to Outside Ideas and Innovations, Professor Says

By Michael Jay Friedman
America.gov staff writer

Washington -- American culture is influenced strongly by the rest of the world, Mexico and Asia especially, said Tyler Cowen, professor of economics at George Mason University in Virginia.

Cowen offered the comment during a wide-ranging February 15 webchat sponsored by the Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs. Among the topics discussed were the ability of governments to "protect" culture, how the United States funds the arts, and the proposed UNESCO Convention on the Promotion and Protection of Cultural Diversity.

Addressing a question about government attempts to "protect" culture, Cowen warned that most such efforts are driven by political objec-

tives rather than "principles of true diversity."

Asked about funding of the arts in the United States, Cowen outlined a system that relies heavily on indirect government support, through favorable tax treatment for private donations. This system, he explained, means that the U.S. government is not obliged to choose between "bad" and "good" art.

Queried on how outside artistic traditions have influenced American culture, Cowen replied that the United States "is one of the most open nations for immigrants, new food ideas, new music, and many other innovations." In particular, he pointed to developments in fashion and the cinema -- where contributions from India increasingly are influential.

Cowen also suggested that cultural exchange is not one

way. American blues and jazz music, for instance, are based on West African forms. Today, such Nigerian musicians as Fela Kuti fuse contemporary African sounds with an American jazz already grounded in African music.

Cowen was critical of the proposed Cultural Diversity Convention, calling it a "highly flawed" document.

"It will not support real world cultural diversity. ... Commerce and creativity are allies, not enemies," he concluded.

Source: <http://goo.gl/hss5w>
Full text transcript is at: <http://goo.gl/lo1q9>

Related sources:

Art of the Edge

An e-book showcases the work of 17 contemporary American artists. These artists exemplify such bedrock American values as innovation, diversity, free-

dom, individualism, and competitive excellence. Read more at: <http://goo.gl/DGdor>

Graphic Novels: Drawing the Asian American Experience.

Asian-American artists and writers have attained considerable prominence as creators of sophisticated graphic novels, many of which explore cultural identity and social issues. Read more at: <http://goo.gl/vy5x4>

U.S. Dancers Forge East-West Connection

Since its inception in 1971, the ODC (Oberlin Dance Collective) company has been hailed for its imaginative choreography and bold aesthetic vision. The dance company found inspirations and friendship while teaching and performing in Indonesia, Burma, and Thailand. Read more at: <http://goo.gl/wh0N6>



Did You Know?

The costumes, masks and puppets in the theatrical version of Disney's *the Lion King*, designed by Julie Taymor, were inspired by Indonesian arts. Julie Taymor, director and designer, was a former student of Indonesian masked dance-drama and shadow puppetry.

Check more pictures at: <http://goo.gl/B8l9v>

Read the article titled "Indonesian Culture Strongly Influenced American Director" at: <http://goo.gl/Yqb5j>

You Asked: What is American Culture?

By David Kipen

This essay is excerpted from the Living Book You Asked.

The easy joke would be, "Sum up American culture in 500 words? Isn't that too many?"

The hard fact is that American

culture may not exist anymore. Thanks to the Internet — the very medium that now enables you to read, on another continent, an essay I'm writing in North America in response to a question probably asked on another continent entirely —

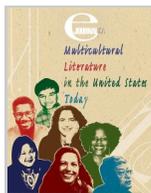
all the old sentry boxes guarding our national cultures are seriously understaffed. Look at the three art forms that most of my countrymen think of as somehow intrinsically American originals: musical comedy, jazz, and the detective novel.

The hottest ticket on Broadway at the moment, and the smart bet to win a shelf full of Tony Awards, may just be *Fela!*, a musical about the late Nigerian multi-instrumentalist Fela Kuti.

Continue to page 4

MORE RESOURCES

E-Publications



eJournal USA: Multicultural Literature in the United States Today/by U.S. Department of State, February 2009

U.S. Department of State, February 2009

The United States is enriched culturally by immigrants from many nations. This edition of *eJournal USA* focuses on distinguished American writers from various ethnic backgrounds who add immeasurably to mutual understanding and appreciation through tales of their native lands and their experiences as Americans. Full version is at: <http://goo.gl/NkfMx>

eBook: Outline of American Literature/by U.S. Department of State, December 2006.

The Outline of American literature, newly revised, traces the paths of American narrative, fiction, poetry and drama as they move from pre-colonial times into the present, through such literary movements as romanticism, realism and experimentation. Full version is at: <http://goo.gl/DqrjF>

Multimedia

Photo gallery-American Arts: Landscape of Diversity.

The remarkable flourishing of the arts in present-day America largely was due to the

influx of talent from around the world and the rapid inclusion into the artistic mainstream of women and people of African, Asian, Hispanic and other ethnicities. Today, the landscape of American arts is as diverse and unique as the landscape of American society. Check the pictures at: <http://goo.gl/GtNDN>



Photo gallery -Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art.

Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art, was an exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art, tells the story of the coiled sweetgrass baskets made by the Gullah/Geechee people of the southeastern United States — descendants of slaves brought from Africa 300 years ago. Check pictures of several sweetgrass baskets displayed during the exhibition at: <http://goo.gl/wH8GM>

Photo gallery-Latin American Influence on Display in New York

In fall 2010, El Museo del Barrio and the New-York Historical Society teamed up to put on the exhibition *Nueva York (1613-1945)*, an attempt to document four centuries of cross-cultural influence and cooperation between Latin America and New York. See the pictures of some items at: <http://goo.gl/JRiXo>

Photo gallery-Native Vision:

Art from and Inspired by Native Americans

When the State Department's "Art in Embassies" curators select artwork to install in U.S. diplomatic post, they often include works from or inspired by American Indians. Many of these works says the artists, reflect their ancestors' resilience and pride. See the pictures at: <http://goo.gl/NWYBsJRiXo>

Podcast-African-American's Activist Promotion of Muslim Culture

Okolo Rashid, an African American Muslim promotes and educates Americana on Muslim Culture through International Museum of Muslim Cultures at Jackson, Mississippi. Listen to the podcast and got the transcript at: <http://goo.gl/bhoHg>

Video-DanceMotionUSA: Evidence.

Movement, music, and spoken word are seamlessly combined by this Brooklyn-based group to explore the traditions and contemporary expressions of the African American Diaspora. Accessible at: <http://goo.gl/CbCSq>

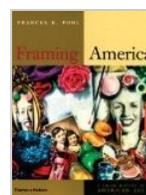
Books

(available in IRC collection)

Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian American/edited by: Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

Alien Encounters showcases

innovative directions in Asian American cultural studies. In essays exploring topics ranging from pulp fiction to multimedia art to import-car-subcultures, contributors analyze Asian American's interactions with popular culture as both creators and consumers.



Framing America: A Social History of American Art/by Francis K. Pohl. New York:

Thames & Hudson, 2008.

Eschewing the conventional genesis story of American art, one that locates its origins in the portrait work of anonymous colonial itinerants, Pohl reaches further into history than previous surveys. In order to locate a more authentic foundation for American art, she investigates the cultural production resulting from interactions between Native Americans and several exploratory European groups. Also unprecedented is Pohl's exploration of crafts, utilitarian objects, and curiosities to further illuminate the development of society in America (Summary was written by Library Journal, posted in Amazon.com).

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You Asked: What is American Culture?

Continued from page 2

Fela's influence on jazz, too, only grows and helps demonstrate how the breakdown of formerly "national" cultures parallels a similar cross-pollination between once discrete genres. Like the sentinels guarding the ramparts of erstwhile "American" culture, the customs officer working the borders between jazz, pop, and musical theater has long since given up and gone home. Wherever that is.

In detective fiction, the dissolution of American culture appears even more pronounced. The most eagerly anticipated novel of the summer, detective or otherwise, may just be the late Stieg Larsson's *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*, the third in a series of Swedish mysteries. *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, a Swedish film based on Larsson's second book about the aloof hacker vixen Lisbeth Salander, will grace state-side screens this fall. Larsson's first installment in the series, *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, had followed the trail-blazing novels of his fellow Swede Hen-

ning Mankell Salander looks to be a genuine heroine for our time, born of the Internet, and ultimately.

Before we all join hands and start singing *It's a Small World* (to borrow a tune from one of America's most globalized corporations — from which an invoice is probably in my inbox already), it's fair to point out that an American movie studio has already bought for the British director-producer Ridley Scott the rights to remake all of Larsson's books in English. Apparently subtitles are still a higher hurdle than any border checkpoint, and the money to be made from a multi novel series is, as J.K. Rowling could tell you, magic.

But, plainly, American culture no longer belongs to America, and in truth it never did. Musical comedy owes its provenance to opera, of course, which harks back to Monteverdi's Italy and Lully's France at least. Jazz came out of New Orleans by way of the Caribbean and, before that, Africa. And the trail of detective fiction winds back quite a ways — through the quintessentially

British Sherlock Holmes, to Poe's oddly French Inspector Dupin, to Dickens's Inspector Bucket from *Bleak House*, all the way to Sophocles's Oedipus Rex — before it ever goes cold.

The roots of American culture branch even more convolutedly than the four freeways that carve up Boyle Heights, the Los Angeles neighborhood where my Yiddish-speaking ancestors lie buried, where Spanish is as common as English, and where I write these words.

David Kipen recently wrote a new translation of Cervantes' The Dialogue of the Dogs (Melville House) and is author of The Schreiber Theory: A Radical Rewrite of American Film History (Melville House). He is director of literature for the National Endowment for the Arts, for which he manages The Big Read (www.nea.gov/bigreadblog/) program. His greatest accomplishment is winning the Ann Arbor Bookfest Spelling Bee.

Source: <http://goo.gl/GQzby>

This information package is compiled by the Information Resource Center (IRC) for the U.S. Speaker and Specialist Program conducted by Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy Jakarta from October 3-14, 2011 in Medan, Bangka-Belitung, Ubud and Jakarta.

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