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The Tyranny of Beauty: transPOP! Korea Vietnam remix

February 14, 2009



Area Park, Three second-frozen defectors from North Korea, 2006, transPOP! Korea Vietnam Remix

Just got back from the symposium attached to the awesome art exhibition, [transPOP! Korea Vietnam remix](#), which is at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco through March 15. The show looks at the intersections between Korean and Vietnamese pop culture through the eyes of several visual artists from Korea, Vietnam & the U.S. It's definitely worth a visit for any fans of Korean dramas, Vietnamese movies and Asian pop stars.

Anyways, the symposium today was held at UC Berkeley's Institute of East Asian Studies and featured heavy hitters like deconstructionist film queen and scholar Trinh T. Minh Ha (who I missed because I had to make pancakes for my kids) and Korean American artist and transPOP co-curator Yong Soon Min. I attended the roundtable discussion about the links between Korean and Vietnamese pop culture, which was pretty great and featured an excellent mashup of Korean and Viet films and dramas that concluded with a music video by The Wonder Girls.



transPOP! Korea Vietnam remix

What I loved most, though, was the same moment occurred that almost always happens when I talk with my fellow academics and scholars about Hong Kong films, or Korean soap operas, or any other form of Asian pop culture. At some point the academic/scholar/intellectual will start to talk about his or her favorite drama/film/idol and will get that same dreamy-eyed look as an adolescent girl when she's discussing Jay Chou or Takeshi Kaneshiro. It's usually very brief and it's followed by a fleeting, giddy smile, then the conversation will quickly return to emotional transnationalism or the crisis of modernity or gender politics. But it always proves to me that we academics are people too, and we're just as vulnerable to the allure of a beautiful face as anyone else.

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